

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/01
Foundation Portfolio

Key messages

In order to successfully complete this coursework component, candidates should:

- Keep a detailed blog showing the development of the project, their final artefact meeting the requirements of their chosen brief and a creative critical reflection upon their work.
- Aim to complete these elements to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools.
- Ensure the blog remains online and easily accessible throughout the examination series.

Individual candidate record cards must be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective and strand. If candidates have worked in groups comments must reflect individual contributions to projects.

When using Submit for Assessment, centres should ensure that all uploads are clearly legible, that all necessary paperwork is uploaded, especially the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and Individual candidate record cards (ICRC), and that if they enter more than ten candidates they select and upload the ICRCs of an appropriate sample as set out by Cambridge. It would also aid moderation if centres hyper-linked all of their candidates to a centre web page or blog, the URL address of which should be clearly stated on the ICRCs of each candidate. Moderation was slowed considerably this session due to illegible URLs.

General comments

Centres and their cohorts are once again to be congratulated on producing a high standard of work in very difficult circumstances; candidates have produced some exceptionally creative work despite some being impacted by circumstances beyond their control. Many have used the pandemic as a source of inspiration and employed their close families as actors or models to produce some very professional artefacts.

On the whole, centres engaged well with this component and candidates produced some excellent work. Most demonstrated detailed research into existing magazines and film openings, which fed into the planning and construction of their own media products. Many candidates demonstrated high levels of skill in the use of media tools, in both the products and in the creative critical reflections. In the best work, knowledge and understanding of conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with comprehensive evidence of the process.

Comments on specific tasks

Blogs

Some centres produced blog hubs (a centre blog or web page with candidates' names and numbers hyperlinked to their work) demonstrating good practice, however this was not universal practice. Even if there are only two entries the use of a hub helps teachers monitor candidates' work and aids the moderation process. All centres should follow this good practice and clearly transcribe the URL of the hub on the Individual candidate record cards. All hyper-links in both the centre's hub and candidate blogs need to be checked carefully by centres to ensure that they work.

Blogs or websites should be clearly organised so that they read in a chronological order using date stamps if possible. The finished product (film opening or magazine pages) should be the first thing seen as the blog or

website is opened so that it is clear to Moderators which is the final version. All elements should be clearly labelled, and the use of menus and tags is to be encouraged. The best online content is comprehensive, with candidates posting meaningful posts on a regular basis. Some candidates continue to produce upwards of fifty meaningful posts; less successful candidates seemed content to settle for less than twenty. The most effective blogs/webpages demonstrated the whole process of the project from initial idea, through research into similar products, planning, production and creative critical reflection. The least effective were those presented on poorly organised websites with often descriptive posts lacking in reflection and evaluation of the process of production. These were often scrolling web pages with final products and Creative Critical Reflections buried part way through a scroll.

All elements of the portfolio must be online, either on or linked to the blog for the moderation period. Google applications continue to be popular for presenting work. This is acceptable as long as all documents are either unlocked or the Moderator is provided with a password for access. Much time was once again spent contacting centres to make work available for moderation after the submission deadline.

Creative Critical Reflections

The assessment of the Creative Critical Reflection (CCR) has a significant impact on the overall mark awarded. Therefore, candidates need to fully address the four set questions using a range of digital applications to demonstrate their skill, knowledge and understanding. Assessment Objective (AO) 2 calls upon candidates to analyse and evaluate their own work. Marks for this are given across both the CCR and the blog but the criteria explicitly refers to engaging with the set questions. If candidates do not engage with all of the questions it is difficult to move beyond Level 2. Assessment Objective (AO) 3 strand 4 gives marks purely for the technical and creative skills used to communicate ideas through the CCR. Therefore, centres should not be giving high level marks for this strand to candidates who produce CCRs that do not employ creative approaches to presenting this element. Many centres have moved away from text-based approaches to this element, which is to be applauded, however, far too many have replaced the written approach with an oral treatment. A talking head or voice audio does not allow a candidate to demonstrate creativity if used for all four questions.

There continues to be, however, some excellent use of multi-media applications making use of a range of sources taken from the production process to fully explore the four set questions. The most successful candidates have allocated adequate time to the CCR and considered it an integral part of their portfolio; the least successful have rushed it and/or considered it a necessary chore following their production. Centres should encourage candidates to give equal value to each of the four questions. Some candidates start with a comprehensive and creative response to **Question 1** and regress to finish with a thin response to **Question 4**.

Research and Planning

The third strand of AO3 relates directly to the candidate's research and planning, and how this has led to the construction of the final product. Therefore, all research and planning materials should be posted to candidate blogs and made accessible to the Moderator.

The most effective research is that completed independently by the candidate or group. It is clearly relevant to the final product and the candidate is able to articulate how their research models have informed their production. The least effective is class work, where the whole class has analysed the same text which bears little or no relevance to the final product. Some candidates presented research into magazines when following the video brief and vice versa. This is relevant if presented as demonstrating the candidate's choice of brief but not as preparation for construction of the opposite brief.

There is no prescribed list of planning materials but candidates should clearly demonstrate the process of production via their blog. The process should reflect professional practice where possible so should include those documents associated with magazine or film production. The most successful candidates present a wide range of materials which clearly show the development of the project. The least successful tend towards generalised descriptive comments about what they did, often in a diary-like format.

Products

Products are primarily assessed across the first two strands of AO3. Marks should be given for the application of technical skills and how these are used to communicate meaning. Products should demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of media language and key concepts.

Magazines

The print brief continues to decline in popularity, even though some centres have turned to it as a safer option during the pandemic. Candidates who attempted this brief generally fulfilled the requirements, with understanding of features of design, layout, font choice and size in evidence. Some candidates completed well organised and considered photo shoots resulting in some excellent original images, although it could be argued that local lock-down rules have seriously impeded this area. Nevertheless, there was evidence of some very creative approaches to the problems faced by candidates. Overall, centres still need to encourage candidates to produce a wider range of appropriate images. Some candidates are still presenting the minimum number of images required rather than considering what their magazine actually needed. Contents pages continue to be an issue with many needing to reflect the full content of the proposed magazine not just a few pages. It is recommended that candidates compare their products to real magazine pages. Double page spreads require candidates to have had some training in journalistic technique. Copy was often poorly proofread and in some instances meaning was not clearly communicated.

Whilst some centres continue to invest in appropriate technical tools for construction of media products, some candidates still need more support in building their skills with dedicated DTP software such as InDesign, Quark Xpress, Affinity Publisher etc.

Opportunities for interim feedback need to be built into the task so that candidates can benefit from the critical eye of peers and teachers, particularly in relation to how far they have carried through their research into codes and conventions into their own products. Weaker productions often appear to be based on little or inappropriate research into existing products, sometimes taken from genres other than those of the proposed product.

Film openings

The video brief continues to be the most popular for this series, with the most effective products being carefully researched and planned. For the best film openings candidates had researched professional work relevant to their own genre choice and had developed a systematic understanding of the institutional conventions of opening titles. Many candidates had successfully adapted their productions to consider country-specific Covid-19 regulations. It was pleasing to see the creativity in overcoming issues, especially those involving isolation where many candidates switched to domestic drama using their families as actors.

It is pleasing to see centres giving their candidates more opportunities to use appropriate technology. Many are showing the development of skills by producing and presenting well constructed preliminary exercises which not only focus on camerawork but also some lighting and sound recording techniques. However, some well constructed openings are still being let down by a lack of consideration of the importance of light and an effective soundscape.

When candidates work in groups, as permitted by the syllabus, it is important that all members' roles are clearly identifiable and that the centre has allocated marks appropriate to those roles. Comments on Individual candidate record cards should clearly identify how marks have been allocated according to candidate roles.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/21
Media Texts and Contexts

Key messages

Section A is a compulsory question, in which candidates must analyse an extract from a TV drama and consider how meaning is constructed, as well as the specific representations of individuals, groups, events, or places through the technical codes of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to answer the question, which for this paper was an extract from *Feud*.

Section B requires candidates to answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from contemporary media.

General comments

Many candidates showed evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with examples and appropriate use of accurate terminology.

Section A

Question 1

Analyse how the extract from *Feud* constructs meaning, including the specific representations of individuals, groups, events or places, through the following technical elements:

- camera shots, angles, movement and composition
- sound
- mise-en-scene
- editing.

There was evidence of sound understanding of technical skills, with most candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately. Technical knowledge was often impressive across camera shots, angles, movement and composition, as well as mise-en-scene. However, some candidates simply identified elements and did not develop their answers sufficiently analysing what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer. This did not allow these candidates the opportunity to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently they were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates could easily identify meaning, but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. Where candidates merely narrated what was seen on screen their response was limited and did not provide a deeper exploration of the connotations of micro elements employed. Centres should focus on the demands of all 5 strands of the mark scheme, ensuring that candidates are aware of how to analyse texts, underpinned with key theories and appropriate media terminology.

Candidates who responded well to this question evidenced a thorough understanding of, and effective reference to, the key concepts of language and representation. They evidenced an effective understanding of the social significances explored within the extract through making effective points using a range of media terminology accurately. Relevant media theories were used effectively in response to the question.

In good answers, candidates were able to analyse the way that meaning was created within the extract from *Feud*. Popular areas of discussion were jealousy, often linked to the rivalry between characters and the importance of appearance, and the age and status of the women. Candidates made insightful comments

about the representation of people and places. They were able to link media theory to their analysis organically, and used terms such as connotation/denotation fluently. Often, candidates were able to link the technical codes with analysis. There were some excellent discussions of conflict between two Hollywood stars, female relationships, power and the 'male gaze'. Feminism and the challenges facing successful ageing women were key themes of the text. Many candidates did not have prior knowledge of Bette Davis, Joan Crawford and Marilyn Monroe but were still able to achieve good marks.

Weaker candidates simply re-told the narrative of the extract, or described/identified the camera shots, angles, movement, composition, sound and editing techniques used within the extract, often following the chronological order of the extract. Candidates who did this generally failed to explain how shot types created meaning, and so they were weaker. Points were repeated throughout, or analysis reduced to simple points. There was also inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' instead of 'cut', or using the term non-diegetic to refer to diegetic sounds). Some candidates managed to successfully apply theory in their responses (e.g., Mulvey, Butler, Strauss), which was very encouraging when employed appropriately. Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesized and holistic approach to the analysis of individuals/groups, themes, or meanings. Some candidates would explain terminology, or theories, rather than applying them to an analysis of the extract.

Section B

To do well on this paper candidates are required to evidence thorough understanding of, and effective reference to, the key concepts of audience and industry. They should evidence an understanding of the wider issues, contexts, and debates, and link this to the question. They should also analyse texts from multiple effective and appropriate case studies, using these to explore their chosen media area. Relevant media theories may be used effectively, in response to the question.

A significant number of responses were without any case study material at all, evidencing little more than a layman's understanding of the key concepts of audiences and institutions. Some responses tended towards giving a potted history of the institution or medium, which was not credit-worthy given that the focus is on recent (within the last five years) and relevant examples. Another observation with **Section B** was the choosing of an independent (international, and domestic, or acclaimed and successful, and limited success) and a blockbuster, or tent pole product as case studies (such as Disney/Marvel's Wonder Woman, Parasite and Tank 342), with candidates having only the information from one or two case studies from which to shape their answer, which is often self-limiting. Some responses did not fully address the question, providing a generalised overview of the case studies rather than addressing the stem of the question. One successful approach is to allow candidates freedom to research each area outlined in the specification, building up resources and case studies from each area (and perhaps even across various industries), which would better equip them to engage more meaningfully with **Section B**.

Question 2

'In the world of media ownership, bigger is always better.' To what extent is this true in the media area you have studied?

Candidates were able to use their case studies to answer the question and many focused on conglomerates such as Disney. Most case studies tended to focus on the film industry, some of which resulted in some accomplished responses. The most interesting and engaging responses were from the music industry, as they were often quite personal and well supported with detailed and relevant case study knowledge.

In good answers, candidates were able to develop a critical engagement and point of comparison between their case studies, often forming a counter argument. Terminology (cross media ownership, monopoly, oligopoly, vertical and horizontal integration) was used fluently, demonstrating a good understanding. Some candidates were able to discuss multiple industries in relation to synergies. When used, key theories (Curran and Seaton) strengthened candidates' responses.

Weaker candidates chose less relevant case studies, which were limited. Terminology was not used fluently, and they tended to focus on facts without providing any analysis or demonstrating an understanding of wider implications. These responses often provided a historical overview, limited to facts such as costs, and box office revenues. Some case studies were not recent, or relevant and there was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They may have evidenced a weak understanding of terms and concepts.

Question 3

How significant is technological convergence in the media area you have studied?

Most candidates who selected this question had some knowledge and understanding to draw upon when answering the question. Case studies relating to Netflix featured predominantly. Film and television were the most prominent industries, followed by music and video games but there were few responses focused on newspapers and magazines. Some candidates were able to discuss multiple industries in relation to synergies. When used, key theories (Hesmondhalgh) strengthened candidates' responses.

Weaker candidates focused on facts, without providing any analysis or demonstrating an understanding of wider implications. There was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They may have evidenced a weak understanding of terms and concepts, such as technological convergence, confusing this with cross media convergence, or cross media marketing.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/22
Media Texts and Contexts

Key messages

Section A is a compulsory question, in which candidates must analyse an extract from a TV drama and consider how meaning is constructed, as well as the specific representations of individuals, groups, events, or places through the technical codes of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to answer the question, which for this paper was an extract from *Devs*.

Section B requires candidates to answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from contemporary media.

General comments

Many candidates showed evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with examples and appropriate use of accurate terminology.

Section A

Question 1

Analyse how the extract from *Devs* constructs meaning, including the specific representations of individuals, groups, events or places, through the following technical elements:

- camera shots, angles, movement and composition
- sound
- mise-en-scene
- editing.

There was evidence of appropriate understanding of technical skills, with most candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately. Technical knowledge was often impressive across camera shots, angles, movement and composition, as well as mise-en-scene. However, some candidates simply identified elements and did not develop their answers sufficiently analysing what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer. This did not allow these candidates the opportunity to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently they were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates could easily identify meaning, but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. Where candidates merely narrated what was seen on screen their response was limited and did not provide a deeper exploration of the connotations of micro elements employed. Centres should focus on the demands of all 5 strands of the mark scheme, ensuring that candidates are aware of how to analyse texts, underpinned with key theories and appropriate media terminology.

Candidates who responded well to this question evidenced a thorough understanding of, and effective reference to, the key concepts of language and representation. They evidenced an effective understanding of the social significances explored within the extract through making effective points using a range of media terminology accurately. Relevant media theories were used effectively in response to the question.

In good answers, candidates were able to analyse the way that meaning was created within the extract from *Devs*. Candidates made insightful comments about the montage of images presented within the extract. They were able to consider themes related to humans and the natural world v technology. Candidate also

identified mysterious elements and enigma codes used within the extract (who is the child? What does Amaya do?). They were also able to consider the protagonists as young professionals. Popular themes discussed were children and youth; cities, work, companies, and corporate branding; social class and equality, including homelessness and poverty.

Weaker candidates simply re-told the narrative of the extract, or described/identified the camera shots, angles, movement, composition, sound and editing techniques used within the extract, often following the chronological order of the extract. Candidates who did this generally failed to explain how shot types created meaning, and so they were weaker. Points were repeated throughout, or analysis reduced to simple points. There was also inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' instead of 'cut', or using the term non-diegetic to refer to diegetic sounds). Some candidates managed to successfully apply theory in their responses (e.g., Strauss), which was very encouraging when employed appropriately. Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesized and holistic approach to the analysis of individuals/groups, themes, or meanings. Some candidates would explain terminology, or theories, rather than applying them to an analysis of the extract.

Section B

To do well on this paper candidates are required to evidence thorough understanding of, and effective reference to, the key concepts of audience and industry. They should evidence an understanding of the wider issues, contexts, and debates, and link this to the question. They should also analyse texts from multiple effective and appropriate case studies, using these to explore their chosen media area. Relevant media theories may be used effectively, in response to the question.

A significant number of responses were without any case study material at all, evidencing little more than a layman's understanding of the key concepts of audiences and institutions. Some responses tended towards giving a potted history of the institution or medium, which was not credit-worthy given that the focus is on recent (within the last five years) and relevant examples. Another observation with **Section B** was the choosing of an independent (international, and domestic, or acclaimed and successful, and limited success) and a blockbuster, or tent pole product as case studies (such as Disney/Marvel's Wonder Woman, Parasite and Tank 342), with candidates having only the information from one or two case studies from which to shape their answer, which is often self-limiting. Some responses did not fully address the question, providing a generalised overview of the case studies rather than addressing the stem of the question. One successful approach is to allow candidates freedom to research each area outlined in the specification, building up resources and case studies from each area (and perhaps even across various industries), which would better equip them to engage more meaningfully with **Section B**.

Question 2

Analyse the significance of the technologies used for distribution in the media area you have studied.

Candidates were able to use some knowledge of distribution technologies to discuss this question. Candidates were able to use their case studies (Disney, Marvel, Netflix) to answer the question. Film and television were the most prominent industries, followed by music and video games. Very few candidates focused on newspapers and magazines. The most interesting and engaging responses were from the music industry (Independent artists, Spotify), as they were often quite personal and well supported with detailed and relevant case study knowledge.

In good answers, candidates were able to develop a critical engagement and point of comparison between their case studies, often forming a counter argument. Terminology (cross media ownership, monopoly, oligopoly, vertical and horizontal integration, technological convergence) was used fluently, demonstrating a good understanding. Some candidates were able to discuss multiple industries in relation to synergies. When used, key theories (Hesmondhalgh) strengthened candidates' responses.

Weaker candidates chose less relevant case studies, which were limited. Terminology was not used fluently, and they tended to focus on facts without providing any analysis or demonstrating an understanding of wider implications. These responses often provided a historical overview, limited to facts such as costs, and box office revenues. Some case studies were not recent, or relevant and there was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They may have evidenced a weak understanding of terms and concepts, such as prosumers.

Question 3

Explain how audiences are targeted, built and maintained by media organisations.

Most candidates who selected this question had some knowledge and understanding to draw upon when answering the question. Case studies related to Disney, and Marvel featured predominantly. Most case studies tended to focus on the film industry resulting in some accomplished responses. Some candidates were able to discuss multiple industries in relation to synergies. When used, key theories (Curran and Seaton) strengthened candidates' responses.

Weaker candidates focused on facts, without providing any analysis or demonstrating an understanding of wider implications. There was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They may have evidenced a weak understanding of terms and concepts, such as fandoms.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/23
Media Texts and Contexts

Key messages

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General comments

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Section A

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There was evidence of appropriate understanding of technical skills, with most candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately. Technical knowledge was often impressive across camera shots, angles, movement and composition, as well as mise-en-scene. However, some candidates simply identified elements and did not develop their answers sufficiently analysing what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer. This did not allow these candidates the opportunity to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently they were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates could easily identify meaning, but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. Where candidates merely narrated what was seen on screen their response was limited and did not provide a deeper exploration of the connotations of micro elements employed. Centres should focus on the demands of all 5 strands of the mark scheme, ensuring that candidates are aware of how to analyse texts, underpinned with key theories and appropriate media terminology.

Candidates who responded well to this question evidenced a thorough understanding of, and effective reference to, the key concepts of language and representation. They evidenced an effective understanding of the social significances explored within the extract through making effective points using a range of media terminology accurately. Relevant media theories were used effectively in response to the question.

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MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/03
Advanced Portfolio

Key messages

In order to successfully complete this coursework component, candidates should:

- Complete one of the four set briefs.
- Keep a detailed blog showing the development of the project, their final three artefacts meeting the requirements of their chosen brief and a critical reflection upon their work.
- Aim to complete these elements to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools.
- Reflect upon their work both in blog posts and the critical reflection.
- Ensure the blog remains online and easily accessible throughout the examination series.

Individual candidate record cards must be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective and strand. If candidates have worked in groups comments must reflect individual contributions to projects.

When using Submit for Assessment, centres should ensure that all uploads are clearly legible, that all necessary paperwork is uploaded, especially the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and Individual candidate record cards (ICRC), and that if they enter more than ten candidates they select and upload the ICRCs of an appropriate sample as set out by Cambridge. It would also aid moderation if centres hyper-linked all of their candidates to a centre web page or blog, the URL address of which should be clearly stated on the ICRCs of each candidate. Moderation was slowed considerably this session due to illegible URLs.

General comments

Centres and their cohorts are once again to be congratulated on producing a high standard of work in very difficult circumstances; candidates have produced some very professional submissions for this component despite some being impacted by circumstances beyond their control. It is pleasing that the quality of work has steadily improved over the last series: many candidates presented detailed and focused research into appropriate existing media, using skills, knowledge and understanding gained over the complete course to effectively plan and construct their own products. Most demonstrated good levels of skill in the use of media tools in video, print and online production. Critical reflections demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the subject and the most effective were able to clearly reflect upon their own work. The quality of centre assessment has also improved over the last series and centres are to be congratulated on their professionalism.

Comments on specific tasks

Blogs

Some centres produced blog hubs (a centre blog or web page with candidates' names and numbers hyperlinked to their work) demonstrating good practice, however this was not universal practice. Even if there are only two entries the use of a hub helps teachers monitor candidates' work and aids the moderation process. All centres should follow this good practice and clearly transcribe the URL of the hub on the Individual candidate record cards. All hyper-links in both the centre's hub and candidate blogs need to be checked carefully by centres to ensure that they work.

It is important that centres check that the Moderator is given access to all documents. This is especially important where candidates have used Google documents to present work outside of the blog. This session Moderators spent too much time chasing centres for access to work.

The most effective blogs used a linear format, organising the blog so that the earliest post is last and the most recent post is first. The package of products and the critical reflection should be the first thing seen when opening up the blog. All elements should be clearly labelled whether through the use of menus, tags, or headers. Candidates who documented the whole process of production in detail tended to be most successful. They showed clear evidence of research in all aspects of the production, clearly documenting and justifying the choices and decisions they made – including the ideas at each stage that they rejected.

At this level a substantial amount of evidence, in a variety of forms (photos, video, articles, audio, presentation, surveys, comparisons, annotations, text, mock ups, tests, drafts and roughs), is needed to illustrate an effective understanding of the core concepts. Some candidates are presenting in excess of fifty meaningful blog posts; conversely, those candidates who only offer a small number of vague or undetailed posts are not able to access the upper range of the mark scheme.

Critical reflections

In the mark scheme Assessment Objective (AO) 2 is assessed in the Critical Reflection. Therefore, candidates need to fully address the four set questions. These should not be dealt with separately but integrated into a fluent essay style response. The mark scheme clearly states across all levels that there should be a degree of engagement with **all** questions. Any candidates who do not engage with **all** of the questions should be reflected in the centre's marking.

The syllabus requires that candidates produce an 'evaluative essay' therefore centres should prepare candidates for this and discourage simple responses to the four questions set out as four paragraphs under the question heading. Some candidates seemed to struggle with writing an essay that addressed all four questions within the confines outlined in the syllabus – '. . . around 1000 words'. Centres should advise candidates that this word count should be seen as an advisory minimum. Candidates who write fewer than 1000 words are liable to self-penalise through a lack of depth in their reflections. Candidates should focus on presenting a well structured and argued reflective and analytical essay rather than worrying about the word count.

There is no longer a requirement for the critical reflection to use a creative approach to presentation. However, some candidates made good use of captioned images from their work to support the content of their essays. This is good practice and to be encouraged.

The strongest critical reflections tended to be from candidates who had kept the most reflective records of their research, planning and production. Successful candidates thus answered the questions using clear examples from all stages of their production.

Research and planning

The third strand of AO3 relates directly to the candidate's research and planning, and how this has led to the construction of the final products. Therefore, all research and planning materials should be posted to candidate blogs and made accessible to the Moderator.

Candidate blogs should include a range of research and planning materials posted over the duration of the project which illustrate the process of production from research and initial ideas to the final production packages and critical reflection. The best research materials demonstrated a range of textual analysis with focused and annotated examples. It is important that candidates include the exploration of similar products aimed at similar audiences to those chosen for their production tasks. In the strongest work the research was revisited at stages throughout the production and reflection process, for the purpose of comparison and to demonstrate how conventions were used or deliberately broken. Audience research was strongest when learners went beyond quantitative based questionnaires, which are rarely as useful as qualitative, and analysed how target audiences actually engage with products. Candidates were rewarded when they explored multiple ideas for their product and then documented the progression and development of those into pre-production documents.

There was a range of excellent planning and development presented, especially where candidates had recorded evidence that enabled them to reflect and make informed choices about the way forward for their productions. Centres could continue to encourage learners to include evidence such as: script readings,

screen tests for actors, location pre shoots, practice shots or lighting tests, costume fittings and ideas, behind the scenes videos or photos, production vlogs (video logs), and 'making-of' video(s). Candidates could also be encouraged to make photos or video on the set and annotate them with reflection of their own roles. Work was almost always improved when candidates gained feedback on rough cuts and in many strong portfolios this was done on a number of occasions for each of the major and minor tasks.

Centres are reminded that research and planning should not just reflect the process of production of the major task. The briefs are to produce a package of work; therefore, candidates should research and plan the major task, the two minor tasks, and branding across the products.

Production

Products are primarily assessed across the first two strands of AO3. Marks should be awarded for the application of technical skills and how these are used to communicate meaning. Products should demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of media language and key concepts. All three products should be assessed together as a package.

The most successful production work built on previous skills, knowledge and understanding. Candidates produced packages of products demonstrating consistency in style, purpose and quality between the major and the minor tasks. Strong examples paid close attention to simulating form, style and generic conventions across video, print, and online work as well as identifying a clear branding strategy.

Of the four briefs (Music Promotion Package, Film Promotion Package, Documentary Package, and Short Film Package) the Short Film Package and the Music Promotion Package continue to be the most popular. The least popular for this series was the Documentary package. The Film Promotion Package, whilst popular, had a decrease in the quality of work submitted.

Major video products

All briefs contain a major video product. These are a music video, two film trailers, an extract from an original TV documentary, or a complete short film

There were some creative approaches to music videos and many were of a professional standard. These employed a range of forms, with the most popular being a mixture of narrative and performance. Candidates rose to the challenge of Covid lockdowns dispensing with group performances and focusing on solo artists. Weaker productions tended to be simple narratives accompanied by music. The most successful had the star persona/s to the fore and were able to carry this 'branding' across to their minor products.

The film trailers were not as well considered this series. However, most candidates chose to produce a teaser trailer plus a theatre trailer. Codes and conventions were often researched and applied. Candidates working on this brief often presented too much of the narrative of the film they were promoting, failing to select and film appropriate extracts. Weaker productions tended to present overly long extracts from one part of the film.

TV Documentary extracts were of mixed quality; the most successful were conscious of the fact that they were extracts and candidates often contextualised these in their blogs. Codes and conventions were adhered to, and it was often clear that research into theories of documentary production had been explored and applied. Weaker examples tended to attempt too much and started to resemble full short documentaries. They were often poorly researched and edited with long shots of rambling and/or repetitive information.

There were some powerful short films with thoughtful narratives, conscious choices of mise-en-scene, and well-considered casting. Weaker products tended to try to produce a short feature film rather than treating the product as a distinct genre in its own right.

Centres are reminded of the importance of producing risk assessments for all video products. At all times candidates must be aware of the risks, and not place themselves or anyone else they work with in the creation of their products at risk. Local laws must be adhered to at all times, especially when filming vehicles

Some centres where English is not the first language chose to present products in their first language. This is acceptable for video products as long as English subtitles are used and the rest of the portfolio is completed in English. There was some effective subtitling this series, especially of the short films.

Minor print products

Whilst there were some excellent minor print products conforming to appropriate conventions and continuing the branding of the major product, many seemed to be an after-thought. Candidates should view the minor products as an integral part of the brief and centres should give marks based on the whole package rather than just the major task.

The most effective digi-packs (Music Promotion) had clearly been well researched and employed an appropriate number of panels. Images had been produced specifically for the product and usually promoted the star persona/s of the major task. Weaker products often resembled vinyl LP covers with just two panels and limited imagery, often lifted directly from the major product.

Film posters (Film Promotion) were the most effective of the minor tasks, with candidates demonstrating a clear understanding of their role in the promotion of the film. The main weakness with some posters was the production of original photographs with some candidates relying on screen grabs from their major products for this purpose.

Magazine articles (Documentary) were often well written and clearly a product of effective research. However, if centres choose to offer this brief they should offer candidates some instruction in journalistic technique in preparation. Copy should be carefully proofed and formatted appropriately. The most effective products were presented as articles from existing professional magazines or online journals. Articles should contain some original photography as well as clear copy and effective design.

The short film festival postcards (Short Film) tended not to reflect the quality of the films they were promoting. Often candidates would lift an image from their film and place text over it along with the film festival logo. Postcards were presented as single sided and often lacked in detail. Some candidates confused postcards with posters and ended up producing a mixed brief which is not allowed by the syllabus. The most successful products again demonstrated a clear link to detailed research, employed some original imagery, and considered both sides of the card.

Social Media pages

All briefs require the production of a social media page as part of the promotional package. The page should reflect the overall branding of the main product and be used to demonstrate an understanding of how products target their audiences. Unfortunately, this element was the weakest part of many packages. A strong major product and minor print product were often let down by a poor social media product. Centres should focus on this element as an area for development.

Social media pages may be 'live' online or produced within templates and embedded in candidate blogs. Centres should ensure the safety of their candidates when using live social media pages and adhere to any local guidelines.

The most popular format for this series was once again Instagram but some candidates used generic templates based on the Facebook or Twitter format. Whichever format is used candidates should combine a range of text-based posts and original photographic images to complete this product effectively. The most effective products were clearly promotional and reflected the branding of the main product; the weaker products simply posted a few images from the main product with little or no sense of purpose.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/41
Critical Perspectives

Key messages

Clearly there is some excellent teaching going on in this subject. It is genuinely pleasing to see much improved responses this year – with a real emphasis on up-to-date media issues from perceptive, engaged and informed candidates. Centres should be congratulated for this.

General comments

- Candidates must manage their time carefully – many submitted lengthy **Section A** questions followed by very short **Section B** Media Ecology responses, despite the two sections overall being worth the same.
- Some candidates are still reliant on old examples/case studies – particularly for Regulation (Question 1) and Post Modern (Question 2). This is disappointing as the guidance is clear – case studies should primarily feature texts released no later than 5 years from the examination date.
- A significant number of candidates clearly had learnt a great deal but did not address the set question which made it difficult for them to access the higher levels.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 Media regulation

Analyse the challenges of regulating the media in the digital age.

Some of the very best responses focused on the challenges presented to regulators by social media exemplified through analysis of various controversies. Case studies used included: an examination of the sacking of Gino Carano from The Mandalorian and Disney; Twitter and hate speech and English footballers Rashford & Saka; reaction to Depp vs Heard trial; Donald Trump's ban from major social media; Rohingya Facebook case study. Better film focused answers examined modern films, including The Joker, and Livingstone and Lunt's work on the competing forces around regulation in the digital age provided the theoretical framework for many very good answers.

These stand in contrast with a clutch of answers presenting a historic account of the BBFC from 1912 to present day with an inappropriate emphasis very much on the 1950s. Older examples frequently cited (with no attention paid to the question at all) included: 12A ruling, Human Centipede, Dark Knight and Child's Play 3. Some candidates who studied the press tended to do likewise. Gaming was generally more successful. In terms of theory usually the psychologist Bandura was favoured over the substantial body of subject specific specialist academic work on media effects although it was good to see Martin Barker successfully cited in arguments in this field. Simplistic assertions that in the past audiences were very easily influenced were frequent.

Question 2 Postmodern media

Explain the knowledge and understanding needed by audiences in order to make sense of postmodern media texts

This was the most consistently answered question with even limited responses able to identify the work of relevant theorists. The very best answers were able to apply these to the question, offering an argument

rather than merely a list of terminology. Jojo Rabbit, Love Island and Arianna Grande's music video for ThankUNext were among the examples discussed and awarded marks in the higher levels of the mark scheme. It was most disappointing to see candidates continuing to frame entire responses on old examples, despite clear guidance to the contrary. While credit can be given for some of the arguments made (and historic examples can be used to exemplify changes in media) whole answers given over to The Truman Show, Pulp Fiction, Scream and The Matrix do not meet the syllabus requirement that case studies primarily focus on texts released within five years of the examination date. A significant number of candidates used Lady GaGa as an example for postmodernism but did not make appropriate references to her music videos.

Question 3

'The media condition the way we think.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

This was generally addressed well. Some answers focused purely on a detailed analysis of Childish Gambino's This is America without reference to the question. In addition, Glover was often referred to as a prosumer. The better examples argued that Donald Glover's profile along with marketing via a conglomerate was of greater significance in the message spreading than the existence of an open access platform such as Facebook. Several candidates argued that the platforms for individuals to express themselves are owned by big media institutions, such as Meta/ Google and they could withdraw access at any point without justification or warning should there be a clash of ideologies. There were some very good responses on representation and stereotyping – some on 'white saviour', others presenting detailed arguments around using Edward Said's work on Orientalism to critique BBC's The Bodyguard.

Question 4

'Given the dominance of global media, there are now few opportunities for local voices to be expressed.' How far do you agree with this statement?

This section was significantly better than in the previous entry. Given the notional timing of an hour this should be the most substantial response of the three produced within the 2-hour examination. However, for many candidates it was the briefest by far, which would go some way to explaining underperformance by candidates who were clearly able to write well. Candidates should be encouraged to manage their time carefully to ensure they leave themselves enough time to tackle this question.

Weaker candidates would often approach this question by answers that consisted of lengthy histories of Media Ecology (centred on the work of Marshall McLuhan/ Neil Postman) leaving little time and space to address the focus of the question, the contemporary issue of new technologies.

Some of the better responses argued forcefully that social media platforms provide a space for voices from outside the media conglomerates exemplified by the rise of prosumers and influencers such as KSI. The best recognised that social media giants are themselves globalised conglomerates and therefore as potentially limiting to local voices as Newscorp, Disney etc. There were some very engaged debates around cultural imperialism given the global reach of Netflix/Spotify and the rise of social media providing platforms to resist the imposition of Western/US hegemony. This suggests that (where appropriate) localised case studies often prove very successful – particularly apt here would be local media platforms. One excellent case study involved the sharing on Tik Tok of emo boys wearing skirts and make up which went viral underpinned with Gauntlett's work on identity. Another achieved similar success examining mediated reality using Real Housewives of Dubai, in particular the reaction to the programme of Emirati influencer, Majid Al Amryan which went viral then crossed over into the mainstream when it garnered significant local and national news coverage.

Activism/ Clicktivism featured heavily too, in particular the Black Lives Matter and MeToo movements. Jenkins (fandom/ participatory culture – e.g. Hillywood show) and the rise of Citizen journalism – Gilmore (Ukraine/ Russia) were among excellent case studies particularly when linked to the rise of 'Fake news' and 'cancel culture'. Where some candidates were able to interrogate these problematic terms using such examples as Trump, many merely touched on them briefly. The area around mis-/disinformation looks likely to remain a 'live' topic for at least the immediate future.

Many case studies cited Fox news (Conservative/ Republican) and CNN (Liberal/ Democrat) as examples where the company's ideology was transmitted through their reporting of the 2020 Us election and Jan 6th Capitol Riots. Hesmondhalgh/ Curran and Seaton's work on industry was used well here. The most successful of these were able to illustrate their understanding of the nuances involved in such representation

incorporating audience theory – Stuart Hall’s work on active audience and Pariser’s on filter bubbles. The competition for eyeballs – ‘the attention economy’ – was a fruitful area of debate for many who examined how the proliferation of content/ prosumers has impacted on the media ecosystem (Naughton/ Gauntlett). The concept of media influencers was cited frequently but not always followed up with a detailed example to justify the point made in the essay.

Debates/ critiques around technological determinism as offered by Morozov were mentioned by a small sample of candidates, and this could be a very rewarding starting point for this area. Some weaker responses merely used terminology without demonstrating an understanding through definition of exemplification – particularly such key terms as Vertical/ Horizontal integration and Technological Convergence.

Finally, it is worth noting that over simplistic general knowledge answers based entirely on candidate’s use of TikTok which offer no sign of any subject specialist knowledge/ debate struggle to move beyond the minimum/ basic level.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/42
Critical Perspectives

Key messages

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General comments

- Candidates must manage their time carefully – many submitted lengthy **Section A** questions followed by very short **Section B** Media Ecology responses, despite the two sections overall being worth the same.
- Some candidates are still reliant on old examples/case studies – particularly for Regulation (Question 1) and Post Modern (Question 2). This is disappointing as the guidance is clear – case studies should primarily feature texts released no later than 5 years from the examination date.
- A significant number of candidates clearly had learnt a great deal but did not address the set question which made it difficult for them to access the higher levels.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Media regulation – Analyse the ways in which contemporary media regulation reflects its period.

Some of the very best responses focused on the challenges presented to regulators by social media exemplified through analysis of various controversies. Case studies used included: an examination of the sacking of Gino Carano from The Mandalorian and Disney; Twitter and hate speech and English footballers Rashford & Saka; reaction to Depp vs Heard trial; Donald Trump’s ban from major social media; Rohingya Facebook case study. Better film focused answers examined modern films, including The Joker, and Livingstone and Lunt’s work on the competing forces around regulation in the digital age provided the theoretical framework for many very good answers.

These stand in contrast with a clutch of answers presenting a historic account of the BBFC from 1912 to present day with an inappropriate emphasis very much on the 1950s. Older examples frequently cited (with no attention paid to the question at all) included: 12A ruling, Human Centipede, Dark Knight and Child’s Play 3. Some candidates who studied the press tended to do likewise. Gaming was generally more successful. In terms of theory usually the psychologist Bandura was favoured over the substantial body of subject specific specialist academic work on media effects although it was good to see Martin Barker successfully cited in arguments in this field.

Question 2

Postmodern Media – Analyse the media text or texts which, for you, are essentially postmodern.

This was the most consistently answered question with even limited responses able to identify the work of relevant theorists. The very best answers were able to apply these to the question, offering an argument rather than merely a list of terminology. Jojo Rabbit, Love Island and Arianna Grande’s music video for ThankUNext were among the examples discussed and awarded marks in the higher levels of the mark scheme. It was most disappointing to see candidates continuing to frame entire responses on old examples, despite clear guidance to the contrary. While credit can be given for some of the arguments made (and

historic examples can be used to exemplify changes in media) whole answers given over to The Truman Show, Pulp Fiction, Scream and The Matrix do not meet the syllabus requirement that case studies primarily focus on texts released within five years of the examination date. A significant number of candidates used Lady GaGa as an example for postmodernism but did not make appropriate references to her music videos.

Question 3

Power and the media – ‘Digital media has enabled ordinary people to be as powerful as media companies in the production and distribution of persuasive messages.’

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Some answers focused purely on a detailed analysis of Childish Gambino’s This is America without reference to the question. In addition, Glover was often referred to as a prosumer. The better examples argued that Donald Glover’s profile along with marketing via a conglomerate was of greater significance in the message spreading than the existence of an open access platform such as Facebook. Several candidates argued that the platforms for individuals to express themselves are owned by big media institutions, such as Meta/ Google and they could withdraw access at any point without justification or warning should there be a clash of ideologies. There were some very good responses on representation and stereotyping – some on ‘white saviour’, others presenting detailed arguments around using Edward Said’s work on Orientalism to critique BBC’s The Bodyguard.

Question 4

To what extent have new technologies influenced the style and form of traditional media?

Given the notional timing of an hour this should be the most substantial response of the three produced within the 2-hour examination. However, for many candidates it was the briefest by far, which would go some way to explaining underperformance by candidates who were clearly able to write well. Candidates should be encouraged to manage their time carefully to ensure they leave themselves enough time to tackle this question.

Weaker candidates would often approach this question by answers that consisted of lengthy histories of Media Ecology (centred on the work of Marshall McLuhan/ Neil Postman) leaving little time and space to address the focus of the question, the contemporary issue of new technologies.

Streaming was a major focus with Disney + and Netflix offered as case studies. Instagram, Tik tok and Youtube provided many with an opportunity to demonstrate their detailed knowledge. Responses which applied such knowledge to the question were rewarded significantly better than those that merely repeated facts and figures (many seemingly regurgitated from AS work on film industry). Jenkins and fandom were discussed successfully, as was the evolution of traditional media forms into digital e.g. podcasts. Turkle’s work on social media was used well as were examples of political campaigns, with many fruitful explorations of Cambridge Analytica’s role in Trump/Brexit.

Black Mirror’s Bandersnatch was once again used by some, with some excellent responses analysing the text in a sophisticated way to offer insights into how the rise in interactive media has impacted on traditional TV forms. However, there are many other examples that candidates could research if they were given more freedom to build up resources and case studies. Centres should also be mindful that this text will not be permitted for use as a primary case study text under the 5 year rule from 2024.

Activism/ Clicktivism featured heavily too, in particular the Black Lives Matter and MeToo movements. Jenkins (fandom/ participatory culture – e.g. Hillywood show) and the rise of Citizen journalism – Gilmore (Ukraine/ Russia) were among excellent case studies particularly when linked to the rise of ‘Fake news’ and ‘cancel culture’. Where some candidates were able to interrogate these problematic terms using such examples as Trump, many merely touched on them briefly. The area around mis-/disinformation looks likely to remain a ‘live’ topic for at least the immediate future.

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how the proliferation of content/ prosumers has impacted on the media ecosystem (Naughton/ Gauntlett). The concept of media influencers was cited frequently but not always followed up with a detailed example to justify the point made in the essay.

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