

MEDIA STUDIES

<p>Paper 9607/01 Foundation Portfolio</p>

Key messages

In order to successfully complete this coursework component candidates follow one of the two set briefs as determined by the syllabus (video or print). They must:

- keep a detailed blog showing the development of the project
- research in depth to full understand the
- produce their artefact using appropriate technical codes
- evaluate their product in the creative critical reflection.

Each of these elements needs to be completed to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools. The blog must remain online and easily accessible throughout the examination series. Expectations of evidence from each assessment objective are listed on pages 24–27 of the syllabus.

Individual Candidate Record Cards must be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective. If candidates have worked in groups comments must reflect individual contributions to projects.

General comments

On the whole centres engaged creatively with this component and candidates produced some excellent work, demonstrating 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. However, there were also some candidates who appeared not to be following the requirements of the syllabus, with incomplete products, little or no evidence of research or planning and little attempt to produce a creative critical reflection. Some candidates had not considered the implications of dangerous stunts, exposed weapons (real or fake) in public places, and flying drones. It is good practice to complete risk assessments before any photo or film shoots.

Most centres now comply with the rubric of the syllabus and write clear comments on the Individual candidate record cards explaining how marks were awarded. However, there are still centres that do not; this is a requirement of the syllabus, and allows moderators to understand how marks have been awarded.

Comments on specific tasks

Blogs

Many centres have now set up blog hubs (a centre blog or web page with candidates' names and numbers, hyperlinked to their work) which allow one-click access to the individual work of candidates. This 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 are working.

The finished product should be placed at the top (final post) of the candidate's blog so that it is clear to Moderators which is the final version. The best work was comprehensive, with blog posts that followed the whole process of the project from initial idea, through research into similar products, planning, production

and creative critical reflection. Too many candidates are still, however, presenting very short blogs which do not evidence enough of the process to justify the high level marks they were often given.

All elements of the portfolio must be online, either on or linked to the blog. Disks, USBs and printouts must not be sent. The most effective blogs were those produced using dedicated blogging applications (Blogger, Wordpress etc.) which use a linear format to order blog posts from most recent to earliest, with the earliest post last, and the most recent post at the top. They included a range of materials posted over the duration of the project, illustrating the production process from research and initial ideas to final production and critical reflection.

Creative critical reflections

Candidates who fully addressed the four set questions, using a range of digital applications to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, performed best in this area. There continues to be some excellent detailed voiceover videos with extracts from the finished product and from the process, and some really imaginative approaches to using presentation applications to which adequate time had been allocated.

Weaker work tended to be text only posts, or text-heavy presentations using SlideShare or Prezi, often in very short slides with little depth and development. Such work is unlikely to go beyond the criteria for minimal marks. Candidates should approach the Creative Critical Reflection as an integral part of the production process and not something tagged on to the end of a project. Centres should encourage candidates to give equal value to each of the four questions. Many candidates start with a comprehensive and creative response to **Question 1** and regress to finish with a thin response to **Question 4**.

Products

Magazines

The syllabus requires candidates to produce the front cover, contents page and a double page spread of a new magazine, including a minimum of four original images and made up of entirely original written material. Candidates generally fulfilled the brief, 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. However, others would benefit from support in this area. Too many relied upon 'snapshots' taken with little consideration of framing or mise-en-scène. There also needs to be a wider range of appropriate images with many candidates simply presenting the minimum number of images required rather than considering what their magazine actually needed.

Contents pages need to reflect the full content of the proposed magazine rather than just the pages which are being created for the assessment. Better research here would benefit candidates greatly. Double page spreads require candidates to have some understanding in journalistic technique. Whilst centres are investing in appropriate technical tools for construction of media products, some candidates would have benefited from more support in building their skills with dedicated publishing software such as InDesign or PagePlus. Too many are relying on Photoshop, or other image editors, to construct pages something well beyond the limits of what these programs are designed to create that.

Opportunities for interim feedback need to be built in to the task so that candidates can benefit from the critical eye of peers and teachers, particularly in relation to how far they have applied their research into codes and conventions to their own products. Weaker productions often appear to be based on little or inappropriate research into existing products from the same genre.

Film openings

This task involves the production of the first two minutes of a new feature film, including the titles, adhering to commercial cinema conventions. This worked best when candidates had researched film openings relevant to their own genre choice and had developed a systematic understanding of the institutional conventions of opening titles.

Candidates need to consider carefully what purpose an opening must serve in establishing enigma for the rest of the film to solve. In some cases, candidates produced film openings which were effectively entire short films, or trailers which gave away too much of the story. A key feature of the task is how far the finished text is 'readable' as a film opening.

Expectations for work awarded marks in Level 4 and 5 is that a high degree of skill will be in evidence. This includes camerawork, sound, use of mise-en-scène and editing. Interim deadlines can assist candidates with feedback on the effectiveness of their work.

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.

Closing Comments

The coursework component requires candidates to mix technical skills with analytical understanding, and the most successful candidates are those who are able to demonstrate both. Candidates who are able to master one side but not the other are unlikely to be able to access the upper range of the marks. Centres should use the opportunities that coursework provides for candidates to evaluate along the way, recording their understanding throughout in the blog. Better candidates do not begin to make their final products until they have first engaged with substantial research in both the codes and conventions of their chosen genre and the technical codes they need to apply, practising the skills they will need to master at the same time. For more advice, please see the School Support Hub.

MEDIA STUDIES

<p>Paper 9607/21 Key Media Concepts</p>

Key messages

Candidates should:

- know and understand the technical codes of TV dramas, especially sound and editing
- analyse the extract to engage with how meaning has been created
- know and use media terminology accurately
- support their answers for both Section A and Section B with examples
- address the key terms of the chosen question in Section B
- have prepared at least one case study for Section B
- avoid solely relying on their personal experience and exposure to media.

General comments

Section A is a compulsory question where candidates must analyse an extract from an American TV drama, and consider how meaning is constructed 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 be able to attempt the question, which this session was based on an extract from *Agent Carter*.

Section B requires that candidates answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge. In this session the choice was between the consumption of media and the impact of funding on media production. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

There was a good spread of marks across both sections of the paper, with many candidates showing evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with examples. Candidates must illustrate their points using contemporary examples; at times, some candidates demonstrated good understanding of concepts and produced sound arguments, but were unable to access the upper mark bands because their answers were not supported with relevant examples. The ability to address the key terms of the question and to shape relevant knowledge towards fully answering the question was often not in evidence.

Section A

Question 1

Technical knowledge was often impressive across all four areas and it was pleasing to see evidence of some effective teaching of all of the technical skills, with the majority of candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately and with ease. However, some candidates just identified elements and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer, thus reducing the opportunity to explore meaning and representation. Where this was the case, candidates were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates were able to easily identify meaning but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis.

There were some excellent responses at the higher end of the range, highlighting candidates' understanding of the ways in which meaning is constructed through the use of different technical areas. There were some very sophisticated, analytical responses demonstrating an understanding of how meaning and representation was created, coupled with an excellent use of technical terminology. Often candidates were able to link the technical codes with analysis of sexism and gender, which in many cases led to a nuanced and higher level response.

Common problems in responses were:

- identifying technical codes but not exploring how meaning is created
- the tendency towards narrative or descriptive responses, rather than analysis
- repeated points throughout or reduced analysis to one word
- inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' or 'switch' when they meant 'cut').

Some candidates tried to apply theory in their responses (e.g. Male Gaze), which was not really necessary. When used appropriately in this case as a criticism of gender representation in the extract, this was deemed to be acceptable in the construction of meaning.

Of the four technical areas, editing and sound were again handled least well and these should be areas for attention in the teaching.

Section B

Question 2

'Nowadays, everybody consumes media texts in the same way'. Discuss with reference to the media area you have studied.

Most candidates had some first-hand experience to discuss, thus eliciting a wide range of answers. The majority of case studies tended to focus on the film and music industry, with many of these resulting in accomplished responses. As in previous series, some of the most interesting and engaging responses were from the games industry and were often quite personal, sometimes brilliantly supported with detailed and relevant case study knowledge.

At the top end, candidates elicited direct responses to the question with comprehensive evidence from case studies and a diversity of texts and institutions offered in support of the arguments they presented. Unfortunately, many answers just tended to be a personal discussion of streaming services, lacking any detailed case study support, rather than evaluating the ubiquity or not of consumption. Candidates that didn't include relevant detailed case study often deployed quite a limited technical vocabulary in their answers. Better answers were able to discuss consumption of cross platform media and the notions of an active/passive audience.

It was worrying to see such a significant number of responses without any case study material at all, or in other cases, completely inventing erroneous figures as supporting evidence.

Question 3

Discuss the impact of funding on media products.

The responses to this question tended to be slightly less successful, with many candidates often misunderstanding the key term. For many the argument was a bigger budget led to a better production, with more successful responses discussing the impact of funding on the variety and availability of media products.

Most responses for this question tended to focus on the film industry. Better responses had institutional examples of how funding impacted all aspects of a product's creation and distribution, with many discussing the impact of state funding/crowdfunding/conglomerate funded examples. Again, games industry responses were often stronger, with detailed case study comparisons, using accurate and current supporting data, comparing and contrasting the respective funding of indie and blockbuster releases.

Many candidates ignored the generation of pre-production funding in favour of discussing marketing budgets, which often led to quite tangential responses, while others were able to list supporting facts and figures without shaping the material towards answering the question. In many cases, no case study material was evident.

Closing Comments

Candidates need to show that they understand the media beyond that which we might expect a member of the general population to understand; relying on their own personal exposure to media products alone will

not allow candidates to access the higher mark range. Dedicated case studies (linked texts) can be infinitely tailored to candidate's own interest, but must be supported with extensive research and understanding of the way those texts were created.

For example, a candidate wanting to use the Marvel Universe as a starting point for a case study would be best served by studying three or four films (primary texts), and include secondary texts such as theatrical trailers, behind the scenes footage, interviews and any other texts (billboards, magazine advertisements, online and digital media presence) associated with the film. They should research and understand the processes of production, distribution and marketing as they relate to contemporary media institutions (in this case, Marvel, but other subsidiaries as well), as well as the nature of audience consumption of all of the primary and secondary texts and the relationships between audiences and institutions. For more information, please see the syllabus.

Better candidates will conduct 2 or more case studies (preferably on different areas) to ensure that, regardless of the questions, they will be well prepared to respond appropriately.

MEDIA STUDIES

<p>Paper 9607/22 Key Media Concepts</p>

Key messages

Candidates should:

- know and understand the technical codes of TV dramas, especially sound and editing
- analyse the extract to engage with how meaning has been created
- know and use media terminology accurately
- support their answers for both Section A and Section B with examples
- address the key terms of the chosen question in Section B
- have prepared at least one case study for Section B
- avoid solely relying on their personal experience and exposure to media.

General comments

Section A is a compulsory question where candidates must analyse an extract from an American TV drama, and consider how meaning is constructed 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 be able to attempt the question, which this session was based on an extract from *Empire*.

Section B requires that candidates answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge. In this session the choice was between ownership of the media and the impact of cross-media convergence on media production. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

There was a good spread of marks across both sections of the paper, with many candidates showing evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with examples. Candidates must illustrate their points using contemporary examples; at times, some candidates demonstrated good understanding of concepts and produced sound arguments, but were unable to access the upper mark bands because their answers were not supported with relevant examples. The ability to address the key terms of the question and to shape relevant knowledge towards fully answering the question was often not in evidence.

Section A

Question 1

Technical knowledge was often impressive across all four areas and it was pleasing to see evidence of some effective teaching of all of the technical skills, with the majority of candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately and with ease. However, some candidates just identified elements and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer, thus reducing the opportunity to explore meaning and representation. Where this was the case, candidates were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates were able to easily identify meaning but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. A significant number of responses simply offered a narration of the text with a list of technical terms, which resulted in limited interpretation.

There were some excellent responses at the higher end of the range, highlighting candidates' understanding of the ways in which meaning is constructed through the use of different technical areas. There were some very sophisticated, analytical responses demonstrating an understanding of how meaning and representation was created, coupled with an excellent use of technical terminology. The best responses synthesised construction and meaning in an organic way. Often candidates were able to link the technical codes with analysis of stereotypes, ethnicity, power and gender, as well as the tropes of music videos, which

in many cases led to a nuanced and higher level response. However, candidates should take care when writing about ethnicity and avoid offensive stereotyping and language.

Common problems in responses were:

- identifying technical codes but not exploring how meaning is created
- the tendency towards narrative or descriptive responses, rather than analysis
- repeated points throughout or reduced analysis to one word
- inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' or 'switch' when they meant 'cut').

Some candidates tried to apply theory in their responses (e.g. Male Gaze), which was not really necessary. However, in the context of the 'yacht scene' this was deemed to have been acceptable in the construction of meaning.

Of the four technical areas, editing and sound were again handled least well and these should be areas for attention in the teaching.

Section B

Question 2

'Everything in the media seems to be owned by a small number of very big companies.' Discuss the implications of media ownership with reference to the media area you have studied.

The best answers were able to provide case study material and argue the impact of ownership by conglomerates and independents on audiences. The advantages and disadvantages of horizontal/vertical integration, mergers and oligopolies versus underfunding and creative methods of production/distribution from independents were discussed at the top end, often citing Disney/Marvel/Lucasfilm as a case study.

Ironically, many candidates interpreted this for cross media convergence, or got bogged down in discussions about funding. Piracy was often discussed, but rarely in a way that answered the question. Often candidates offered a potted history of their chosen institution; where this happens, and candidates do not engage with the key terms of the question or produce a defined argument, candidates are limited to the lower range of the marks.

It was worrying to see such a significant number of responses without any case study material at all, or in other cases, completely inventing erroneous figures as supporting evidence.

Question 3

Discuss the impact of cross-media convergence on the media area you have studied.

The responses to this question tended to be slightly more successful. However, many candidates often misunderstood the key term to mean technological convergence. Most responses for this question tended to focus on the film industry; the best answers in this series tended to be from the print and games media areas.

Better responses had institutional examples of how cross-media convergence impacted on the successes of a media product with relevant and contextualised case study evidence, often citing Disney as an example. They were also able to explore the impact of synergy and cross-media convergence in the context of horizontal and vertical integration and addressed the significance of the impact on both institutions and audiences. Some candidates gave a detailed history of their chosen institution/area, rather than shaping their knowledge towards answering the question.

In many cases, candidates were inventing figures and often there was no case study material evident at all.

Closing Comments

Candidates need to show that they understand the media beyond that which we might expect a member of the general population to understand; relying on their own personal exposure to media products alone will not allow candidates to access the higher mark range. Dedicated case studies (linked texts) can be infinitely

tailored to candidate's own interest, but must be supported with extensive research and understanding of the way those texts were created.

For example, a candidate wanting to use the Marvel Universe as a starting point for a case study would be best served by studying three or four films (primary texts), and include secondary texts such as theatrical trailers, behind the scenes footage, interviews and any other texts (billboards, magazine advertisements, online and digital media presence) associated with the film. They should research and understand the processes of production, distribution and marketing as they relate to contemporary media institutions (in this case, Marvel, but other subsidiaries as well), as well as the nature of audience consumption of all of the primary and secondary texts and the relationships between audiences and institutions. For more information, please see the syllabus.

Better candidates will conduct 2 or more case studies (preferably on different areas) to ensure that, regardless of the questions, they will be well prepared to respond appropriately.

MEDIA STUDIES

<p>Paper 9607/03 Advanced Portfolio</p>

Key messages

Successful candidates should:

- complete one of the four set briefs
- keep a detailed blog that documents their research and the production process
- reflect upon their work in the creative critical reflection.

Each of these elements needs to be completed to a high standard, with a substantial amount of evidence, demonstrating knowledge and understanding, research, planning and appropriate use of media language and techniques. Expectations of evidence from each assessment objective are listed on pages 27–30 of the syllabus. Coursework Assessment Summary Forms must be completed by the centre, and should give clear comments for each learner which explain why the marks have been awarded for each assessment objective.

General comments

Once again there were some entries which included work of a very high quality. The strongest submissions presented detailed and focused research into appropriate existing media and used the knowledge gained to effectively plan and construct their own products. A good number of learners demonstrated a high level of control over both video and print production tools. In the best work, learners exhibited a clear understanding and motivated application of the relevant media conventions. A number of submissions made innovative use of new technologies in both planning and production work as well as in the creative critical reflections.

In some cases candidates did not complete all three elements of the set brief or submitted a very limited amount of evidence. It is important that both major and minor tasks are completed as well as clear documentation of all stages of the production process including learners own research and individual responses to the creative critical reflection questions.

Comments on specific questions

Blogs

Centres are strongly encouraged to set up blog hubs (an online directory of all the candidates' blog links) as this allows moderators easy access to individual candidates' work; typing in long URLs runs the risk of errors. All links must be checked by centres in advance to ensure that they are working. Centres are once again reminded that **all** elements of the project must be online, either on or linked to the blog; disks, USBs and printouts should not be sent, and will be disregarded by Moderators.

The strongest work came from learners who documented the whole process of the project in detail and showed clear evidence of research in all aspects of the production. The blog is key evidence of achievement of the assessment objectives. The most effective blogs were those which used a linear format, organising the blog so that the earliest post is last and the most recent post is first. Slightly less useful, but still appropriate, were those which organised the different aspects of the production process under relevant heading and on separate pages – however, within these pages, it is always most useful for moderators when posts are arranged chronologically.

There is an expectation that there will be a significant number of blog entries in order to fully document each stage of the process. It is also vital that blogs included a range of materials posted over the duration of the project, illustrating the process of production, from research and initial ideas to the final production and creative critical reflection. The blog should show and explain the choices made at each stage of production in order to illustrate a level of control over all aspects of the production process. The strongest work was from

learners who consistently reflected on the revisions and choices they made. Very short blogs did not provide enough evidence to justify awarding marks in the highest levels, even if the final products were strong.

The best research demonstrated a range of textual analysis with focused and annotated examples, including the exploration of similar products to those chosen for the learner's 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. Audience research was strongest when learners went beyond quantitative based questionnaires, which are rarely useful, and analysed how audiences engaged with products. Good examples included interviews with potential audiences as well as analysis of distribution data and marketing material for similar existing media products. Centres looking to strengthen their marks for AO4 should seek to incorporate the use digital video, audio and print technology into the presentation of their research ideas.

There were some exceptional examples of documentation at all stages of the process. Candidates were highly 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, especially where learners had recorded evidence that was clearly intended to enable them to reflect and make informed choices about the way forward for their production.

Centres seeking to improve their marks should encourage learners to include evidence such as: script readings, screen tests for actors, location pre shoots, practice shots and costume fitting, behind the scenes videos, production vlogs, and 'making-of' video(s). Learners should also be encouraged to take 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.

Production work

There was exciting and well produced work submitted for all four of the briefs; in all options the best work combined strong control over software and hardware with a clear and well documented understanding of media codes and conventions. Centres are to be reminded that the production work is a package that needs to show a consistency in style, purpose and quality between the major and the minor tasks. Strong examples paid close attention to simulating form, style and genre characteristics across both video and print work.

It is important that production work is not presented as a finished product alone. Candidates are rewarded for plotting a journey both in terms of skill development and design and aesthetical understanding – this should include any preliminary tasks, test work and discarded ideas or media material (see section on blogs above). Centres are reminded that satisfactory evidence of planning is needed in order to access marks above Level 3, even if the submitted production work is strong.

Creative critical reflections

The strongest critical reflections tended to be from candidates who had kept the most reflective records of their research, planning and production; they answered the questions using clear examples from all stages of their project journey. The best work also tended to use a variety of digital formats, with a growing number of candidates using several formats to present each question and making good use of audio and video in their creative reflections. One example of creative critical reflection from a level 5 submission included:

Question 1

A six page magazine article with annotated images from the learner's own production work as well as a split-screen video comparison plotting the reference points from existing media texts.

Question 2

A twelve slide Powtoon presentation with side by side analysis of the image, fonts, colours, layout and graphics from the learner's three production tasks, with comparable industry examples.

Question 3

A six slide Prezi with profiling and theoretical justification of the products' audience, as well as a modelling of the products distribution alongside comparable real world examples.

Question 4

A podcast show interviewing the director and aimed at film fans. All technologies used were explained for the purpose they served and on the project.

Other level 5 submissions included director's commentaries, TV talk show interviews, director question and answers, how-to videos, advertisements for specific technologies used, technology review shows as well as marketing packs info-graphic and posters.

There was some excellent self-reflective work in which candidates gave clear motivation for the decisions they made, backed up with examples from the industry or with research they had carried out into audience and institutions.

To reach the Level 5 criteria for AO3, digital creative tools must be used to excellent effect in the creative critical reflection. This is difficult to achieve without using a range of digital presentation techniques. Learners can improve their submission by avoiding brief or text-heavy answers that only used PowerPoint or Prezi. If a range of technology is used throughout the research and planning stages, learners are able to incorporate this into their creative critical reflections, in order to reassess their application of knowledge and development of skills from each stage of their journey. It is important that learners annotate and commentate on their own video and print products, comparing their own products to relevant industry texts.

Summary

It is absolutely clear from the work submitted that this component continues to give students an exceptional learning experience. Many candidates have obviously been on a journey of discovery, built their practical skills and, whether implicitly or explicitly, their understanding of media theory. The difference in marks awarded continues to be largely down to the extent to which learners are able to reflect on their own practice and go back to improve on both their technical ability and their application of relevant media conventions.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/41
Critical Perspectives

Key messages

Candidates should:

- reflect in some detail on the skills they have developed whilst creating their coursework
- analyse their coursework offering an evaluation of the way they explored a key concept
- be prepared to write an extended response on one contemporary media theme
- support their answers with detailed references, to their own coursework and other published media texts
- use contemporary media texts in Section B
- combine knowledge of at least two media and a range of texts, industries, audiences and debates, to be selected by the centre or candidate
- be encouraged to engage with independent case studies about texts and subjects which interest them.

General comments

Most of the candidates found the paper a good stimulus for them to reflect upon their own progress both as producers and critics of media texts. The very best candidates were able to use their knowledge to address the specific areas the question demands; the less successful tend towards repeating all they could remember with scant regard for the particular focus of the exam.

In Section B, the syllabus requires that candidates will combine knowledge of at least two media and a range of texts, industries, audiences and debates. This is best achieved through a case study considering a variety of linked media texts, perhaps based around a central tenant or concept. To best prepare candidates, a series of case studies, considering different types of texts, is most useful. Therefore, a well-prepared candidate will have perhaps two or three case studies. They should be aware of the contemporary media issues they might be able to explore with each case study, and decide which of the questions stated in the syllabus the case study is most appropriate to answer.

There was a tendency for centres to offer case studies of specific episodes from series, particular editions of magazines, and sometimes this was broken down even further to specific scenes or articles – this approach can lead to a lack of personal ownership and engagement with the topic (particularly Media and Collective Identity) which frequently results in lengthy reproductions of undigested notes from lessons. The mark scheme offers no correlation between volume of response and outcome, instead looking for candidates to explain, argue and analyse in response to the question. Some areas, such as Contemporary Media Regulation, or Media and Collective Identity, require more sensitivity than others regarding potential readers of the essay who might find some terms difficult e.g. references to ethnicity/sexuality.

Time management was generally excellent with very few candidates not attempting the appropriate number of questions

Comments on specific questions

Section A

1 (a) To what extent was your creativity the result of your use of digital technology?

Candidates who wrote about how they learned to use specific tools in software programmes and how they then applied this scored well. A high proportion of candidates excelled in this question which was very pleasing. A chronological approach works really well here. Less successful candidates tended to merely list digital tech they had used, only mentioned research and/or only wrote about one product. Candidates should be reminded that they must offer a range of specific, relevant and clear examples from their coursework products to illustrate their response.

1 (b) Evaluate one of your productions in relation to the concept of media language.

This question is often answered with less success as it requires a clear understanding of the concept referred to in the question. Responses may be informed by theory but do not have to be. This question focused specifically on Media Language, and it was clear not all candidates had a good grasp of this concept. Centres must ensure candidates are fully prepared for this question by covering all the media concepts in detail.

Successful candidates answered this question using semiotics, analysing and identifying the signifiers and what they signified. Some focused on the micro elements, considering mise-en-scène, editing, sound and camerawork. Macro approaches, considering narrative, representation, genre and audience were used with varying degrees of success but usually failed to access the top band which is a shame as the quality of learning was clearly very good. The very best answers will combine both to offer articulate reflections on their products which showed excellent understanding of the key concepts.

Section B

Contemporary media regulation

2 How effective are current regulatory practices?

OR

3 What are the arguments against more regulation of the media?

Both questions were attempted by a good number of candidates, who were well prepared to engage with the question. Better answers recognised and addressed the difficulties for regulatory systems posed by the internet, considering the global issues surrounding online-only institutions. Some candidates made good use of material covering film, videogames and TV. This topic area lends itself to historical essays which focus on BBFC and the press, resulting in well informed detail which regularly fails to reach beyond 2000. This is such a pity as the Leveson Inquiry and its aftermath offers many possible explorations. The best examples often referred to international media organisations rather than UK ones.

Global media

4 'The global audience for media has removed all local difference.' Discuss.

OR

5 What are the arguments against global media?

This topic was less popular, but there were some very encouraging responses to both questions. Again, better answers focused on national and international media institutions, products and audiences, using local context and a range of examples to good effect.

Media and collective identity

6 'It doesn't matter how the media stereotype social groups, audiences can decide for themselves.' Discuss.

OR

7 Analyse the representation of a social group in contemporary media.

This topic was one of the two most popular, with many good responses from candidates. However, some candidates did not consider enough detail because they focused on two areas of representation, giving themselves too much to do in the time given.

Popular areas of representation were young people, women, Muslims and LGBT. Better candidates connected theory and texts seamlessly, making cogent and articulate points and personally engaged with the issues and debates. Less successful candidates presented their case study as separate lists or simply ignored one aspect.

There were several responses on female characters in Video Gaming which demonstrated a real engagement with the issues. Other popular case studies used here included examples from *13 Reasons Why* and *Stranger Things*, a testament to their global success.

Whilst context can be useful in a case study, some candidates struggled to include much material from the 21st century. This is unlikely to help candidates engage with Contemporary Media Issues and Debates, the title of the section. Centres are reminded that the syllabus states: *There should be consideration of both the historical and the contemporary in relation to the chosen topic, with most attention on the contemporary. Centres are therefore advised to ensure that study materials for this unit are up to date and relevant.*

Media in the online age

8 To what extent have online media revolutionised consumption?

OR

9 'The online age has transformed media production.' Discuss.

This topic was also popular, and saw a range of quality in terms of the answers candidates gave. The best responses explored contemporary media informed by the latest thinking, contextualising it in terms of wider cultural debates around censorship, audience and industries.

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Postmodern media

10 How far do postmodern texts challenge the audience to see things differently?

OR

11 Postmodernism has been defined as an historical period, a style and as a theoretical approach. What does postmodernism mean to you in relation to the media texts you have studied?

Whilst not the most popular topic area, a number of candidates tackled postmodernism, and some did so outstandingly well. The best examples used a wide variety of texts, including *Community* and *Drive*. When candidates were less successful they tended to rely on a narrow range of

examples, which made it more difficult for them to access the top band despite writing well. There were some intelligent references to theory in the better candidates, who used it to explore and support their ideas, sometimes with a strong and coherent argument.

Closing Comments

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For example, a candidate wanting to use the Marvel Universe as a starting point for a case study would be best served by studying three or four films (primary texts), and include secondary texts such as theatrical trailers, behind the scenes footage, interviews and any other texts (billboards, magazine advertisements, online and digital media presence) associated with the film. They should consider carefully the five topics, and the questions supplied in the syllabus, and how the texts they have studied relate to these questions.

When responding to the question in Section B, candidates must demonstrate understanding of whichever contemporary issue they select, combining their knowledge of at least two media texts with a wider understanding of the issues surrounding their chosen area. Better candidates will conduct 2 or more case studies (preferably on different areas) to ensure that they will be able to select the most appropriate question and case study combination. For more information, please see the syllabus.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/42
Critical Perspectives

Key messages

Candidates should:

- reflect in some detail on the skills they have developed whilst creating their coursework
- analyse their coursework offering an evaluation of the way they explored a key concept
- be prepared to write an extended response on one contemporary media theme
- support their answers with detailed references, to their own coursework and other published media texts
- use contemporary media texts in Section B
- combine knowledge of at least two media and a range of texts, industries, audiences and debates, to be selected by the centre or candidate
- be encouraged to engage with independent case studies about texts and subjects which interest them.

General comments

Most of the candidates found the paper a good stimulus for them to reflect upon their own progress both as producers and critics of media texts. The very best candidates were able to use their knowledge to address the specific areas the question demands; the less successful tend towards repeating all they could remember with scant regard for the particular focus of the exam.

In Section B, the syllabus requires that candidates will combine knowledge of at least two media and a range of texts, industries, audiences and debates. This is best achieved through a case study considering a variety of linked media texts, perhaps based around a central tenant or concept. To best prepare candidates, a series of case studies, considering different types of texts, is most useful. Therefore, a well-prepared candidate will have perhaps two or three case studies. They should be aware of the contemporary media issues they might be able to explore with each case study, and decide which of the questions stated in the syllabus the case study is most appropriate to answer.

There was a tendency for centres to offer case studies of specific episodes from series, particular editions of magazines, and sometimes this was broken down even further to specific scenes or articles – this approach can lead to a lack of personal ownership and engagement with the topic (particularly Media and Collective Identity) which frequently results in lengthy reproductions of undigested notes from lessons. The mark scheme offers no correlation between volume of response and outcome, instead looking for candidates to explain, argue and analyse in response to the question. Some areas, such as Contemporary Media Regulation, or Media and Collective Identity, require more sensitivity than others regarding potential readers of the essay who might find some terms difficult e.g. references to ethnicity/sexuality.

Time management was generally excellent with very few candidates not attempting the appropriate number of questions

Comments on specific questions

Section A

1 (a) To what extent was your creativity the result of your use of digital technology?

Candidates who wrote about how they learned to use specific tools in software programmes and how they then applied this scored well. A high proportion of candidates excelled in this question which was very pleasing. A chronological approach works really well here. Less successful candidates tended to merely list digital tech they had used, only mentioned research and/or only wrote about one product. Candidates should be reminded that they must offer a range of specific, relevant and clear examples from their coursework products to illustrate their response.

1 (b) Evaluate one of your productions in relation to the concept of media language.

This question is often answered with less success as it requires a clear understanding of the concept referred to in the question. Responses may be informed by theory but do not have to be. This question focused specifically on Media Language, and it was clear not all candidates had a good grasp of this concept. Centres must ensure candidates are fully prepared for this question by covering all the media concepts in detail.

Successful candidates answered this question using semiotics, analysing and identifying the signifiers and what they signified. Some focused on the micro elements, considering mise-en-scène, editing, sound and camerawork. Macro approaches, considering narrative, representation, genre and audience were used with varying degrees of success but usually failed to access the top band which is a shame as the quality of learning was clearly very good. The very best answers will combine both to offer articulate reflections on their products which showed excellent understanding of the key concepts.

Section B

Contemporary media regulation

2 How effective are current regulatory practices?

OR

3 What are the arguments against more regulation of the media?

Both questions were attempted by a good number of candidates, who were well prepared to engage with the question. Better answers recognised and addressed the difficulties for regulatory systems posed by the internet, considering the global issues surrounding online-only institutions. Some candidates made good use of material covering film, videogames and TV. This topic area lends itself to historical essays which focus on BBFC and the press, resulting in well informed detail which regularly fails to reach beyond 2000. This is such a pity as the Leveson Inquiry and its aftermath offers many possible explorations. The best examples often referred to international media organisations rather than UK ones.

Global media

4 'The global audience for media has removed all local difference.' Discuss.

OR

5 What are the arguments against global media?

This topic was less popular, but there were some very encouraging responses to both questions. Again, better answers focused on national and international media institutions, products and audiences, using local context and a range of examples to good effect.

Media and collective identity

6 'It doesn't matter how the media stereotype social groups, audiences can decide for themselves.' Discuss.

OR

7 Analyse the representation of a social group in contemporary media.

This topic was one of the two most popular, with many good responses from candidates. However, some candidates did not consider enough detail because they focused on two areas of representation, giving themselves too much to do in the time given.

Popular areas of representation were young people, women, Muslims and LGBT. Better candidates connected theory and texts seamlessly, making cogent and articulate points and personally engaged with the issues and debates. Less successful candidates presented their case study as separate lists or simply ignored one aspect.

There were several responses on female characters in Video Gaming which demonstrated a real engagement with the issues. Other popular case studies used here included examples from *13 Reasons Why* and *Stranger Things*, a testament to their global success.

Whilst context can be useful in a case study, some candidates struggled to include much material from the 21st century. This is unlikely to help candidates engage with Contemporary Media Issues and Debates, the title of the section. Centres are reminded that the syllabus states: *There should be consideration of both the historical and the contemporary in relation to the chosen topic, with most attention on the contemporary. Centres are therefore advised to ensure that study materials for this unit are up to date and relevant.*

Media in the online age

8 To what extent have online media revolutionised consumption?

OR

9 'The online age has transformed media production.' Discuss.

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