

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/01
Foundation Portfolio

Key messages

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

- follow one of the two set briefs as determined by the syllabus (video or print)
- keep a detailed blog showing the development of the project, their artefact, and a creative critical reflection upon their work
- ensure their blog remains online and easily accessible throughout the examination series.

Centres are reminded that:

- individual candidate Record Cards must be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective. Expectations of evidence from each assessment objective are listed on pages 24–27 of the syllabus
- if candidates have worked in groups comments must reflect individual contributions to projects.

General comments

On the whole centres continue to engage creatively with this component and candidates once again 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. However, this is an area for development for many centres. Opportunities must be made available for candidates to learn, develop and practice skills in the use of photographic equipment, editing and desk-top publishing software, and online creative applications.

In the best work, knowledge and understanding of conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with comprehensive evidence of the production process. Each phase (the development of the project, the final product and the creative critical reflection) was completed to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools. Unfortunately, there were also some candidates who did not appear to follow any of the requirements of the syllabus, who presented incomplete products, little or no evidence of research or planning and little attempt to produce a creative critical reflection. Some candidates continue not to consider the implications of dangerous stunts, exposed weapons (real or fake) in public places, and flying drones. It is the responsibility of centres to ensure that candidates complete risk assessments before any photo or film shoots.

Most centres are now complying with the rubric of the syllabus and writing clear comments on the Individual candidate Record Cards explaining how the marks were awarded. However, there are still centres that are not doing this and they are reminded that this is a requirement of the syllabus.

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.

Blogs need to be organised carefully, especially if using Wordpress or website building applications such as Wix. The finished product (film opening or magazine pages) should be the first thing seen as the blog is opened so that it is clear to Moderators which is the final version. All elements should be clearly labelled within the post, the title, or the menu item. Moderators should not have to scroll backwards and forwards to find key elements. The best blogs were comprehensive, with candidates posting on a regular basis. Some candidates produced upwards of fifty meaningful posts.

The most effective blogs demonstrated 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. The clearest blogs to follow 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.

Centres are reminded that all elements of the portfolio must be online, either on or linked to the blog for the moderation period. Disks, USBs and printouts must not be sent.

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 could only meet 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 not just a few pages. Double page spreads require candidates to have had some training 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 DTP software such as InDesign or PagePlus. Too many are relying on Photoshop to construct pages; a job that it is not designed to do.

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 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 from the same genre. Some candidates are still producing products that bear little resemblance to real print products, with some relying on newsletter or flyer templates to create a product.

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 in Level 4 and 5 is that a high level of skill will be in evidence, including camerawork, sound, use of mise-en-scène and editing. It is desirable that candidates should have the opportunity to use appropriate 'tools of the trade' including some lighting equipment and sound recording equipment external to the camera. Many well constructed openings were let down by a lack of consideration of the importance of light and an effective soundscape.

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 each Individual Candidate Record Card should clearly identify how marks have been allocated according to the roles the candidate performed.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/21
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

Section A is a compulsory question whereby 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 *The Sopranos*.

Section B requires that candidates answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge, which in this session were about the ways in which audience consumption has changed, and the vitality of digital distribution in media production. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

General comments

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 and appropriate use of accurate terminology. While there were contemporary examples used in **Section B** order to illustrate points, often candidates would write everything about their chosen case studies; 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

Discuss the ways in which the extract from *The Sopranos* constructs meaning through the following:

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

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. Better attempts are being made to address the micro area of editing, although this is still the area candidates tend to be least confident about when responding. Unfortunately, some candidates relied on merely identifying the elements and were unable to develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer. This limits their opportunities to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently they were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates were able to identify meaning easily, but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. A common problem is candidates merely narrating of what is seen on screen, leading to limited responses such as 'sad' or 'angry' as opposed to any deeper connotations of the micro elements employed.

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 is created coupled with an excellent use of technical terminology. Often candidates were able to link the technical codes with analysis of an unreliable narrator, the emptiness of the American Dream, issues around mental health and attitudes towards women.



Common problems in responses were identifying technical codes but not exploring how meaning is created. In these responses, the tendency is towards narrative or descriptive responses, rather than analysis, often making repeated points throughout or reducing their analysis to one word; these candidates were more likely to use terminology inaccurately (for example using the term 'jump cut' or 'switch' when they meant 'cut', or indeed the use of 'flashback'). Some candidates tried to apply theory in their responses (e.g. Male Gaze, Propp, Uses and Gratifications etc.), which was not really necessary, though when used appropriately in this case as a criticism of the objectification of women, or indeed exploring the binary opposites of wealth and happiness, it was deemed to be acceptable in the construction of meaning. Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesised and holistic approach to the analysis of individual scenes, themes or meanings.

It was pleasing to see candidates respond more evenly on all four micro elements and this has clearly been the focus in the teaching of this component.

Section B

General comments

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. Other responses tended towards giving a potted history of the institution or medium, which was unnecessary, given that the focus is on recent and relevant examples. A common problem with **Section B** seems to be the choosing of an independent and a blockbuster product as case studies, whereby candidates have only the information from two case studies from which to shape their answer. Often this was limiting candidates' responses as they did not have enough to write on for the focus of the question, and they wrote everything they knew about these two case studies, rather than address the stem of the question. Candidates could be given more freedom to research each area outlined in the specification and build 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**. Candidates should also consider carefully the question itself; responses which are fully focused on the question and its implications are much more likely to be successful.

Question 2

In relation to the media area you have studied, discuss the ways audience consumption has changed over time.

The question was accessible to all candidates, as most had some first-hand experience to discuss, thus eliciting a wide range of answers; most case studies tended to focus on the film and music industry with many of these resulting in accomplished responses. As in previous series, the most interesting and engaging responses were from the games industry, and were often quite personal, well 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. Unfortunately, many answers relied heavily on a personal discussion of streaming services, lacking any detailed case study support, with little evaluation of the ubiquity, or not, of consumption, deploying quite a limited technical vocabulary in their answers. Better answers were able to discuss consumption of cross platform media, including the notions of an active/passive audience, prosumerism, and interactivity.

Question 3

To what extent is digital distribution vital to the media area you have studied?

The responses to this question tended to be slightly less successful, with many candidates often misunderstanding the key term, or conflating it with other areas, most frequently marketing. For many the basic argument was that digital production has led to more digital distribution, with more successful responses discussed the impact of the ease of distribution of digital media products, especially when vertically integrated, in comparison to physical distribution. Most responses for this question tended to focus on the film industry. Very often, scant true knowledge about distribution was evident, including channels, sales rights, online/theatrical/streaming/rights, territories, transport, festivals, windowing and exclusivities. In many cases, no relevant case study material was evident. It is vital that candidates are prepared to approach

this question with detailed, relevant knowledge of the distribution of the media products in their chosen case study. Whilst marketing is a key area of distribution, candidates should be reminded that they are not synonyms for one another; greater research and focus in current distribution practices, methods and institutions should be considered.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/22
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

Section A is a compulsory question whereby 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-scène 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 *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Section B requires that candidates answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting and applying their knowledge, which in this session were about the significance of the impact of technology on audiences and the extent to which the production of media texts is driven by profit. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

General comments

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 and appropriate use of accurate terminology. While there were contemporary examples used in **Section B** order to illustrate points, often candidates would write everything about their chosen case studies; 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

Discuss the ways in which the extract from *The Handmaid's Tale* constructs meaning through the following:

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

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. Better attempts are being made to address the micro area of editing, although this is still the area candidates tend to be least confident about when responding. Unfortunately, some candidates relied on merely identifying the elements and were unable to develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer. This limits their opportunities to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently they were unable to achieve higher marks. Alternatively, some candidates were able to identify meaning easily, but lacked the accurate use of technical language of the conventions of moving image to underpin their analysis. A common problem is candidates merely narrating of what is seen on screen, leading to limited responses such as 'sad' or 'angry' as opposed to any deeper connotations of the micro elements employed.

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 is created coupled with an excellent use of technical terminology. Often candidates were able

to link the technical codes with analysis of attitudes towards women, female oppression, class differences, slavery and dystopian futures.

Common problems in responses were identifying technical codes but not exploring how meaning is created. In these responses, the tendency is towards narrative or descriptive responses, rather than analysis, often making repeated points throughout or reducing their analysis to one word; these candidates were more likely to use terminology inaccurately (for example using the term 'jump cut' or 'switch' when they meant 'cut', or indeed the use of 'flashback'). Some candidates tried to apply theory in their responses (e.g. Male Gaze, Propp, Uses and Gratifications etc.), which was not really necessary, though when used appropriately in this case as a criticism of the objectification of women, or indeed exploring the binary opposites of gender or class, it was deemed to be acceptable in the construction of meaning. Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesised and holistic approach to the analysis of individual scenes, themes or meanings.

It was pleasing to see candidates respond more evenly on all four micro elements and this has clearly been the focus in the teaching of this component.

Section B

General comments

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. Other responses tended towards giving a potted history of the institution or medium, which was unnecessary, given that the focus is on recent and relevant examples. A common problem with **Section B** seems to be the choosing of an independent and a blockbuster product as case studies, whereby candidates have only the information from two case studies from which to shape their answer. Often this was limiting candidates' responses as they did not have enough to write on for the focus of the question, and they wrote everything they knew about these two case studies, rather than address the stem of the question. Candidates could be given more freedom to research each area outlined in the specification and build 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**. Candidates should also consider carefully the question itself; responses which are fully focused on the question and its implications are much more likely to be successful.

Question 2

How significant has the spread of technology in recent years been for audiences? Refer to the media area you have studied.

The best answers were able to provide recent and relevant case study material and argue the impact of the spread of technology on audiences, although many struggled to apply targeted case studies specifically to this question, while others discussed production methods instead of answering the question. Many candidates were limited by responses that discussed older media products (including black and white films) being examples of 'poorer technology' and that digital and CGI products were 'better' experiences for audiences. Some candidates were able to answer on issues of piracy, but often these responses lacked any nuance and tended towards technology being an advantage but piracy was a disadvantage to institutions. Better responses were able to link the proliferation of technology, hardware and software to audience behaviours, rather than just mere consumption, or indeed a generalised personal discussion of mobile phone usage. Games often garnered better responses, looking at DIY bedroom production and prosumerism. Again, candidates were hampered when relying on two centre-led case studies, and at best were merely listing the technology used to make the product and how this leads to a better audience experience. The transformative power of the proliferation of technology, for better or worse, was often ignored.

Question 3

'The production of all media texts is driven by profit.' To what extent do you agree with this?

Candidates who had prepared successfully for this question were able to answer well on a range of artistic, ethical and capitalistic ideas around this topic, but often arguments were condensed merely to conglomerates exist to make profit, whereas independents do not, without any nuance or exceptions. Many candidates struggled to separate the process of production and the final product itself, which limited their ability to form a meaningful response, as they ignored issues of funding, financing, star power and how

artistic vision can come at the expense of profit. It was pleasing to see some very recent examples discussed, particularly the Netflix film *Roma* and the ability of digitally distributed/niche/arthouse films to attain commercial success and global celebration. Many candidates fall into the trap of listing statistics, including profit, without shaping the information towards answering the focus of the question. Some very interesting case studies were offered on hip hop/trap/grime producers attaining commercial success via unconventional means. Very often however, the core focus of the question that all production is driven by profit, was overlooked.



MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/23
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

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MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/03
Advanced Portfolio

Key messages

Successful candidates must:

- complete one of the four set briefs
- keep a detailed blog that documents all of their own research and the production process
- target their research, plan effectively, and make appropriate use of media language and techniques
- systematically reflect on both the process and the outcome
- reflect upon their work in the creative critical reflection.

Each of these elements needs to be completed to a high standard by each candidate. A substantial amount of evidence is needed at each stage of the process in order to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. 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 explaining why the marks have been awarded for each assessment objective.

General comments

Again there were some strong submissions for this component with candidates overwhelmingly completing all the tasks to a satisfactory or good level and an increasing number of candidates producing excellent work in all of the assessment criteria.

It is encouraging to see that a growing number of candidates are presenting a coherent and reflective learning journey with detailed and focused research that studies and evaluates appropriate existing media texts. Increasingly, they use the knowledge gained to carry out and document effective planning and construction of their own products, demonstrating a strong control over both video, print and online production tools.

In the best work learners exhibited a clear understanding, and strongly motivated application, of the relevant media conventions. The most rewarding submissions made innovative use of new technologies in both the planning and production work as well as in the creative critical reflections.

The most limiting aspects for many candidates is still a lack of clear documentation at all stages of the production process, including the learner's own research, as well as a limited use of new technologies and innovative responses to the creative critical reflection questions.

In some cases candidates did not complete all three elements of the set brief or submitted a very limited amount of evidence. To meet the demands of the specification it is important that candidates complete both major and minor tasks, presenting and reflecting of their journey by illustrating the iterations that have led to the final products.

Comments on specific questions

Blogs

The number of centres submitting work on a central porthole or hub is much higher, however many are still not doing so. Centres are reminded that it is an expectation that work is submitted via a single blog hub (an online directory of all the candidates' blog links) allowing moderators easy access to all candidates' work; typing in individual URLs is time consuming and runs the risk of errors. Links must be checked in advance to

ensure that they are working. Centres are once again reminded that **all** elements of the project must be accessible online, either on or linked to the blog; CD's disks, USB's and printouts should not be sent, and will be disregarded by moderators.

The strongest blogs documented the whole project process in detail and showed clear evidence of research in all aspects of the production, clearly illustrating and justifying choices and decisions made – including the ideas at each stage that were rejected. The blog is the key evidence of achievement of the assessment objectives. Effective blogs often used a linear format, organising the blog so that there is a chronological journey presented. Other strong candidates 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 also arranged chronologically. Either way a substantial amount of evidence is needed to meet the demands of the assessment objectives.

It is vital that blogs included a range of materials posted over the duration of the project and illustrating the process of production from research and initial ideas to the final production and creative critical reflection. The blog should show that the products are the result of research and planning. This is in order to demonstrate that candidates' decisions are motivated and that they are in control over the production processes. Candidates must 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. Short blogs did not provide anywhere near enough evidence to justify awarding high marks even if the final products were strong.

The best research demonstrated a range of textual analysis with focused and annotated examples. It is essential that candidates include the exploration of similar products or similar target audiences to those chosen for the learner's production tasks. In the best portfolios, research was revisited at each stage of the production process and in the critical reflection.

Audience research was strongest when learners went beyond quantitative based questionnaires, which were rarely useful in informing choices, and analysed qualitatively how audiences actually engage 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.

Candidates were able to meet the requirements of the upper bands when they explored multiple ideas for their product and then documented the progression and development of those into pre-production documents. There were some excellent examples of planning and development, especially where learners had recorded evidence that enabled 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 or lighting tests, costume fittings and ideas, behind the scenes videos or photos, production vlogs (video logs), 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 always improved when candidates gained feedback on rough cuts early enough in the process to make meaningful changes; in many strong portfolios this was done on a number of occasions for each of the major and minor tasks.

Production work

The most successful production work built on previous experiences and was the end product of iteration and test shooting, rehearsals and detailed planning. Candidates who were awarded high marks also needed to show 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. Candidates should show the choices they have made about equipment they have used as well as casting, settings and locations.

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. If the work has been completed as the project unfolds then many of the assets and materials needed for the critical reflection should be in place; the candidates' task is then to creatively present them innovatively and in a way that enables them to reflect on the choices they made. Successful candidates thus 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 including audio and video. Candidates are expected to use different formats to present each of the four questions. Often strong candidates presented the answer to each question in a number of ways and took the opportunity to explore their broader understanding of media and communication modes.

Strong examples of Level 5 submission included a different creative approach to each set question and in many cases more than one way of presenting each question, examples included:

- Magazine articles with annotated images from the learner's own production work.
- Split-screen video comparison plotting the reference points the existing media texts researched in the planning stage.
- Simulations of TV magazine programmes and talk shows, web or social media content, YouTubers, how to videos, directors' commentaries and pod casts.
- Presentations with side by side analysis of the image, fonts, colours, layout and graphics from the learner's three production tasks, with comparable industry examples.
- Models of the products distribution alongside comparable real world examples.
- Videos demonstrating the changes made to the product after audience feedback.
- Podcast show aimed at film fans that interviews the director and/or other key production staff in which all technologies used were explained for the purpose they served and on the project.
- YouTube how-to video illustrating the key technology.
- Director's commentaries.
- TV and radio talk show interviews.
- DVD extras, SFX guides, director question and answers.
- Advertisements for specific technologies used.
- Technology review shows.
- 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 presentation software. 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 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 confidence as well as their understanding of media theory. The differentiation in marks awarded continues to be overwhelmingly driven by the extent to which learners are able to generate evidence that they have reflected on their own practice and gone back to improve on both their technical ability and their application of relevant media conventions, demonstrating a level of control and understanding of the choices they are making.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/41
Critical Perspectives

Key messages

In **Section A**, candidates should refer to both the Foundation and Advanced Portfolios. Candidates should be prepared to discuss any of the key concepts for 1(b) in **Section A**. Candidates are best served by building case studies using contemporary media texts. Texts which are no longer considered contemporary are unlikely to allow candidates to discuss the relevant and pertinent details required to respond to **Section B** questions. Centres should encourage candidates to complete individual case studies, in addition to any completed as a class. Class-wide case studies tend to prevent candidates from meeting the demands of the mark scheme.

General comments

Most candidates found the paper a reasonably good launchpad for them to reflect upon their own progress both as producers and critics of contemporary media. The best candidates are able to use their knowledge, analytical skills and grasp of relevant theory to structure responses which directly address the demands of the question; the less successful do not seem well enough prepared for the depth and breadth of the paper. Time management was generally good with all sections attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 (a)

In what ways did you use or challenge conventions in your production work?

Students who wrote about how they researched conventions of specific texts in their chosen genre and how they then applied this to their own work were most likely to be successful. A chronological approach works really well here, linking research and planning directly to decisions taken. Less successful responses tended to focus only on their own work, without linking what they had done and why to any existing media texts. Very occasionally, candidates only discussed their work in one of the two coursework components; candidates should be reminded that they must discuss both their Foundation Portfolio and their Advanced Portfolio.

Question 1 (b)

Evaluate one of your productions in relation to the concept of representation.

This question is often the least successful for many candidates. It requires a clear understanding of the key concept, with detail understanding of how this concept is explored in one of their productions. This paper asked candidates to focus on the concept of genre; successful candidates were often able to incorporate ideology from theorists like Neale and Altman in film or Goodwin and Dyer in music video. Documentary genres were discussed in detail by few students.

It should be clear that analysis of media texts happens post- rather than pre-production thus avoiding the trap: *we used x's theory throughout*.

Lengthy narrative accounts of the process of production are unlikely to provide candidates with enough opportunities to access the upper bands, and should be limited to **Question 1(a)** in any event.

Section B

There were a number of occasions where candidates from the same centre all had the same case study. Whilst it might be useful and appropriate to demonstrate and monitor case studies as a whole class exercise in the first instance, generally candidates perform better when allowed a degree of independence in their studies.

The purpose of a case study is to provide candidates with material which exemplifies the relevant features of their chosen topic area – they are a collection of associated texts, linked in some way, which the candidate knows well – including the processes through which the texts were made, how they were intended to be distributed and consumed, and their intended audience. Candidates may have analysed these texts in great detail, applying a variety of media theories if appropriate, and many know much about these texts. However, the **Section B** question requires more than a simple regurgitation of these details. Some candidates this series seemed to offer a premeditated and learned essay, which bore little relevance to the question they had chosen to respond to; this meant that many essays were not able to access the highest level of the mark scheme, which calls for coherent, developed argument which addresses the set question directly.

Candidates are always best served by being prepared for several topic areas, being prepared to be agile and analytical in their response to the question, and able to respond with a process which is question-oriented rather than case-study oriented. Many answers forgot to answer all aspects of the question i.e. ‘producer’ or ‘online’; the best answers always built an argument relating to all markers of the question.

Contemporary media regulation

2 To what extent does media regulation reflect its period?

OR

3 ‘It is impossible to regulate the media effectively.’ Discuss this view.

Candidates frequently presented case studies on regulatory bodies, such as the BBFC, ASA and PEGI, with quite a broad variety in the quality of these responses. Whilst context can prove useful, taking a purely historical approach presents the risk of producing a huge volume of very detailed material (Battleship Potemkin) which ignores 21st Century texts completely.

The BBFC decision to classify Paddington as a PG because of a scene involving a toothbrush being used in the ear was very popular. There were some really successful responses which addressed press freedoms following the Leveson Enquiry, although these were best when all aspects of the question were considered. Candidates should be careful that they don’t introduce misunderstandings or assumptions when making generalised statements. There were some interesting case studies which covered YouTube and other social media, including the controversial influencer Pewdie Pie and moments such as the sharing of footage of the terrorist attack in Christchurch. This may well prove an interesting a fruitful avenue of future study.

Global media

4 ‘The positives of global media outweigh the negatives.’ How far do you agree with this view?

OR

5 To what extent have global media created global culture?

This topic was frequently chosen by candidates. Media conglomerates were frequently considered, with some candidates focusing on Disney and Marvel as institutions who develop global media. Candidates who did well carefully considered the question, using it to frame their response, critically developing their arguments. Weaker answers tended to rely on regurgitating numerous facts about large conglomerates without linking these to the question. Better responses were always supported with well-selected textual references, and considered alternative interpretations applying the prism of cultural imperialism, hegemony and reception theory when exploring the question in detail.

Media and collective identity

6 ‘People don’t want positive or negative representations of themselves – they want complexity.’ How far do you agree with this statement?

OR

7 In what ways are representations of specific social groups resistant to change?

Youth and gender (sometimes combined) were the most popular topics with ethnicity not far behind. Successful candidates referred to a wide range of contemporary texts and the work of theorists such as Gauntlett, Cohen, Hebdige and Naomi Wolf. These were successfully applied by some students to texts including Black Mirror, Vogue (under new editor Edward Enninful) and My Brother the Devil. Long essays on

representation of Arabs in Hollywood tended to rely on rather generalised opinions rather than using textual evidence to support the claims being made, which was a pity as this is definitely an area with potential for interesting responses. There was some very good work featured the potential of Youtubers as agents of self-representation for youth and sexuality and it was pleasing to see candidates engage with these debates in thoughtful and sometimes personal ways.

Candidates who performed well in this topic present their arguments with passion and engagement with the subject matter. One area of representation which was especially well-covered was that of LGBT+, with some candidates providing well-developed arguments which were able to critique texts from a variety of considered angles rather than focusing on a binary position of negative or positive, or strong or weak. The best responses demonstrated complexity and nuance, and were able to unpick the examples they had provided in a greater depth than most, building an argument using examples from several industries.

Media in the online age

8 To what extent have online media revolutionised traditional media?

OR

9 'We are all producers in the online age.' Assess the evidence to support this statement.

This topic featured a wide range in the quality of responses. Some of the better answers explored contemporary media informed by the latest thinking, contextualising it in terms of wider cultural debates around censorship, audience and industries. However, some candidates rarely went further than discussing their own experience of watching *Netflix*, or listening to *Spotify*. While these are good starting points the specification requires subject specific knowledge to enable such reflections to move beyond simple common sense observations such as *people used to go to the cinema/buy CDs shops but now they go online*.

The most accomplished work set up sophisticated arguments around the competing ideas presented by Morozov/Leadbetter/Pariser/Boyd/Jenkins among many others. These were connected with suitable case studies of the industry; the genesis of the Old Town Road's success via social media was a particularly enlightening read, encompassing crowdsourcing as a means of funding production, the music industry and remix culture. Strong responses were always well-supported with textual references from these case studies, used deftly to define a position or challenge a preconception.

Wonder Woman was used as evidence that many audiences still embrace the cinema going experience as well as accessing movies in other ways, although the level of detail on the filming of it was less obviously relevant. Candidates should be reminded that a compact answer which engages with the question and is supported with appropriate and relevant examples can often have more impact than a lengthy response which does neither of these. Weaker arguments favoured assertions – e.g. cinema is dying – over readily available empirical evidence to the contrary.

Postmodern media

10 'Everything is playful in the postmodern text.' Discuss this view.

OR

11 What, for you, is the most useful way of understanding postmodern media?

The responses to this topic were generally strong, which was hugely encouraging. The choice of texts here was very enlightening and a wide range were addressed, although *Bandersnatch/Black Mirror* in general were quite rightly too good to ignore. One approach which worked well was to outline a theorist's work then apply it to appropriate texts, such as *Blade Runner 2049/Deadpool*, Zoella, Pewdiepie.

Centres are reminded that any theory presented in of itself is not credit-worthy. Media theory should be used as a jump-off point, allowing candidates to apply, analyse and engage with the reading of any text through it. It is worth stating, however, that offering a critique of the theory through engagement with texts can prove just as fruitful as accepting the theory without questioning it. It is also worth reminding centres that there is no requirement to use media theory or theorists in this paper; candidates who struggle to remember or apply a theory would be better served analysing and focusing on the question.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/42
Critical Perspectives

Key messages

In **Section A**, candidates should refer to both the Foundation and Advanced Portfolios. Candidates should be prepared to discuss any of the key concepts for 1(b) in **Section A**. Candidates are best served by building case studies using contemporary media texts. Texts which are no longer considered contemporary are unlikely to allow candidates to discuss the relevant and pertinent details required to respond to **Section B** questions. Centres should encourage candidates to complete individual case studies, in addition to any completed as a class. Class-wide case studies tend to prevent candidates from meeting the demands of the mark scheme.

General comments

Most candidates found the paper a reasonably good launchpad for them to reflect upon their own progress both as producers and critics of contemporary media. The best candidates are able to use their knowledge, analytical skills and grasp of relevant theory to structure responses which directly address the demands of the question; the less successful do not seem well enough prepared for the depth and breadth of the paper. Time management was generally good with all sections attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1 (a)

To what extent did your research and planning help you to be more creative?

Students who wrote about how they researched conventions of specific texts in their chosen genre and how they then applied this to their own work were most likely to be successful. A chronological approach works really well here, linking research and planning directly to decisions taken. Less successful responses tended to focus only on their own work, without linking what they had done and why to any existing media texts. Very occasionally, candidates only discussed their work in one of the two coursework components; candidates should be reminded that they must discuss both their Foundation Portfolio and their Advanced Portfolio.

Question 1 (b)

Evaluate one of your productions in relation to the concept of genre.

This question is often the least successful for many candidates. It requires a clear understanding of the key concept, with detail understanding of how this concept is explored in one of their productions. This paper asked candidates to focus on the concept of genre; successful candidates were often able to incorporate ideology from theorists like Neale and Altman in film or Goodwin and Dyer in music video. Documentary genres were discussed in detail by few students.

It should be clear that analysis of media texts happens post- rather than pre-production thus avoiding the trap: *we used x's theory throughout*.

Lengthy narrative accounts of the process of production are unlikely to provide candidates with enough opportunities to access the upper bands, and should be limited to **Question 1(a)** in any event.

Section B

There were a number of occasions where candidates from the same centre all had the same case study. Whilst it might be useful and appropriate to demonstrate and monitor case studies as a whole class exercise in the first instance, generally candidates perform better when allowed a degree of independence in their studies.

The purpose of a case study is to provide candidates with material which exemplifies the relevant features of their chosen topic area – they are a collection of associated texts, linked in some way, which the candidate knows well – including the processes through which the texts were made, how they were intended to be distributed and consumed, and their intended audience. Candidates may have analysed these texts in great detail, applying a variety of media theories if appropriate, and many know much about these texts. However, the **Section B** question requires more than a simple regurgitation of these details. Some candidates this series seemed to offer a premeditated and learned essay, which bore little relevance to the question they had chosen to respond to; this meant that many essays were not able to access the highest level of the mark scheme, which calls for coherent, developed argument which addresses the set question directly.

Candidates are always best served by being prepared for several topic areas, being prepared to be agile and analytical in their response to the question, and able to respond with a process which is question-oriented rather than case-study oriented. Many answers forgot to answer all aspects of the question i.e. ‘producer’ or ‘online’; the best answers always built an argument relating to all markers of the question.

Contemporary media regulation

2 Critically assess the arguments for and against greater regulation of the media.

OR

3 How far do wider social issues impact upon media regulation?

Candidates frequently presented case studies on regulatory bodies, such as the BBFC, ASA and PEGI, with quite a broad variety in the quality of these responses. Whilst context can prove useful, taking a purely historical approach presents the risk of producing a huge volume of very detailed material (Battleship Potemkin) which ignores 21st Century texts completely.

The BBFC decision to classify Paddington as a PG because of a scene involving a toothbrush being used in the ear was very popular. There were some really successful responses which addressed press freedoms following the Leveson Enquiry, although these were best when all aspects of the question were considered. Candidates should be careful that they don’t introduce misunderstandings or assumptions when making generalised statements. There were some interesting case studies which covered YouTube and other social media, including the controversial influencer Pewdie Pie and moments such as the sharing of footage of the terrorist attack in Christchurch. This may well prove an interesting a fruitful avenue of future study.

Global media

4 Critically analyse the ways in which institutions have developed global media.

OR

5 What kinds of media audience behaviours are global?

This topic was frequently chosen by candidates. Media conglomerates were frequently considered, with some candidates focusing on Disney and Marvel as institutions who develop global media. Candidates who did well carefully considered the question, using it to frame their response, critically developing their arguments. Weaker answers tended to rely on regurgitating numerous facts about large conglomerates without linking these to the question. Better responses were always supported with well-selected textual references, and considered alternative interpretations applying the prism of cultural imperialism, hegemony and reception theory when exploring the question in detail.

Media and collective identity

6 To what extent is human identity ‘mediated’?

OR

7 Assess the implications of different media representations.

Youth and gender (sometimes combined) were the most popular topics with ethnicity not far behind. Successful candidates referred to a wide range of contemporary texts and the work of theorists such as Gauntlett, Cohen, Hebdige and Naomi Wolf. These were successfully applied by some students to texts including Black Mirror, Vogue (under new editor Edward Enninful) and My Brother the Devil. Long essays on representation of Arabs in Hollywood tended to rely on rather generalised opinions rather than using textual

evidence to support the claims being made, which was a pity as this is definitely an area with potential for interesting responses. There was some very good work featured the potential of Youtubers as agents of self-representation for youth and sexuality and it was pleasing to see candidates engage with these debates in thoughtful and sometimes personal ways.

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Media in the online age

8 To what extent has convergence transformed the media?

OR

9 Evaluate the relationship between online media and democracy.

This topic featured a wide range in the quality of responses. Some of the better answers explored contemporary media informed by the latest thinking, contextualising it in terms of wider cultural debates around censorship, audience and industries. However, some candidates rarely went further than discussing their own experience of watching *Netflix*, or listening to *Spotify*. While these are good starting points the specification requires subject specific knowledge to enable such reflections to move beyond simple common sense observations such as *people used to go to the cinema/buy CDs shops but now they go online*.

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Postmodern media

10 Why might some media be described as 'postmodern'?

OR

11 How far do postmodern media challenge the relationship between text and audience?

The responses to this topic were generally strong, which was hugely encouraging. The choice of texts here was very enlightening and a wide range were addressed, although *Bandersnatch/Black Mirror* in general were quite rightly too good to ignore. One approach which worked well was to outline a theorist's work then apply it to appropriate texts, such as *Blade Runner 2049/Deadpool, Zoella, Pewdiepie*.

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