

GCE AS Examiners' Report

Media Studies
AS
Summer 2025

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Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
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Contents

	Page
Executive summary	5
Component 1: Investigating the Media	6
Component 2: Investigating Media Forms and Products	14
Component 3: Media Production	18
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	21

Executive Summary

In Component 1, centres and candidates showed clear improvement in responding to feedback, especially in Section A. Candidates demonstrated a solid grasp of the set products and a sound understanding of the theoretical framework. Their responses reflected an awareness of the paper's varied demands, with Media Language and extended Representation questions being particularly well handled. This suggests thorough preparation and effective teaching strategies.

Most candidates attempted all questions, and incomplete scripts were rare, indicating good exam technique and time management. However, the advertisement question proved challenging for some, particularly in analysing audience engagement. This points to a need for deeper understanding of campaign advertisements and more analytical reference to the set Super.Human advert. Centres are encouraged to focus on developing candidates' ability to interpret and critique advertising texts with greater precision and insight.

In Component 2, candidates generally displayed competent knowledge of the set products and theoretical concepts. Stronger responses combined subject knowledge with detailed analysis, contextual awareness, and confident theoretical application. However, a recurring issue was the misinterpretation of command words, especially among lower-performing candidates. Many responses lacked analytical depth and were overly descriptive, particularly in Section C. While some candidates showed general awareness of key ideas, they struggled to apply them critically, resulting in underdeveloped answers.

Popular choices remained consistent, with *Peaky Blinders* and *Vogue* dominating Sections A and B. Encouragingly, more centres selected KSI/JJ Olatunji in Section C, suggesting growing confidence in newer set products. Responses to *Black Mirror* and *Vogue* were particularly strong, often supported by well-chosen textual references and theoretical perspectives. However, concerns persist around candidates' textual knowledge, especially in Section C, where some showed limited engagement with specific examples. Centres are reminded to emphasise close textual study, including homepage layout, online content, and interactive features like hyperlinks and participatory elements.

Most centres submitted complete productions for Component 3 that aligned with the briefs, with a clear preference for print-based options—especially magazine and film marketing briefs. While few centres offered a wide range of briefs, most favoured one or two, and assessment across briefs was generally consistent. Candidates responded positively to the tasks, producing work that demonstrated their understanding of media forms and genre conventions within the theoretical framework.

It was evident that most centres had set appropriate tasks that allowed candidates to meet the brief requirements and develop their work independently. The quality of submissions reflected thoughtful planning and a good grasp of production techniques. However, the dominance of print-based briefs suggests a need to encourage broader engagement with other formats to diversify candidate experience and skill sets.

Centres are advised to consult exemplar work available on the WJEC secure site to better understand the standards expected for Component 3. This can help ensure that future submissions continue to meet assessment criteria and reflect a wide range of media production skills.

MEDIA STUDIES
GCE Advanced Subsidiary
Summer 2025
COMPONENT 1: INVESTIGATING THE MEDIA

Overview of the Component

As with the previous summer series, it was encouraging to see how centres and candidates had responded to feedback, particularly in Section A. Overall, candidates displayed a solid grasp of the set products and demonstrated a sound understanding of the theoretical framework. Their responses reflected a clear awareness of the different requirements across the paper. In particular, the Media Language and extended Representation responses were well handled, suggesting thorough preparation for this component.

Most candidates attempted all questions, and incomplete scripts were rare.

However, the advertisement response posed challenges for some, especially in terms of addressing of audiences. This highlights a need for further development in candidates' understanding of campaign advertisements, with more explicit and analytical reference to the set *Super.Human* advert.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.10 Explore how visual elements create meaning in this music video extract.

Assessment Objectives:

AO2 1: Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts and through the use of academic theories

The unseen product selected for this question was an extract from the music video *Unhealthy* by Anne Marie featuring Shania Twain (2023). This proved to be a highly accessible text for the majority of candidates, particularly those who had thoroughly prepared through their study of music videos. It was encouraging to see candidates across the ability range engage with the extract in detail through various media terminology and contexts. There was no expectation for candidates to have prior knowledge of the Western genre to access the range of marks available to them. Candidates achieving higher bands responded directly to the question, offering an insightful analysis of a range of visual elements used to create meaning, including:

- mise-en-scene elements including colour, settings, clothing, character expression /movement and props
- mode of address
- shot type, angles and movement
- lighting techniques
- appropriate visual editing techniques

Candidates achieving marks in the higher bands demonstrated a confident and articulate analysis of the visual elements employed by the producers, effectively linking these to the music video extract's intended purpose. Their responses were well structured, consistently focused on the question, and explored both music video techniques and the use of Western iconography to engage the target audience. Candidates awarded in the higher bands demonstrated a strong command of media language and a clear grasp of how meaning is constructed. The unseen product prompted insightful and detailed interpretations, particularly around themes of female empowerment and the subversion of traditional patriarchal ideologies. These candidates showcased a secure understanding of the theoretical framework, frequently referencing relevant theories such as Stuart Hall's theory of stereotyping. More advanced answers incorporated excellent semiotic analysis and/or binary oppositions to deepen their critique, an approach that is strongly encouraged. There was also thoughtful engagement with the representation of 'reality' in the text, notably recognising Shania Twain's recurring portrayal in isolation as a significant stylistic and thematic device.

Candidates in the middle of the mark range typically identified visual element techniques and their associated connotations but their analysis often lacked detail or remained focused on more obvious aspects of visual techniques, such as clothing and colour. They tended to overlook the wider variety of visual strategies available for exploration. As a result, they produced a reasonable and/or straightforward analysis of the music video extract that tended not to cover a broad range of points. It is important to note that without engaging with a broader range of visual elements, candidates are unlikely to access the higher bands. While some candidates did address themes such as female empowerment, this focus on representation often came at the expense of analysing visual element techniques, leading them away from the specific demands of the question, losing marks.

As the unseen text is always drawn from one of the forms studied for Section A, candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework in relation to the selected form. Encouragingly, very few candidates were awarded in the lower bands, with the majority offering focused responses that appeared to reflect the guidance provided in the previous summer series. Those who were awarded in the lower bands often misapplied theory such as inserting Stuart Hall's Reception theory inappropriately or over-elaborating Todorov's Narrative theory or gender representation theory, neglecting the visual elements used to create meaning and the intended purpose of the music video. Some candidates analysed sound and editing techniques that detracted from the question. A small number of responses were overtly descriptive with only basic application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework to analyse the product. In such cases, the limited and undeveloped understanding made it difficult to award higher than Band 2.

Q.20 Compare the choices the newspapers have made in their representation of events.

In your answer you must consider:

- the similarities and differences in the representations
- how far the representations relate to relevant media contexts.

Assessment Objectives:

AO2 1 and 2:

Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to:

- analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts and through the use of academic theories
- make judgements and draw conclusions.

This is an extended response question where candidates are assessed on the quality of their written response including the ability to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured.

In this response the bullet points were included to help the candidates structure their answer and to guide them in what to include. Both bullet points must be covered but not in the same amount of detail. Stronger responses were able to address the focus of the question and to analyse both products making relevant comparisons. It was essential in this response that candidates demonstrated effective essay writing skills and could employ subject specific terminology.

The unseen product selected for this question was the of the front page of the *Daily Express* newspaper (25 October 2022) published the day the Conservative party elected Rishi Sunak as Prime Minister. The question invited a variety of representation explorations which candidates effectively did, including insightful reference to events and relatable issues.

Candidates attaining marks in the higher bands demonstrated a confident and effective application of the theoretical framework. These candidates engaged with more detailed aspects of representation and demonstrated clear awareness of selection and combination, particularly in relation to relevant contexts such as news values and political bias often linked to the political stance of the newspapers. There were frequent and detailed references to visual elements, newspaper conventions and language devices across both texts resulting in some exceptionally detailed analyses shaped by contemporary contexts. Many candidates had clearly engaged deeply with the set *Daily Mirror* front page as evidenced by their impressive analytical and contextual insights.

The application of media theory was consistently strong with relevant references to theorists such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. Higher band candidates explored both products in detail, drawing on visual, technical and written elements of media language to highlight key similarities and differences. Comparative analysis was essential at this level and those achieving higher marks successfully demonstrated this skill. It was especially encouraging to see candidates engaging thoughtfully with ideology and the complex aspects of representation in an informed way. These responses were categorised by perceptive and informed judgements and conclusions about relevant media contexts underpinned by precise textual evidence. Candidates awarded in the higher bands showed a strong grasp of the 'how far...' aspect of the question, critically examining the extent to which representations reflected relevant media contexts. Their responses were notable for their clarity of argument, perceptive judgements, and a sophisticated understanding of how events are constructed within the zeitgeist.

Responses in the middle band tended to concentrate on more straightforward or obvious aspects of representation. For instance, many focused on the contrast between positive and negative portrayals, or the depiction of 'hero' versus 'villain' in the newspapers being compared. Some of these responses leaned more heavily on analysing one product over the other. References to context were generally straightforward and/or satisfactory and sometimes lacked detail.

Very few candidates were underprepared for this response. However, responses placed in the lower bands tended to simply describe the key features of the two products with limited, undeveloped or absent judgements and conclusions related to contexts. A common issue among lower band responses was an imbalance in contextual comparison. Candidates frequently engaged more with the set *Daily Mirror* newspaper, offering little to no contextual analysis of *The Daily Express*. This limited engagement weakened the comparative element required by the question. Additionally, the choice of theoretical perspective is crucial. It must be valid, relevant, and clearly support the candidate's analysis. Some responses overemphasised Stuart Hall's Reception theory, which, while relevant, detracted from the core requirement of analytical comparison between the texts. Several candidates also focused extensively on the double-page spread of the set newspaper, which could not be credited, as it was not required by the question. Furthermore, some responses quoted directly from the newspapers without analysing the language features (written elements), thereby limiting the analytical value of their arguments. Finally, while only a small number of candidates made this error, it is important to note that responses cannot be awarded above Band 2 if they only engage with one of the texts, regardless of whether aspects of the response meet upper band criteria.

Q.30 Assessment Objectives

Q.31 AO1 1a

- Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media.

Q.32 AO1 1a and 1b

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media.

Q.33 AO1 2a and 2b:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.

Q31: Name the conglomerate that owns Marvel Studios.

Responses mostly focused on The Walt Disney Company or 'Disney' which was credible. The few candidates who were not awarded marks had not addressed it at all.

Q32: Briefly explain **two** advantages of producing a film in a conglomerate organisation.

Overall, most candidates successfully offered two valid advantages and explanations allowing them to access the full range of marks. Some candidates offered holistic explanations, which would also allow for this. Popular responses included, 'Conglomerates will have a presold fanbase to minimise risk, 'Conglomerates offer quality assurance widening audience appeal and the potential to make sizeable box office profit, 'Conglomerates have the ability to use vertical integration allowing opportunities to use synergy with their subsidiaries' and 'Conglomerates are likely to lead mainstream films to have high budgets and so can afford A-list actors and cost effective advertising/marketing, maximising profit potential and minimising risk'. The explanations were often linked to examples from *Black Panther*. Many candidates supported their response with appropriate application of theory from Curran and Seaton and David Hesmondhalgh. However, the theory was not essential to achieve the high bands, particularly as David Hesmondhalgh is on the A-level specification. Some candidates identified advantages of producing a film under a conglomerate organisation but did not fully explain them or lacked clarity and therefore did not fully answer the question. There were a few candidates that repeated their first advantage and so could not access the full marks.

Q33: Explain the significance of economic factors to film distribution. Refer to *Black Panther* to support your points.

In this question, candidates were rewarded for drawing together knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study, including different areas of the theoretical framework and media contexts. Some candidates struggled with this question, largely because they were either too general with their reference to *Black Panther* or offered limited reference to economic factors to aid their response.

Candidates in the higher bands tended to lead with economic factors related to the film industry and were aware of their significance to film distribution. They would then effectively offer detailed examples from *Black Panther* to support their points. Stronger responses referred to the box office growth of the film and its success as a standalone superhero film within a franchise. There was pleasing engagement with examples of the film's marketing/exposure such as its 360 campaign and use of synergetic practice to reach marginalised audiences and to maximise the film's profit. Candidates in the high bands offered specific and accurate reference to the financial figures related to the film, including its budget and total global box office gross which effectively contributed towards the answer.

Candidates in the middle band tended to have an imbalanced response. They offered satisfactory economic factors and some (but not always) appropriate reference to examples from *Black Panther's* distribution. Some candidates in this band tended to have more focus on one over the other (i.e. high band context but appropriate/limited low band reference to the film) hence lacked in development. Middle band responses would at times offer appropriate reference to the film's marketing such as the 'Welcome to Wakanda' catwalk show at New York Fashion Week or the Superbowl 'Long Live the King' Lexus trailer, but in such cases didn't develop in enough detail to meet the higher bands.

Many candidates in the lower bands tended to offer limited reference to the significance of economic factors to the distribution of *Black Panther*. Some candidates in the lower bands tended to write an audience response with little industry focus. There were several notable inaccuracies regarding figures related to the film's distribution, including the erroneous claim that Disney contributed '£1 million' towards the film's marketing campaign.

Unlike the last summer series, there was satisfying industry theory and theoretical perspectives applied to support responses. This included appropriate application of Curran and Seaton's Power and Media Industries theory, where candidates referred to The Walt Disney Companies' operation for profit and power and how the film's distribution celebrated diversity, challenging the notion that the film industry is dominated by a small number of media institutions limiting creativity and variety. Weaker responses tended to mention these theorists without using them to further their exploration of the film industry. Lower band responses tended to be quite brief which limited exploration, suggesting time efficiency in the exam needed to be worked on.

Q.40

41: Identify **two** ways advertisers reach audiences.

Assessment Objectives:

AO1 1a: Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media

Similar to Q32, this question elicited a wide range of responses. Many candidates successfully identified effective ways advertisers reach audiences, including targeted advertising strategies such as synergy, collaboration, and product placement. Other commonly cited and valid approaches included personalisation, the use of individualised or aspirational narratives, a focus on audience values, emotive language and imagery, unique selling points, and specific advertising formats such as television and radio.

However, some responses were too general or lacked specificity, with vague references such as 'advertisements', 'magazines', 'online', or 'cinemas', which could not be awarded credit. Likewise, simply stating 'demographics' or 'psychographics' without further explanation was insufficient and not considered credible. A number of responses also lacked clarity or coherence, with phrases like 'having characters walk around', 'traditional', 'speak to the audience', or 'through the message they are trying to portray' failing to demonstrate a clear understanding and therefore not meeting the criteria for credit.

- 42: Explain how producers of advertisements address audiences. Refer to the *Super. Human* to support your points.

Assessment Objectives:

AO1 1a and b: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media

This question required the candidates to refer to the set *Super. Human* and explore how producers of advertisements address audiences. Responses varied, with some candidates demonstrating confusion between the concepts of audience addressing with targeting, an area that would benefit from further clarification and consolidation. Whilst analysis was not required in this response, some candidates referred to athletes and their disabilities in overtly generalised ways, rather than identifying them by name. Doing so may have enhanced the specificity and depth of their responses.

Candidates in the higher bands demonstrated a confident and insightful exploration of how the producers of the *Super. Human* advertisement addressed their audience, showcasing excellent, detailed, and accurate knowledge and understanding. Their responses often included excellent and detailed references to the set product, particularly in relation to the relatability of the advertisement and the representation of identity through specific Paralympians (celebrity endorsement). They thoughtfully examined the positive representations of marginalised groups and their personal stories within the advertisement, which was likely to be familiar to the audience. There was strong and relevant application of audience theory, with many candidates drawing on Stuart Hall's Reception theory, specifically focusing on the dominant or hegemonic reading intended by the producers. While not explicitly required by the specification, some candidates went further by incorporating A-level concepts such as David Gauntlett's Identity theory and Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory, applying them in appropriate and meaningful ways.

Some candidates were overtly analytical at the expense of exploring the way audiences were addressed by the producers and generally would have been awarded in the lower bands. There was also some confusion between Channel 4 and the BBC.

Some responses in the lower bands were largely descriptive and demonstrated limited reference to the set advertisement. These basic responses often referenced the product's addressing of audiences through their interest in sport, but provided only superficial evidence, for example, merely noting that the advertisement features '... a lot of swimming and running'. Additionally, some candidates attempted to reference Stuart Hall's Reception theory but did so without meaningful application, often misusing terms such as 'negotiated' or 'oppositional' readings, which led to a loss of focus on how audiences are addressed. A few responses also misapplied or overextended Clay Shirky's End of Audience theory, inaccurately describing audiences as 'passive' rather than active, which reflects a misunderstanding of the theory's core ideas.

While many responses were notably longer than in previous years, indicating thorough preparation for both the question and the paper overall, there were also numerous incomplete answers. This suggests that some students struggled with time management, often prioritising Section A at the expense of Section B.

Summary of key points

- Centres should prepare candidates so that they are able to answer questions from across the full range of specification content. Candidates should be able to engage with questions that test all bullet points outlined in the specification knowledge grids.
- When theory is used in a response, it should be relevant, applied effectively and should be a helpful tool for analysis or discussion of the set products. Candidates are not credited for downloading theory, trying to 'shoehorn' irrelevant theory into a response or simply naming theorists, often in brackets.
- Candidates must study media contexts and their influence on media products and processes, and they need to be able to analyse set products in relation to their contexts. They should consider leading with the contexts to strengthen their focus particularly with the Section B extended response. As per previous summer series, more preparation is needed in this area.
- Candidates should ensure they have a clear understanding of audience concepts referred to in the specification, including how audiences are addressed by producers, not just targeted, and to distinguish between these concepts.
- Time management is crucial, allocate sufficient time to all sections of the paper to avoid incomplete answers particularly in Section B.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCE Advanced Subsidiary

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 2: INVESTIGATING MEDIA FORMS AND PRODUCTS

Overview of the Component

Candidates generally demonstrated a competent level of knowledge and understanding across the assessment, particularly in relation to the set products and the relevant elements of the theoretical framework. In many cases, candidates were able to engage with key concepts and apply them appropriately to the products they had studied. The most successful responses were those that combined accurate subject knowledge with thoughtful and detailed analysis, secure contextual awareness, and a confident application of theoretical ideas. These responses often reflected an ability to interpret the demands of the question effectively and to structure responses coherently, resulting in strong and insightful arguments.

However, it remains a matter of concern that previously issued feedback regarding the interpretation of command words has not been fully addressed by all centres. A significant proportion of candidates—particularly those performing in the lower bands—appeared to struggle with identifying and responding to the specific requirements of the questions. This issue was most evident in responses that were overly descriptive or lacked analytical depth, and which failed to sustain a focused engagement with the set task. In Section C especially, many candidates demonstrated a general awareness of key concepts but were unable to apply them in a structured and critically evaluative manner, resulting in underdeveloped responses that did not fully meet the assessment criteria.

As in previous assessment cycles, *Peaky Blinders* remained the most widely selected set product in Section A, with *Vogue* continuing to be the most popular choice for Section B. It was encouraging to note that the number of centres selecting KSI/JJ Olatunji in Section C has increased significantly, with uptake now approaching that of Zoe Sugg. This diversification of choice indicates growing confidence in the delivery of newer or previously underutilised set products. Overall, performance was strongest in Section C, where a considerable number of candidates engaged confidently with the online media products, offering detailed and perceptive analysis. Responses to Question 20 (*Black Mirror*) and Question 60 (*Vogue*) were particularly strong, frequently supported by well-chosen textual references and appropriate theoretical perspectives.

Nonetheless, there are continuing concerns regarding candidates' textual knowledge and their ability to reference specific details from the set products. This was particularly noticeable in Section C, where some candidates demonstrated only a limited engagement with actual examples from the online media texts they had studied. Centres are reminded of the importance of close textual study and are encouraged to ensure that learners are thoroughly familiar with the formal codes and conventions of homepage layout and design, examples of online content, and interactive features, including hyperlinks and participatory elements. A consistent emphasis on these areas will not only strengthen responses but will also help ensure that candidates are equipped to meet the analytical demands of the questions more effectively.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Questions 10, 20, and 30

Explain how production processes influence the success of television programmes. Refer to *Peaky Blinders*/*Black Mirror*/*Killing Eve* in your response.

AO1 1a and 1b: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media.

This question was generally well answered, as most candidates were able to successfully demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the production processes in relation to the set product they had studied. High-level responses demonstrated a clear understanding of production processes and media industries, offering precise explanations of how production decisions contributed to their set product's overall success. Candidates in the higher bands frequently referenced the pre-production, production, and post-production processes in detail, including aspects such as genre, representations, narrative, and distribution. Although not formally required, some candidates also integrated relevant theoretical perspectives effectively, such as Curran and Seaton. There was some effective discussion of the way in which *Peaky Blinders* combines the conventions of a gangster show or crime drama with those of a western or period drama, and of the way in which the 'San Junipero' episode of *Black Mirror* combines the conventions of sci-fi with those of the romance and coming-of-age genres. Some candidates demonstrated a detailed understanding of the influence of explicitly named production processes, such as the creative freedom of the collaborative production—e.g. Caryn Mandabach Productions, Tiger Aspect, and the Yorkshire Screen Fund for *Peaky Blinders*—and the reputational influence of the BBC. Some candidates considered the impact of casting choices on the global success of the set products they had studied. Less successful responses often failed to explain how production processes influenced the success of the set product studied. Responses in the lower bands tended to be more descriptive, listing production stages without linking them to success or engaging fully with the "how" element of the question.

Questions 40, 50, and 60

To what extent do audience responses to magazines change over time?
Refer to the set edition of *Woman*/*Woman's Realm*/*Vogue* magazine in your response.

AO2 1 and 2

Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to: analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts and using academic theories, and make judgements and draw conclusions

This question was answered with varying degrees of success, with candidates able to successfully apply their knowledge and understanding of the historical context of the set products they had studied to their analysis of the media language used within the magazine. However, responses that also offered judgements and drew conclusions were less frequent. The best responses were analytical, well-structured, and rooted in the theoretical framework. Responses in the higher bands readily engaged in discussion driven by analysis and explored in detail how and why audience responses changed over time. These candidates made references to audience demographics (e.g. those relating to gender, age, social class/socio-economic status, ethnicity, nationality, etc.) and to changing values and attitudes in society, supporting their arguments with detailed and specific textual evidence. Although not a requirement, responses in the higher bands often made specific reference to theories of representation and audience, such as Hall or Gerbner. In contrast, lower-level responses often focused too narrowly on historical context or deconstructed media language in isolation, with examples and arguments largely undeveloped. Some candidates failed to respond to the evaluative dimension of the question and did not offer judgements or conclusions.

Questions 72 and 82

Explore how online media producers construct representations of themselves. Refer to JJ Olatunji KSI/Zoe Sugg in your response.

AO2 1 Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts.

Successful responses to this question demonstrated a confident and precise application of the theoretical framework, underpinned by close and well-selected textual references to the set products studied. Candidates in the higher bands engaged thoughtfully with representations of identity—such as gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, nationality, and social class—and considered how these identities are constructed and communicated through online media. Many candidates effectively examined the creation of an online persona, recognising that these personas evolve in response to shifting audience expectations and social attitudes. In particular, stronger responses identified how a maturing audience led to more nuanced and socially aware forms of self-representation over time. There was some insightful analysis of KSI's early YouTube content, especially vlogs centred around humorous interactions and sibling banter, which many candidates identified as central to his initial appeal through traits such as authenticity, relatability, and unfiltered language. These were often contrasted with more recent content, in which candidates noted a conscious shift in tone, values, and sensitivity to issues such as political correctness, branding, and public image. Similarly, responses in the highest band provided detailed comparative analysis of early Zoella (Zoe Sugg) vlogs—characterised by light-hearted, personal content aimed at a younger female audience—and her more recent output, reflecting both the changing nature of her audience and the pressures of maintaining a consistent yet evolving online identity. Many candidates explored how Zoe Sugg's online persona is constructed to appear authentic, approachable, and aspirational, embodying the "girl-next-door" archetype. Her relatable personality, combined with her informal delivery and domestic setting, was often highlighted as key to her success in building a loyal, predominantly female fanbase. Likewise, candidates discussed the way in which KSI/Olatunji is positioned as a role model, particularly in later content, where his achievements in music and boxing are presented alongside personal growth, offering aspirational value to viewers. Zoella, too, was frequently analysed as a role model figure, with her advice and lifestyle content interpreted as comforting and familiar, often functioning in the parasocial role of an older sister or trusted friend. In contrast, responses in the lower bands tended to lack specific textual reference and analytical precision. These responses were more likely to describe general features of the online content or focus too narrowly on identity categories without fully exploring how they were constructed or received. As a result, they often failed to address the complexity of the question or to engage with the deeper analytical and evaluative elements expected at this level.

Summary

In summary, while there were many examples of insightful, articulate, and well-structured responses—particularly from candidates performing in the higher bands—there remain several key areas that require more focused and consistent attention. Centres are strongly encouraged to ensure that candidates are thoroughly trained in interpreting and responding appropriately to command words, such as “analyse,” “evaluate,” and “explore.”

A significant number of responses, particularly in the lower and middle bands, lacked clarity in their understanding of the question’s demands, which limited the depth and effectiveness of their analysis. Candidates should be consistently supported in developing analytical and evaluative arguments that are well-structured, logically developed, and closely tied to the specific demands of each question. Additionally, responses must refer consistently and specifically to the set products in order to demonstrate a secure understanding and meet the requirements of the assessment objectives.

A recurring issue observed was the tendency for some candidates to introduce media theory unnecessarily or inappropriately—particularly in AO1 questions, where reference to theory is not required. In many such cases, theoretical content was included inaccurately or irrelevantly, which weakened rather than strengthened the response. Centres should remind candidates that theory should only be applied where it serves a clear purpose—namely, where it enhances the clarity, depth, or precision of their analysis or evaluation. When theory is used appropriately and concisely to support an argument, it can significantly enrich a response. However, when it is applied without clear relevance, it often leads to confusion, repetition, or superficial commentary. Therefore, careful judgement is needed when integrating theoretical perspectives, and candidates should be encouraged to prioritise close textual reference and contextual understanding over name-dropping theorists.

Continued emphasis on embedding theoretical knowledge meaningfully and applying it within a well-developed analytical framework will be essential if more candidates are to access the higher bands in future assessment cycles. Centres should aim to build learners’ confidence in selecting appropriate examples, structuring arguments effectively, and focusing sharply on the question set, thereby raising overall levels of performance across all bands.

MEDIA STUDIES
GCE Advanced Subsidiary

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 3: MEDIA PRODUCTION

Overview of the Component

Most centres and candidates submitted full productions as detailed in the briefs and work reflected the range of briefs, however, tended to favour and focus on the print-based options. By far the most popular briefs were the print-based options especially the magazine and film marketing briefs. Few centres offered a range of briefs with most centres favouring one, possibly two at most. Mostly, there was parity in the assessment across the briefs. Candidates responded positively to the briefs and were able to produce work that demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of media forms and genre conventions framed by theoretical framework. It was clear that most centres had set appropriate tasks in order for candidates to meet the requirements of the brief and the need for the assessment to be independently developed and produced. All centres are advised to access exemplar work on the WJEC secure site to ascertain the standards for Component 3.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Administration

The administrative procedures prescribed by WJEC are designed to facilitate an effective moderation process and ensure that candidates' work is viewed and moderated appropriately. Most centres adhered to these procedures and uploaded work in advance or on the deadline, using appropriate file formats. Once again it is important to point out to centres that it is crucial that productions, such as DVD covers or double page spreads, are uploaded as one accurately sized document, rather than the back, front and spine or each page being submitted as separate documents. This enables the moderators to see the artefacts to the candidates' best advantage. Files which ask the moderator to pay for the privilege of opening them remain inappropriate.

Coversheets

Most of the coversheets were completed appropriately, including signatures of candidates and teachers and dates to authenticate the work. Most candidates identified research undertaken to inform their production and link to the brief. Most candidates completed the Statement of Aims and Intentions in Section B of the coversheet as required. It is essential candidates include a word count on this sheet and adhere to the word limit of 350 words. A large number of candidates significantly exceeded the word limit and in such cases, teachers should cease assessment of the statement once the upper threshold has been reached and the allocation of marks should reflect this. That said, assessors should not be overly harsh on candidates who fail to meet the word count – automatically awarding zero marks is not appropriate.

Assessment Objectives:

AO3: Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

Candidates must respond to the set brief for the year of assessment. Briefs are released annually, on 1st September in the year prior to assessment. Most candidates met the requirements of their chosen brief and were able to apply suitable knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework to their production work. In a few cases

candidates did deviate from the specific stipulations of their brief with regards to industry or audience. This should be reflected in the assessment of the work.

Most candidates adhered to the more detailed requirements of the brief in terms of length and features. However, centres should be reminded that simply meeting the requirements of the brief is not enough to place the work into the higher bands for Column 2. The first bullet point of column two of the marking grid does require a consideration of how conventions are used relevant to the chosen form, genre and industry context of the set brief. In some cases, this was not considered and consequentially, some candidates were over-rewarded for meeting the requirements of the brief. The production should adhere to the codes and conventions of the chosen form and be recognisable as such. It was particularly noticeable in the magazine brief that adequate research was not always undertaken. Some candidates' magazine productions did not feature consistent use of fonts, columns, and colour to demonstrate the brand identity of the product, and in some cases were lacking industry features such as price and barcode and page numbers. The film marketing production brief saw some productions missing institutional information on the DVD cover or appropriate age rating certification, billing blocks, the correct number of thumbnails or guidance that conventionally and industry standards would expect to see.

Statement of Aims and Intentions

It is essential that candidates have undertaken appropriate research into similar media products before writing the Statement of Aims and Intentions. Candidates should reference their research to explain how they will apply this knowledge and understanding to the creation of their own productions. There was much less evidence of formulaic Statements of Aims and Intentions this year and fewer instances of theorists being namedropped without understanding. Research into similar products remains essential and should enable candidates to explain the decision-making process when putting the productions together.

Production

Most candidates followed print briefs (magazine or film marketing), with a small number following the music marketing online brief. A variety of genres were produced and a majority of these were assessed appropriately. Most centres applied the assessment criteria accurately across all briefs and candidates' work which ensured fairness of the assessment process.

Brief 1: Television

No candidates from the samples completed this brief.

Brief 2: Magazines

Most submissions for this brief were print based this year, with few candidates or centres attempting to create an online website for a magazine.

A range of genres were engaged with, and it was mostly evident that candidates had researched their genre and developed their knowledge and understanding of the conventions of magazines and the genre. There was evidence, however, of candidates and centres not engaging or fully understanding the appropriate codes and conventions of magazines. It was again evident this year that some magazines did not follow a conventional layout in terms of use of columns for the double page spread or front pages, and where key information such as page numbers, barcodes, prices were not included. A number of candidates either wrote articles right into the middle of the page where the staples would be or across the whole page which breaks conventions. Key elements of the brief such as a pull quote were often omitted and not commented upon by assessors.

Brief 3: Film Marketing

A number of candidates completed the film marketing campaign, and only a few of these completed the online option. Responses for both options commonly demonstrated appropriate genre signifiers and understanding of conventions by candidates.

Some candidates did not conform to recognised elements of DVD/BluRay covers such as the layout, use of thumbnails, blurbs or age ratings. It should be noted DVD or BluRay covers should be uploaded to the correct scale / size and as one document rather than separate documents for the spine, front and the back. Not all the online offerings had the requisite 250 words on the webpage or the full 45 seconds of audio-visual material related to the topic. Some candidates went well above the 45 seconds of audio-visual and this should be considered in the assessment.

Brief 4: Music Marketing

A small number of candidates submitted music videos but there were no music marketing websites in the sample. The music videos were generally of a high standard although not all reached the 3 minutes and 30 seconds requirement, and this should have been noted in the assessment and marked suitably as this is self-penalising. Centres are reminded that music videos should not be made for songs which already have official videos.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4308

Email: media@eduqas.co.uk

Qualification webpage: <https://www.eduqas.co.uk/ed/qualifications/media-studies-asa-level>

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