

GCSE Examiners' Report

Media Studies
GCSE
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
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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.

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Executive Summary

The 2025 Component 1 examination was positively received, with strong engagement across both sections. Centres had clearly prepared candidates well, particularly for Section A, where application of AO2 skills in analysing set products was a notable strength. The chosen products, such as the Quality Street advertisement and Fortnite, were accessible and stimulated confident responses across the ability range. Representation of ethnicity was generally well handled, though some candidates lacked confidence in discussing white/Caucasian ethnicity, often defaulting to gender or religion instead. In Section B, centres are reminded that the film set product should be taught strictly in relation to media industries. Compared to 2024, there was a marked improvement in AO1 skills, especially in understanding how audiences engage with video games, indicating better grasp of the theoretical framework.

Component 2 was also well received, with all questions accessible to a wide range of candidates. The television extracts in Question 1 allowed for strong AO2 responses, and the new 2025 music videos were particularly effective for exploring representation in Question 3. Candidates demonstrated confident use of the theoretical framework, including Propp's character functions, Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications, and feminist theories. However, in Question 1b, some candidates struggled to analyse characters through genre conventions, instead focusing on stereotypes. Centres are encouraged to provide practice in both Media Language and Representation to ensure readiness for varied question demands. Crime drama was better understood than sitcom, with some candidates lacking the tools to analyse comedic character types effectively. Centres are advised to use Eduqas resources to strengthen sitcom knowledge. In Question 2, while references to contemporary television products were often helpful, some candidates focused too heavily on them, neglecting the historical set products like *The Sweeney* or *Friends*. Over 7% of candidates did not attempt this question, highlighting the need for better contextual knowledge. Centres should introduce key contexts early and link them to Media Language, Representation, Industry, and Audience to support deeper analysis.

Component 3 showed strong engagement across all brief options, with print briefs remaining the most popular. Most centres adhered to the 2025 briefs, though a few submitted work that responded to previous years' briefs. The component assesses candidates' ability to apply theoretical knowledge from Components 1 and 2 through their production work and statement of aims. Centres varied in approach, with some offering one brief and others offering multiple; both are acceptable, provided assessment parity is maintained. The magazine brief was especially popular, with many candidates drawing on personal interests like sports. The film marketing brief also saw high uptake, particularly in the horror genre. Regardless of the brief, candidates must conduct thorough independent research into genre conventions and plan their production carefully. Centres are encouraged to guide students through this process and ensure formal articulation of their ideas in the statement of aims. To ensure alignment with Eduqas standards, all centres should consult exemplar work on the WJEC Secure site before commencing internal assessment.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE

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Component 1: Exploring the Media

Overview of the Component

The 2025 examination of Component 1 was well received by the cohort and there was strong engagement with both sections. Centres had prepared candidates well for Section A in particular, with strong application of AO2 skills in the study of the set products chosen for examination.

The demands of the specification provided challenge for all levels of candidates and the products examined provided an adequate level of expectation and variety. It was clear that centres had prepared candidates well to respond to questions referring to the Quality Street advertisement and Fortnite, which was engaged with confidently across all levels of the cohort. It is encouraged, for Section B, to focus on teaching and learning of film and centres are reminded that the set product for film is taught in relation to media industries only.

Analysis of the representation of ethnicity was approached particularly well by a large quantity of the cohort; however, centres are encouraged to build confidence in learners to manage discussion of white/Caucasian ethnicity. Where there was a lack of confidence, candidates overly focused on gender without appropriately linking it to ethnicity, or religion was referred to in place of ethnicity.

In comparison to the 2024 season, it was felt that AO1 skills linked to the theoretical framework of audience has improved significantly, with strength shown in how candidates are able to identify and discuss how audiences engage and interact with video games.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Media Language and Representation

Q.1 Explore how the print advertisement for Quality Street uses media language to communicate meanings:

- (a) Layout and design**
- (b) Images**

AO2 1a

Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media

The best responses for both Questions 1(a) and (b) were able to link the meaning of the advert to the social hierarchy in the 1950's and further discussions for (b) used the regency era knowledge to show a strong understanding of the set product.

For Question 1(a) candidates were expected to draw on elements of layout and design such as placement of image to text, the colours, fonts and how the eye of the audience is drawn across the product. Discussion was related to, for example, rule of thirds, scale and sizing, Z-layout and geometry, and terminology was used with a range of success. Answers that identified these features and then discussed connotations of the meaning for the brand or the audience were highly rewarded.

For Question 1(a) there were some candidates who provided too much focus on images and written language which were not being assessed in this question, and centres are encouraged to provide clear opportunities for candidates to understand the differences between these elements and layout and design. Where discussions of these items were linked to the placement on the design, some reward was given, but it will have restricted candidates reaching the very top bands.

For Question 1(b) the very best candidates were able to discuss the imagery of the central characters, the two in the frame, the larger sweets and the meaning behind these in relation to the audience or the brand. Discussions of patriarchy, euphemistic elements and brand mascots were handled well with subject specific terminology being applied well.

For Question 1(b) the very top responses understood that Quality Street were connoting luxury in a post-ration period, however, there was occasional confusion over the target consumer being the upper class. Where narrative was discussed, there were successful applications of Propp's theory, intertextuality and Barthes semiology, however this was not a necessity to reach the top bands.

Similarly to previous series, there were still a number of candidates who relabelled the questions, which provides a level of challenge when marking their papers. Candidates are encouraged to read all the questions in advance before starting the paper, so they understand what each question is asking of them. Centres should be engaging in effective teaching of this strategy.

Q.2 (a) Explain how social and cultural contexts influence magazines. Refer to the Vogue magazine front cover to support your points.

AO1 2a and 2b

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

There were a small number of candidates who provided a full and detailed textual analysis for Question 2 (a) and who wrote about how Malala Yousafzai was being represented based on the colour scheme and masthead without links to context. Regular practice of a context-based question is encouraged in centres to minimise this for further series.

The best responses for Question 2 (a) used the wording in the question as a steer to discuss their responses and anchored their understanding of context on how the magazine industry was influenced by this. Discussions of the coverlines in relation to the date of publishing were seen in the very top responses as they were able to make links to COVID and articles under the curation of the then editor Edward Eninnful.

Responses that provided a history of Malala Yousafzai and her experience without linking this to why she is appearing as the featured cover star were unable to reach the top bands as there was a lack understanding shown about the relationship between this context and choices being made by the magazine.

Social and Cultural contexts provided a rich opportunity for candidates to discuss a range of elements on the cover, including Yousafzai and the coverlines, and the very large majority of candidates could do this well; suggesting that teaching of this part of the specification continues to improve.

(b) Compare the representation of ethnicity in the Vogue and Grazia front covers.

AO2 1a and 1b

Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media to make judgements and draw conclusions.

Question 2 (b) was engaged with well, to varying levels of effect, and the unseen product provided not only a necessary level of challenge but also an opportunity for candidates to analyse the representation of white/Caucasian ethnicity. There were a range of interesting and valid points made in discussions of 'western' beauty standards linked to ethnicity and perceived beauty standards across each issue. The very best responses used the bullet points set out in the question to structure their response with a clear progression into conclusions and judgements. There was excellent demonstration of analysis of all aspects of the covers including the coverlines, with insightful readings of how producers are making key choices about the cover models used on their issues.

It was concerning that some candidates referred to the *Grazia* issue as having 'no ethnicity' and it is key that centres ensure effective teaching and learning strategies around delivering this key concept of representation in the future. Candidates need to have confidence in using appropriate terminology when referring to ethnicity, culture, dress and traditions. Where candidates leaned more into gender representations, they were able to reach the lower bands, as discussion of ethnicity was lacking.

The use of Alvarado had a mixed outcome across responses and centres should use caution when exploring such academic level theorists for GCSE as ineffective application in responses can limit the eventual outcomes for the learners.

It was felt this year that the skills of conclusion and judgement have dropped slightly after a noticed improvement in the 2024 paper. Explicit consideration of and reference to the 'choices the producers have made', as stated in the bullet points, may support improvement of this for future series.

Section B: Exploring Media Industries and Audience

Q.1 (a) Name the organisation that regulates film in the UK.

AO1 1a

Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media

There was a considerable number of candidates who did not attempt this question or who offered answers that were not relevant. Centres are reminded of the necessity of teaching about regulatory bodies, as detailed in the Eduqas GCSE Media Studies specification. The correct answer of BBFC or its fully written out name were both accepted answers.

(b) Briefly explain the advantages of vertical integration for the film industry.

AO1 1a and 1b

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media

Question 3 (b) was found to be a challenging question for a large majority of the cohort with a large number of candidates not attempting to respond to this question. The very best responses clearly understood what the term vertical integration meant and were able to articulate this through clear examples that were beneficial for the industry. In the lower bands, where a candidate was able to identify an advantage, such as increased profit, or wider global audience, were rewarded even if they had not shown full understanding of the term.

Centres are encouraged to ensure the teaching of industry terms in relation to film is not focused on just the set product. The set products should be used to help deepen the understanding; this question did not ask for reference to *No Time To Die* so candidates were able to use examples such as Disney or Universal. Some candidates confused vertical integration with convergence, synergy or referred to it as a mechanism on the camera.

The most successful candidates were able to identify that vertical integration was a process where all the stages of production and distribution were within the same conglomerate and further exemplify the benefits this gave.

(c) Explain how the film industry uses convergence to promote films. Refer to the 007 website to support your points.

AO1 1a and 1b

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media

Question 3 (c) required candidates to discuss how convergence was used in promotion, with the 007.com website as an example to help demonstrate this understanding. The best candidates understood that as Film can only be studied through the theoretical framework of Industry and therefore focused on the promotional tools available for an organisation using cross-convergence platforms and technology.

Candidates within the lower bands relied on audience to try and explore this topic, and some candidates used Uses and Gratifications to structure their response; this is not an area that should be studied in relation to this set product. There were a small number of responses that also provided a deconstruction of the *No Time To Die* poster, and this had no direct link to convergence or the website.

The best responses discussed the website as a convergent tool that provided opportunities to continue the promotion of the film, even outside of contemporary releases. Discussions of social media, archives of information, experiences and news were just a few strong examples of these promotional tools. Candidates were regularly referring to synergistic relationships between the brand's link to the James Bond franchise and how the website was being used as a hub for this information.

Q.1 (a) Identify two different audiences for the game Fortnite.

AO1 1a

Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media

Question 4 (a) was an extremely well received and was answered by the majority of the cohort. Candidates who used demographic features to add detail to their two answers, such as age range, helped secure the marks. Candidates who put teenagers/young adults as two separate answers were only awarded one mark as there was no clarity on the differentiation between these two audiences.

(b) Briefly explain how video games target audiences through marketing. Refer to Fortnite to support your points.

AO1 1a and 1b

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media

Question 4 (b) was also extremely well received, and there was a clear understanding about how *Fortnite* drew in their audience through a range of techniques such as synergy, collaborations, social media and the bright colour schemes. Examples of collaborations ranged from Marvel, Sabrina Carpenter and DC Comics right through to the regularly mentioned Travis Scott.

At the lower end of the cohort some candidates were able to describe some features of the game but were unable to make links to how these were elements of marketing or how they targeted the audience. There was no requirement to use the response to 4 (a) in this answer; those who did were not disadvantaged.

- (c) Explain how audiences interact with video games. Refer to the Uses and Gratifications theory and Fortnite to support your points.**

AO1 1a and 1b

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media

It is clear through the assessment of Question 4 (c) that *Fortnite* and Uses and Gratifications are still being taught extremely well. The additional steer of 'interactivity' within the question was handled confidently across all abilities this year and there was a strong grasp of the functions of the game supporting this relationship between user and product. The very best responses used examples from brand collaborations to exemplify their understanding of the theory and the game.

There were some responses, lower down the bands, that had strong knowledge of the game and its features but did not include or apply Uses and Gratifications. There were also examples of Bartle's theory being used as a replacement in this answer, and this was not helpful to support the learners reaching the upper bands. A less frequent response in this series were those that felt formulaic, where candidates attempted to write 4 paragraphs about each of the gratifications, but failed to appropriately use interactivity or clear game features to demonstrate its correct application. However, it is encouraging to note that most centres are moving away from this strategy and supporting learners in engaging with the specifics of each question.

Question 4 (c) is the synoptic question on the paper, but during this series there was very little evidence of this being explored. At the very top end there were some discussions of representations being seen in the customisable skins of the avatars and some references to enhancements in technology being key to interactivity. Responses that did explore the wider theoretical framework were rewarded accordingly.

MEDIA STUDIES

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Component 2: Understanding Media Forms and Products

Overview of the Component

Component 2 was generally very well received this year and all questions proved accessible to the full range of ability. The television extracts chosen for Question 1 offered candidates plenty of opportunity to demonstrate their skills in analysing Media Language to meet the demands of AO2 and it was particularly pleasing to see the high level of engagement with the new set music videos for 2025, which proved rich texts for exploring Representations in Question 3. Another strength across the paper was the confident application of the theoretical framework, including a largely secure use of Propp's character functions, Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications and a range of feminist perspectives.

In response to Question 1b, some candidates were less confident exploring characters in relation to their genre and instead took a Representation approach, focusing on stereotypes rather than archetypes. To ensure they are fully prepared to meet the demands of the question paper, centres should provide candidates with opportunities to practise responding to AO2 questions with both a Media Language and Representation focus, as candidates may be required to engage with *either* of these areas of the Theoretical Framework in relation to their Television or Music set products. Overall, candidates had a better understanding of crime drama than sitcom, which sometimes meant that their ability to explore how character types were used for comedic purposes in the sitcom genre was limited. Some candidates studying sitcom would benefit from a more secure understanding of character types in the genre to provide them with the tools to make judgements and conclusions about their set product, and centres are advised to refer to the Set Product Fact Sheets and Blended Learning Resources on sitcoms available on Eduqas Digital Resources to support candidates' learning in this area.

Many responses to Question 2 referred briefly to aspects of the contemporary television product and these references were usually helpful when offered to make a point about the historical product, *The Sweeney* or *Friends*. However, some candidates' marks were limited by their use of the contemporary product as their primary focus, highlighting the importance of meeting the specific requirements of the question and using the set product listed main source of reference. It was also concerning that over 7% of candidates failed to attempt Question 2, highlighting the need for centres to ensure their candidates have accurate knowledge of the contexts for their set historical products. It is good practice to use key contextual in the question as the knowledge as an introduction to each set product, before zooming in on aspects of Media Language, Representation, Industry and Audiences, so candidates have the knowledge required to make links between aspects of the set products and their contexts.

Finally, there was a notable improvement in candidates' use of the set music websites this year, with the majority able to make reference to some aspects of Taylor Swift or Lizzo's website to show at least satisfactory understanding of Audiences and meet the requirements of AO1. However, to enable their candidates to reach the higher bands, centres are advised to encourage use of more detailed reference to specific aspects of the websites and application of more subject specific terminology to discuss aspects of online media. The Eduqas Blended Learning activities on the set music artists' websites and social media are recommended as a useful guide for the level of detailed reference required when responding to questions on online media.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) Explore how camerawork creates meaning in this extract.

AO2 1a

Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media.

This question was assessing the ability to analyse the use of camerawork in the extract from the set television product (*Luther*, *Man Like Mobeen* or *Modern Family*) and proved accessible to the full ability range. Overall, candidates responded confidently to this question, and it was pleasing to see how well centres had prepared for this extract-based question, indicative in the well-chosen examples from the set extracts and the candidates' use of a range of appropriate subject-specific terminology to identify and explore technical codes in audio-visual media products.

The three extracts gave plenty of opportunity for candidates to discuss various forms of camera work, most focusing on shot types including close ups, medium shots and long shots, as well as high/low angle shots which featured frequently in *Luther* responses. The majority of responses explored two or three different camera shots from the extract, but a few candidates took 'camerawork' more generally and explored how the camera was used to focus on certain characters (such as Luther, Mobeen or Alex) more to show their importance, and this was an acceptable approach when linked to specific moments in the extract. Less frequently, but usually very effectively, responses explored camera movement and editing, including the tracking shot following Luther to the crime scene to show his role as protagonist and the time lapse editing used in both sitcom extracts.

More successful responses accurately identified specific aspects of camerawork and suggested particular functions associated with characters, genre or narrative, for example, to construct the character roles in *Modern Family* and *Man Like Mobeen*, where power dynamics were frequently analysed. More successful *Luther* responses often explored in detail the use of two shots or angled shots to indicate Luther's relationships with Rose Teller or Justin Ripley. The sense of actuality constructed through documentary style camerawork was frequently the focus of the more successful responses on both sitcoms, including the mockumentary style used for the confessional sofa scenes in *Modern Family* and the unstable camera and partially obscured shots in *Man Like Mobeen*. The relationship between camerawork and audiences also featured in more detail in higher band responses, for example, the long shot of Alice as victim demanding sympathy from the audience or the slow pan from behind the supermarket shelf creating a slow reveal of Mobeen inviting curiosity. Appropriate use of subject-specific terminology was another strength, many candidates employing key words from the Eduqas GCSE Media Studies Glossary such as connotation, narrative, realism, genre and enigma codes.

Many less successful candidates were still able to suggest basic functions of shot types, such as close ups to show characters' emotions or long shots to introduce settings, but these tended to be quite generalised in their focus and lacking specific examples from the set extract, preventing access to the higher bands. The key determiner between the higher and lower band responses for Question 1a continues to be the quality and consistency of the analysis. Higher band responses were analytical throughout whereas lower band responses were more descriptive and generalised when discussing examples from the extract.

(b) How typical of the genre are the characters in this extract?

AO2 1a and 1b

Analyse media products using the theoretical framework to make judgements and draw conclusions.

This year Question 1b had a Media Language focus and responses were expected to make judgements and conclusions about how typical the characters were in relation to their genre, based on their analysis of specific examples from the set extract. The question was more demanding than Question 1a, assessing two different strands of AO2, but overall, it was generally handled well by candidates across the mark bands, with most being able to respond by exploring their set extract in its generic context to at least a satisfactory level. However, some candidates were less confident exploring characters in relation to their genre and instead took a representation approach, producing answers more relevant to last year's 'how stereotypical' question by referring to 'stereotypes' instead of character types and exploring how typical the characters were for their gender, age or ethnicity.

It was pleasing to see how many responses answered the 'how typical' aspect of the question and it is clear again that many centres have prepared their candidates well to respond to this type of question. There was a good balance between characters being deemed typical and atypical, the best responses often exploring characters such as Luther, Teller, Phil or Claire from both perspectives. Popular judgements on *Luther* included Luther as a typical maverick detective but an atypical black protagonist, Ripley as the typical sidekick and Alice as victim or damsel in distress, with some using their understanding of how Alice's role becomes more complex as the narrative progresses by making appropriate reference to her later role as villain. Mobeen was often explored as a mother figure and atypical protagonist, with Eight and Nate as archetypal sidekicks providing comedic situations. The most popular examples for *Modern Family* were Alex as 'geek', Hayley as 'popular' or 'mean girl' and Phil as a less typical sitcom father figure.

Propp's narrative theory proved useful to candidates across the mark range in this question and it was excellent to see the confident application of this area of the theoretical framework for Media Language. It featured most frequently in responses on *Luther*, where it was used to make links between characters in the extract and their narrative roles such as hero, helper, dispatcher and damsel in distress.

The more successful candidates had a good understanding of generic character types and in the higher bands, there was some excellent, detailed analysis of a wide variety of elements of media language to support judgements about genre typicality. It was particularly pleasing to see that dialogue was often used as a prompt for discussions on characters from all three extracts, reflecting good practice in analysing the significance of audio codes in the television products.

Responses in the lower bands were still usually able to make some basic judgements and conclusions about typicality of characters, such as Alex as a typical nerd or Luther as a typical detective. These responses, however, took a more descriptive approach to exploring the characters and often lacked analysis of specific details from the extract to support their judgements. Some candidates also lapsed too much into discussing the whole episode and so lacked the focus on the extract required to achieve the higher bands.

Some responses which took a representation approach still reached the higher bands by linking the representation of social groups to genre typicality, for example, Claire in *Modern Family* being a boss at work challenging gender stereotypes, which is arguably less typical for the sitcom genre. Many who focused on Representation, however, did not make judgements about genre typicality at all, concluding, for example, that Luke was a typical teenager because of his laziness. This highlights the importance of not only selecting appropriate examples from set extract but also using them in a relevant way to respond to the specific question set.

Q.1 How do crime dramas or sitcoms reflect their historical contexts?

AO1 2a and 2b

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

The focus for Question 2 this year was Media Contexts and the question was assessing AO1, so required demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the historical contexts aspect of theoretical framework. Reference to the set historical television product was also an important requirement of this question, and the quality of the links between the knowledge of historical contexts – 1970s or 1990s - and specific aspects of the historical set product - *The Sweeney* or *Friends* - was a key determiner between higher and lower band responses. While most candidates made at least some reference to their historical set product, a significant number of responses were not able to do this, instead using their contemporary television product to answer the question, highlighting the importance of ensuring that candidates are fully prepared to answer questions on all of their set products, both historical and contemporary.

This question elicited a wide range of approaches on both historical products. Many focused on representations of gender and ethnicity and how their television product reflected the attitudes and values of the time, some took a props and settings approach, and a few explained how aspects of production, distribution or consumption were indicative of the time in which their product was made. Responses on *The Sweeney* mainly focused on gender roles in 1970s society and how characters such as Regan and Jenny reflected these norms. The female police constable having a caring role was often highlighted, and higher band responses showed knowledge of 1970s as a patriarchal society. Key points anticipated in the Indicative Content also appeared frequently, such as the police corruption investigated in the Flying Squad and the production values afforded by the use of 16mm film. For *Friends*, representations of gender (mainly through Joey's character) and the heteronormative attitude of the show were most commonly highlighted to explain how the characters reflected 1990s attitudes and values, while some responses in the lower bands tended to describe the characters and settings with limited knowledge of 90s society.

Many responses referred briefly to the contemporary television product in addition to their historical product and this approach was successful where a reference was used to make a point of comparison with the historical product, to show understanding of how genre development is influenced by contexts. However, some candidates used reference to their contemporary product as the main focus of their response so did not reach the requirements of the middle band, as links to the historical set product were 'undeveloped'. A few referred only to the contemporary product, and, while they could demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the influence of contexts, the responses lacked 'relevance' and 'satisfactory links' to set historical product so were unable to achieve above Band 2.

The most successful responses used detailed and accurate knowledge of specific aspects of 1970s or 1990s society and culture to demonstrate understanding of the impact of contexts on the set products, explaining how contexts can have an effect on: casting; representation of social groups, issues and places; patterns of distribution and consumption and audience responses. Responses in the higher bands also made appropriate links between specific aspects of the set product and their contexts throughout their response.

Less successful approaches were usually characterised by either a limited or inaccurate knowledge of the relevant historical contexts or a lack of detailed knowledge of the set product, with a tendency towards describing the characters and settings rather than explaining how they reflected the time in which the product was produced. Some showed a lack of understanding of what is meant by historical contexts, suggesting that this continues to be a more challenging area of the theoretical framework for some candidates to grasp. Surprisingly, many candidates lacked the basic knowledge that *The Sweeney* is a 1970s show which highlights the need for accurate knowledge to access the higher bands.

Q.1 How far do music videos represent social issues?

AO2 1a and 1b

Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media, including in relation to their contexts, to make judgements and draw conclusions.

The focus for the extended response this series was Representation and it was excellent to see how well candidates across the mark range engaged with this question, indicating how thoroughly they had been prepared by centres to demonstrate understanding of the representations in their set music videos, which all proved rich texts for exploring social issues. Candidates were usually able to select appropriate examples from their set music videos and use their analysis of them to make at least some relevant points about issues raised in their videos. Analysis skills were also generally well developed with a good range of subject specific terminology confidently employed.

Links to relevant contexts was a notable strength this year, the social issues focus of the question inviting candidates across the ability range to discuss how the representations in their chosen videos had been influenced by events and movements in society. Popular contexts included patriarchal society, body shaming culture, #blacklivesmatter, #metoo and references to the music artists' own beliefs, values and social media presence.

Another very encouraging trend for this exam series was the increasingly confident way in which candidates developed the sustained line of reasoning which is a requirement to reach the higher bands on this extended response question. Most responses demonstrated at least a satisfactory ability to engage with the 'how far' requirement, with the majority concluding that their music videos represent social issues to a large extent and supporting this by exploring how the representations of issues were constructed.

As suggested in the Indicative Content, most responses explored issues of inequality, discrimination, empowerment and diversity related to representations of ethnicity and gender. Other issues frequently explored included the importance of education, body confidence, homelessness and domestic violence. The new set products for 2025 proved popular, with *Superheroes* and *The Man* as the most popular combination and significantly fewer responses on *Good as Hell* and *Intentions* than last year. Responses on *The Man* tended to be the most confident, generally showing a secure understanding of the representations in the video through analysis of The Man's action codes in the subway, park and yacht scenes, and making a range of excellent contextual links including references to Scooter Braun and Leonardo DiCaprio. *Superheroes* also allowed candidates to make some highly appropriate links to contexts, many using their knowledge of the George Floyd, Chadwick Boseman, Malorie Blackman's novel and Marcus Rashford's social activism to show excellent understanding of the influence of contexts on the issues of racial inequality and Black empowerment in the video. *Intentions* and *Good as Hell* often elicited some quite descriptive approaches on the predicaments of the female protagonists, while stronger responses on these videos explored the connotations of colour palette, costume choices, action codes or camerawork to support their judgements more convincingly, and used their knowledge of Southern University, Alexandria House and Lizzo or Bieber's personal journeys to make contextual links.

The use of theoretical perspectives was generally well-chosen and applied this year, including some excellent understanding of Mulvey and Van Zoonen's feminist approaches to explore *The Man* and both Alvarado and Gilroy proving useful tools to some candidates to make judgements about the representation of ethnicity in *Superheroes*, *Intentions* and *Good as Hell*. Overall, there tended to be fewer references to named theorists this year but a generally stronger application of the theoretical framework, reflecting the good practice in centres of focusing on the theoretical framework for GCSE.

More successful responses impressively demonstrated a high level of theoretical understanding and explored the connotations of a range of visual, technical and audio codes to support their judgements about the representation of issues, reflecting how well centres are equipping candidates with the tools of textual analysis. Use of highly appropriate terminology also featured more frequently in higher band responses, for example, more successful candidates used a range of accurate terminology to discuss the issues raised in *The Man*, including misogyny, patriarchal culture and toxic masculinity. Some candidates challenged the idea that the videos represent social issues, arguing that the videos/artists were concerned less with representing issues and more with promoting their star persona or brand. These often reached the higher bands by first exploring the social issues represented then arguing, for example, that Bieber's *Intentions* was also used as a commodity to promote his brand and represent himself as a hero or white saviour. A few candidates also argued that Swift's video was less about social issues and more about promoting her Netflix documentary and point-scoring against Braun and Borchetta through the references on the subway wall. These were typically excellent responses which engaged with representation on a more complex level, constructing the sustained line of reasoning indicative of responses in the highest band.

In the middle and lower bands, most responses were usually able to explore more obvious aspects of representation but were often lacking a clear focus on specific social issues, instead focusing more generally on stereotypes of gender and ethnicity. Some candidates had relied on discussions of representations of ethnicity or gender more appropriate to previous exam papers, highlighting the importance of responding to the specific question set. Less successful responses were also more descriptive, with a tendency to explain the action that takes place in the music video products rather than demonstrating analytical skills. For example, some responses on *Intentions* spent too long telling the stories of the three female protagonists, in contrast to more successful responses which engaged with issues of domestic violence, homelessness and education, supporting their judgements with detailed examples such as the repeated use of locations and iconography associated with studying representing the importance of education or the low angle group shot of the young women at the end of the video representing female unity and empowerment.

Q.1 Explain how users interact with music websites.

AO1 1a and 1b

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media.

The final question on the paper was assessing AO1 so was looking for demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework, and this year's question, with an Audience focus, proved highly accessible to the full ability range. On average, candidates performed significantly better on this question than on Question 2, and it was also excellent this year to see a high attempt rate this question, indicating that they had been well prepared to manage their time in the examination. The vast majority of candidates were able to identify a number of ways in which audiences use websites on at least a basic level, and the key determiners between the lower and higher bands tended to be how specific and well-chosen the references to the set product were and how far the candidates could show their understanding of ways in which audiences could interact with the website (and the artist) beyond simply buying merchandise, finding tour dates and watching videos.

Audiences were 'users' in this question so many responses across the bands applied some or all of the strands of the Uses and Gratifications theory to their chosen website. As indicated in the Mark Scheme, this was not required to reach the higher bands, but was a popular approach and helped many candidates structure their response and show understanding of the different ways in which audiences interact with websites. There were some interesting discussions of Swift's Eras and how the subsections for the music and merchandise for each era created user interaction through personal identity, and Lizzo's links to her social media sites were often used to show understanding of how her fans interact with both the artist and the Lizzo fan community. While most candidates produced a relevant response on Audiences, some took an Industry approach, focusing on how artists made money or reached global audiences, reflecting a need for candidates to be prepared to focus on the question set rather than a previous year's question.

In more successful responses, candidates used more complex aspects of audiences, including fandom, parasocial relationships and star theory, to demonstrate a higher level of understanding of how audiences interact with websites to form relationships with the artists or as part of fan communities. Responses reached the higher bands by showing their understanding of audience interaction through their very well-chosen references to specific aspects of the set product, whereas in the lower bands the references were still largely relevant but more generalised. Responses benefitted where candidates were able to explain why elements of websites were particularly interactive as opposed to traditionally consumed media, such as the opportunities afforded by convergent links to the artist's social media where fans could interact, or the choices audiences could make about how to listen to music in different formats, from streaming sites, digital downloads or purchasing vinyl records.

Finally, while most candidates made at least some reference to their chosen set product, there were a few responses which took a very generalised approach to music websites and made no reference at all to the *Lizzo* or *Taylor Swift* website. The second part of the question made clear the requirement for reference to the set product, so centres are advised to make sure candidates practise using specific examples from different pages of the chosen website as a vehicle for their demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2025

Component 3: Creating Media Products

Overview of the Component

AO3 (30%): Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

There was evidence of engagement across all of the brief options from centres this year, although the print briefs still remain the most popular. The majority of centres responded appropriately to the set briefs for assessment in 2025 although there were some instances of the briefs being misinterpreted and a small number of centres completed the wrong briefs, submitting work in line with briefs from a previous series.

The focus of the component is the application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework which is embedded during the study of set texts in Component 1 and Component 2. Candidates are assessed on the strength of their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework and how meaning can be created through their statement of aims and their productions.

Centres took different approaches to the component with some centres offering only one brief option whilst others gave candidates a choice of briefs/genres, both of which are acceptable approaches. Where there is more than one brief option being offered to candidates, centres must ensure that there is parity of assessment across the different briefs.

The magazine option was very popular this year and there was a wide variety of sports magazines which gave candidates an opportunity to use their hobbies as inspiration for their productions. The film marketing brief was also very popular, and the horror genre proved to be a popular choice.

Centres are reminded that whatever the chosen brief, candidates must be guided to engage in thorough independent research to enable candidates to understand the typical codes and conventions of the form and chosen genre. After the research is completed, planning must be conducted to ensure the candidates have a solid production concept before moving on to their statement of aims where they will express their plans in a more formal manner.

All centres are advised to access exemplar work on the WJEC Secure site to ascertain the standards for Component 3 before assessing the work in their own centres to ensure that assessment is in line with national standards.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

BRIEF 1: Television/Online

Either:

- a. **Create a key sequence from the first episode of a new television series in the sci-fi or sitcom genre. Your production must target an audience of 16–24-year-olds. Length: 2 minutes - 2 minutes 30 seconds.**

Or:

- b. **Create a functioning website, including a homepage and one other linked page with embedded audio/audio-visual material, for a new television series in the sci-fi or sitcom genre.**

The production must target an audience of 16–24-year-olds.

There were a number of centres who offered this brief and there were some examples of excellent knowledge and understanding of the conventional form of demonstrated. The sci-fi option was the most popular and there were some highly creative and engaging interpretations of the brief. The conventions were often edited thoughtfully to create a successful and exciting key sequences that were engaging and suitably appealing to the target audience. The most successful candidates had adhered to the requirements of the set brief and incorporated a range of shots to establish representations of characters and the genre. Successful candidates constructed clear character roles and carefully controlled the various aspects of media language such as costumes, settings and props to anchor the sci-fi genre, engage the audience and create a clear narrative.

A number of centres offered the website option, some candidates were successful in being able to construct clear narrative and genre whilst conforming to the conventions of websites for television series.

BRIEF 2: Magazines/Online

Either:

- a. **Create a front cover, contents page and a single-page article for a new sport or fashion magazine. Your production must target an audience of 16–24-year-olds**

Or:

- b. **Create a functioning website, including a homepage and one other linked page with embedded audio/audio-visual material, for a new sport or fashion magazine.**

The production must target an audience of 16–24-year-olds.

Brief 2 remained one of the most popular options for submission this year and there were some excellent realisations of the brief. Most candidates opted for the print option but there were a few websites submitted. The sport magazine genre proved popular with candidates and a wide variety of sports were covered. Football was particularly popular, and many candidates managed to construct representations of the next football legend through carefully chosen images and text. A number of candidates were less successful with this and used images from professional football matches or images from their own team games which failed to construct representation so well, highlighting the need for the candidate's control over the people used in the images.

There were a large number of candidates who chose the fashion genre and there were some excellent examples of magazines which met the requirements of the brief. The most successful candidates embedded the conventions of the form and manage to construct representations of the next fashion icon through carefully chosen images and text.

The most successful candidates had clearly completed thorough research into existing products in the sport and fashion genres which clearly helped candidates apply the knowledge and understanding of the form and genre within their own productions. There were some excellent examples of original branding on the front cover which was replicated in the contents page and article which helped create a sense of brand identity across the three products.

There were a number of candidates who did not have a secure understanding of the conventional layout and design of single page articles and contents pages. There were cases of candidates not using the space of the article appropriately and leaving large areas blank or not using columns. It was evident where candidates had not completed thorough research and planning into the layout and design of single page articles and contents pages, some candidates struggled with how to create these successfully.

There were also a number of candidates who failed to establish representations on their front covers due to the mode of address being inappropriate, for example there were instances of people having their backs to the camera or having their faces obscured in each image which made it difficult to establish representations. A number of candidates included images which contained no people, this limited their ability to secure a higher mark in column 3 as no representations of social groups could be constructed. This needed to be reflected in the assessment of the production in column 3 of the assessment grid and this wasn't always the case, which led to some of the assessment of the productions to be deemed as generous.

A small number of centres submitted the online option and there were some excellent examples of websites for sport and fashion magazines.

BRIEF 3: Film Marketing

Create a DVD/Blu-ray front and back cover (including spine) and a main theatrical poster for a new film in the horror or crime genre.

The production must target an audience of 16–24-year-olds.

Brief 3 remained a very popular option within centres and there was evidence of excellent examples of candidate work. The most successful candidates developed a coherent campaign, demonstrating a brand identity for the film across the DVD cover and poster. Some struggled to develop a clear 'brand identity' that linked the poster and DVD cover together, for example they included very different images and font styles across the campaign. If work does not maintain a brand identity across the products this should be reflected in column 2 of the assessment grid.

The horror genre was the most popular option this year and there was evidence of excellent knowledge and understanding of the genre conventions. A large number of candidates successfully created three clear characters through careful consideration of facial expressions, body language, positioning and dress codes of characters. There were also some excellent and terrifying narratives which demonstrated clear knowledge of the genre. Candidates used costume and props particularly well this year to conform to the conventions of the horror genre. The careful choice of settings and colour and lighting also had a big impact on the success of the production in the horror genre, creating some truly terrifying concepts.

The crime genre was not as popular but there were a number of successful productions submitted. Candidates used their knowledge and understanding of the genre from Component 2 to anchor the conventions.

Applying the conventions of the DVD and poster form proved challenging to some candidates who did not conform to recognised conventions and did not include key elements of the brief such as the director and actor names on the front cover. The layout and design of DVD back covers was still an area of challenge in many cases as some candidates did not conform to typical conventions, particularly in the bottom half of the back cover where the technical information is usually found. There were several instances where candidates who used copied and pasted technical information and credit/billing blocks. This is not permitted, and all elements need to be created from scratch (other than the logos). Some candidates used copied and pasted billing blocks that mentioned the names of other films and production companies which did not meet the company logo used. These inconsistencies need to be taken into account when assessing the production. A small number of centres had clearly given a template for this part of the DVD cover and all candidates ended up with a very similar layout and design; this is not permitted, and candidates should be creating this from scratch.

The DVD spine also proved to be an area of challenge with a number of candidates putting the title the wrong way around. This was often not reflected in the assessment which led to the assessment to be deemed generous for column 2 of the assessment grid. There was also evidence replication of images across the poster and DVD and some candidates failed to include the required number of images across the production which again, needs to be reflected in the assessment.

There were quite a number of candidates who did not include any characters in their productions or only included one/two characters. Not only does this not meet the requirements of the brief but it also makes constructing representations of social groups very difficult so needs to be reflected in both columns of the assessment grid.

Centres are reminded that the use of found images in thumbnails, as backgrounds and as part of special effects are not permitted; all images must be original and generated by the candidate. A small number of students submitted hand drawn, illustrated images which makes it challenging to construct clear representations of social groups.

BRIEF 4: Music Marketing/ Online

Either:

- a. Create an original music video to promote a new artist or band in the dance music genre.**

Or:

- b. Create a functioning website, including a homepage and one other linked page with embedded audio/audio-visual material, promoting a new artist or band in the dance music genre.**

The production must target an audience of 16–24-year-olds.

Brief 4 was more popular this year, possibly due to the chosen genre. There was evidence of candidate work that fully adhered to the codes and conventions of the genre, for example by constructing representations relevant to the genre, the creation of a star persona, featuring performance and narrative footage and interpreting the lyrics effectively to communicate meanings. There were some creative interpretations which merged performance and narrative/symbolism to construct successful music videos from within the dance genre.

Lack of construction of star persona continues to impact the success of some music videos. A number of candidates did not include any performance footage to establish the identity of the artist/band. In such cases, candidates had often been over-rewarded due to the lack of representation of the artist being constructed. There were a number of candidates who used images/footage from concerts that they had attended, but this lacked any construction of an original music artist, and this needed to be reflected in the assessment. Use of this type of footage should be avoided.

There were a small number of candidates completed the music website option, there were examples of successful music websites where there was clear star persona of the artist constructed. Audio-visual elements included interviews with the singer or performance footage of the artist/ band at a concert or in a studio, both of which were highly appropriate to the brief. Similarly to the music video option, there were some submissions which failed to construct a representation of a music artist/band which often led to assessment in column 3 of the assessment grid to be generous.

Summary:

- Centres must access exemplar work on the WJEC Secure site to ascertain the standards for Component 3 before delivering the component and before assessing the work. Internal moderation of marks is recommended to ensure assessment is robust before inputting candidate marks.
- The coversheet must be completed fully and accurately by learners and assessors using the exemplar on the Eduqas website as a guide. The coversheet should be used as a 'working document' which is started at the beginning of the Component 3 process and completed throughout the NEA process, signing off each section and dating as the NEA is completed.
- All candidates must complete independent research of the chosen form before starting planning and production of the media products. This will ensure a foundation of knowledge that can support the construction of the final production and candidates will have a secure knowledge and understanding of the conventions of the form and the genre that has been chosen.
- Candidates must adhere to the requirements of the chosen brief in all aspects. These requirements should be used as a checklist to guide candidates during the production process. Where elements of the brief are missing or not incorporated in a conventional manner, this must be reflected in the assessment of the work according to column 2 in the assessment grid. Candidates must also ensure they don't alter the target audience that is specified in the set briefs.
- Original images are essential for all the briefs and candidates must include several images of people within their productions. Productions with no clear models/characters will struggle to reach the higher bands for column 3 of the assessment grid. Candidates should be encouraged to take a wide variety of shots in different locations with different models/costumes to help successfully construct representations and communicate meanings.
- Centres can utilise the new Amplified Mark Scheme to further secure the requirements for each band when assessing the NEA.
- Where possible, teachers delivering this component should attend CPD events either online or in-person to gain a deeper understanding of how the NEA is assessed.

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-gcse>

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | Eduqas](#)

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