

GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Media Studies
A Level
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.

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Executive Summary

The response to Component 1 was encouraging, with centres effectively guiding candidates and candidates demonstrating solid knowledge and understanding of both set and unseen products as well as theoretical concepts. Notably, candidates showed improvement in the extended response question by effectively comparing the two products with varying depth. Most candidates attempted all questions, indicating good time management.

However, persistent issues include handwriting and illegible responses, underlining the importance of practicing handwritten exams. Planning and essay-writing skills remain critical, particularly for structuring extended responses. Candidates benefit from clear guidance on the focus of each exam element, textual analysis skills, media language, and semiotics. Emphasis should be placed on dissecting questions carefully—especially in Section B, where media products serve as a lens for discussing industry and audience—to produce targeted answers. Centres are reminded of the importance of preparing candidates for the exam by studying the set products set outlined the specification. This includes a whole edition of the set newspaper for Section B.

In Component 2, performance was generally very positive; candidates showed a sound grasp of the theoretical framework and applied it effectively to set products. Most were well-prepared and familiar with exam formats, though some rubric infringements occurred, such as using one set product to answer multiple questions or combining answers improperly.

Improvement areas include teaching candidates to be selective in applying theoretical knowledge, ensuring responses are tailored directly to the specific question rather than relying on rehearsed answers. Understanding and responding appropriately to command words like "explain" or "explore" is critical to go beyond description. Candidates should distinguish between questions about how media targets or attracts audiences versus how audiences interpret media, tailoring answers accordingly. When evaluating theories, alternative approaches must be explicitly framed as comparisons of usefulness or validity. Extended responses should balance breadth and depth through a suitable range of examples, avoiding overly superficial or narrowly focused discussions.

Component 3 has reached stability post-pandemic, with centres increasingly confident in delivery and assessment. This confidence reflects a strong grasp of the NEA's purpose—to assess theoretical understanding through practical production work.

Successful submissions feature focused research including textual and industry analysis, thorough planning linked to research, precise statements of aims and intentions, and strict adherence to media form conventions such as shot types and layout. These works intentionally position audiences, meet brief requirements consistently, and carefully use media language and representations of social groups. Both tasks are planned together coherently from the outset.

Conversely, less successful submissions tend to include generic or unfocused research, weak planning, vague statements lacking justification, failure to adhere to media conventions, neglect of audience positioning, and incomplete brief coverage. Media language is often improvised during production rather than planned. Moreover, unequal attention to the two tasks is a common problem.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 1: MEDIA PRODUCTS, INDUSTRIES AND AUDIENCES

Overview of the Component

This component assesses elements of both Assessment Objectives across a range of set and unseen products. Overall, it was encouraging to see how positively centres and candidates responded to the demands of the examination and how well candidates had been guided by centres. The candidates generally demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding both with regard to the set and unseen products and the relevant aspects of the theoretical framework. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of what was required in the different elements of the paper, showing that they had been well prepared for the demands of this component. In particular, it was noticed that there had been an improvement on previous years with the extended response question where it was noted that candidates across the mark range had engaged with the set and unseen products and were able to compare the two products in varying degrees of detail. Most candidates attempted all of the questions and there were very few incomplete papers signifying that candidates had been well taught in managing timings.

The quality of handwriting and the number of illegible responses remains of some concern. It is of paramount importance that candidates are given opportunities to handwrite responses in preparation for the examination. Whilst there was evidence of an improvement, particularly with the extended response question, the teaching of planning and essay writing skills remains of importance in helping candidates to structure a successful response.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 0 Explore how this music video extract uses codes and conventions to communicate meaning.

AO2 1 Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to analyse media products

The unseen product set for this question was an extract from the music video *Now I'm In It* (Haim, 2019). The focus was media language and candidates needed to use their understanding of this area of the theoretical framework to consider how the extract used codes and conventions to communicate meaning. This was a rich unseen resource offering candidates plenty to discuss. The most successful responses were from candidates who understood the requirements of the question and were able to apply their understanding of all elements of media language in relation to the audio-visual example, including visual and technical codes and narrative. These candidates used their knowledge and understanding from their study of the set music videos to engage in confident discussion of the codes and conventions of the extract, effectively analysing elements of the pop/indie genre. The most successful responses were able to combine their discussion of elements of media language and the codes and conventions of the music genre.

Successful responses avoided a descriptive response and instead explored how elements of media language were used, for example the choice of shots including tracking/reverse tracking, close ups and point of view, editing and visual codes including clothing, gesture and expression, analysing in detail how these contributed to the narrative of the music video. They were able to select appropriate examples of media language techniques employed in the music video and were confident in the use of relevant media terminology, analysing in some detail how meaning had been constructed. Successful responses were also able to support their analysis with relevant theories including references to semiotics and structuralism, some candidates also effectively referenced Goodwin in their discussion of the music video's codes and conventions, although this is not a set theorist. Candidates who produced more accurate, developed responses also used the language of semiotics to develop their analysis further, which is to be encouraged. The candidates that were able to explore enigma and symbolism and those accurately applying Barthes' codes were able to write a more detailed and sophisticated analysis.

The more successful responses were also well structured and gave an overview of their understanding of the meaning of the music video, relating this to their knowledge of the music genre and then selected examples from across the product to support this. A number of candidates broadened this discussion to include some excellent, perceptive points about female empowerment and friendship and how this was communicated through media language, for example the shots, locations and editing used in the final sequences of the product.

Candidates in the middle of the mark range demonstrated some straightforward understanding of aspects of media language and often recognised the connotations of the visual elements but failed to then explore them in detail. They produced a reasonable and straightforward analysis of the music video extract with a generally accurate application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework but tended not to cover a broad range of points or develop a response to the 'how' element of the question. These responses were less confident in discussing the codes and conventions of the music video as a form and there were many responses that used the lyrics of the song to talk about meaning instead of the audio-visual elements which restricted their analysis.

Less successful responses approached this question as a general analysis of the unseen product, did not address the 'how' element and missed the nuances of the question in relation to codes and conventions, demonstrating more limited understanding. In these responses there was a tendency to focus on very literal interpretations leading to a more descriptive approach and some obvious points were made about for example, colour codes. These weaker responses focused on trying to understand the themes and other elements of narrative with a preoccupation on alcohol abuse as a reason for the protagonist's behaviour. Attempts to interpret the events literally led to description and undeveloped analysis consisting of suggested meanings that were not supported by evidence. These candidates tended to explain what they could see without analysing why these elements were incorporated into the music video form and how they contributed to the communication of meaning. It was of some concern that these responses were also less confident with exploring a range of elements of media language and failed to support points made with specific examples from the unseen product, instead adopting a superficial, generalised approach which demonstrated often only a basic understanding of the theoretical framework and little use of subject-specific terminology.

Some candidates did incorrectly approach this as a representation question analysing how the protagonist's representation was constructed and referencing feminist theorists.

Key Teaching Points

- Deconstruct the question to ensure understanding of the focus
- Learners should be aware of what to expect in each question e.g. the media language question will always require the analysis of an unseen product from a form studied in class. Learners should be encouraged to use what they have learned from studying set products in the same form
- Use analytical vocabulary and subject specific terminology related to the form to enhance analysis
- Understand what is required when analysing media language, for example reference to the particular codes and conventions of the form referring to visual, technical, language, narrative and where appropriate, audio codes.
- Focus on supporting analysis with detailed reference to specific examples from the unseen product
- Practice in applying theoretical perspectives can enhance analysis

Q.2 0 Compare how far the film posters for *Kiss of the Vampire* and *Jakob's Wife* use gender stereotypes.

In your answer you must:

- consider the similarities and differences in how gender stereotypes are used in the film posters
- consider how the representations reflect social and cultural contexts
- make judgements and draw conclusions about the use of gender stereotypes in the posters.

AO2 1&3 Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to:

- analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts
- make judgements and draw conclusions.

Despite this question being one of the most challenging on the paper it was generally well answered with some very detailed understanding of the two products and the film poster form. Across the mark range candidates had clearly been well guided to compare the two products using appropriate analytical language and they were prepared for the requirements of this question. Many candidates were confident in discussing gender and applying appropriate theories and theoretical perspectives in various levels of detail.

Question 2 0 is an extended response question where candidates are assessed on the quality of their written response, including their ability to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured. There was evidence across the mark range that candidates had been taught how to structure this longer response. The comparisons were approached in different ways, all valid. Some candidates cross-referenced elements of similarity and difference between the two products and others analysed one product and then discussed the second, making references to aspects of comparison. This question was answered well by candidates who used the preparation that they had undertaken for the set product to aid them in the analysis of the unseen product.

In this question the bullet points are included to help candidates to structure their answer and to guide them in what to include. The expectation is that all the bullet points are covered, but not necessarily in the same amount of detail. Better responses were able to do this and to address the focus of the question analysing both products and making relevant comparisons. Candidates attaining marks in the higher bands effectively applied their knowledge of the theoretical framework in their discussion of representation. A range of comparisons was highlighted by candidates and those attaining marks in the higher bands consistently maintained their focus on the question throughout their response. This resulted in coherent, well developed responses and these candidates were also able to make judgements and draw conclusions in relation to how the products reflect their social and cultural contexts, selecting detailed, specific examples to support their points.

The most successful responses were confident and well-structured, demonstrating a good knowledge of *Kiss of the Vampire* as a set product. Stronger responses were able to recognise the complex representations that were constructed reflecting the social and cultural context of the 1960s and how these changes were reflected in the ideologies of the film poster. Some discussed male fears of changing gender dynamics and others explored the supernatural/monstrous/other construction of the female vampires in a more perceptive way. Analysis of the unseen film poster and the similarities and differences with the set product provided stronger candidates with opportunities to discuss complex representations of gender, making perceptive comments about the ambiguity and enigma of the woman in *Jakob's Wife* and the use of religious iconography to demonise the female character was also discussed effectively. Successful responses drew on binary opposition, genre and narrative conventions as well as Stuart Hall and van Zoonen in comparing the products.

There were many responses from the higher bands that made perceptive comments about how the film posters reflected the society that produced them. These insightful points were supported by specific, detailed exploration of examples from the products. The more successful responses were able to recognise the differences between the contexts of the two products comparing different waves of feminism and the more diverse and complex representations of gender that are a feature of contemporary media products. These candidates engaged equally with the two film posters, offering insightful judgements and conclusions fully supported by detailed examples drawn from the products. These candidates also demonstrated excellent skills in comparison and produced well-structured answers consistently employing relevant terminology related to both representation and comparison.

Candidates attaining marks in the middle band, whilst engaging in comparisons, produced responses that were less detailed and analysis that was more straightforward and reasonable. These candidates had been well prepared for discussing the set product but in these responses, there was a tendency to download information about the historical context without applying it to examples from the film poster. These responses focused on more straightforward aspects of the posters, for example page layout and the way that characters' position on the page was evidence of power. These responses were less likely to engage with the complexity of the way that a range of visual codes were evident in the posters that constructed gender in ways that both challenge and reinforce stereotypes. Whilst candidates at this level did incorporate reference to theory, this tended to be undeveloped and was not consistently used to enhance analysis.

Less successful responses awarded marks in the lower bands were more descriptive, undeveloped and made more basic comparisons between the two products and assertions focused on for example, colour of dresses, gesture and facial expressions; the analysis at this level was largely undeveloped and at times lost focus, discussing for example the codes and conventions of the vampire genre rather than the gender representations. These responses tended to focus on more narrow representations, for example women, therefore limiting their discussion. At this level there was also a tendency to simply describe the key features or the narrative of the two products or to focus on basic similarities. Reference to relevant contexts and how the representations used gender stereotypes were brief and undeveloped.

Regarding the use of theory, it is important that the theory/theoretical perspective chosen is valid, relevant and can be used to support the points the candidate wishes to make about the products. There were several examples of candidates who tried to include theories which were often irrelevant or not applied appropriately. For example, many candidates referred to Hall's reception theory when they needed to focus on representation. Less successful responses suggested that the products used the theory rather than the theory being a way to explore the product. More straightforward responses simply named the theory or theorist without developing the analysis further.

Key Teaching Points

- Practise deconstructing questions to ensure that learners understand the focus of the question and how to approach their response
- Practise planning extended response questions using the bullet points as a guide
- Encourage the use and application of relevant theories to enhance analysis and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework
- Use the terminology of comparison and the language of the question in the response
- Understand the difference between detailed descriptions and detailed analysis to improve responses.

Section B: Understanding Media Industries and Audiences

Q.3 1 Name one way in which newspapers are distributed.

AO1 1a Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework

Most candidates were able to answer this correctly for one mark and examples included print, online and apps. However, there were a worrying number of candidates who could not give an example.

Q.3 2 Briefly explain what is meant by diversification in the film industry.

AO1 1a Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework

Most candidates were able to answer this correctly but in varied degrees of detail. In order to attain 2 marks, there needed to be an accurate explanation which included detail and/or exemplification. A more basic, undeveloped response or one that contained inaccuracies was awarded 1 mark. Some candidates seemed unfamiliar with this term despite the fact that it is a key term in the specification glossary and underpins much of the study of industry. Other candidates confused it with diversity.

Q.3 3 Explain how recent technological changes have affected the newspaper industry. Refer to *The Times* to support your points.

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

This question was generally well answered with evidence of knowledge and understanding of the effect of technological change on the newspaper industry. Successful candidates demonstrated their awareness of the focus of the question and addressed the 'how' element. The examples used by those candidates accessing marks in the higher bands were relevant and detailed and supported by theory/theoretical perspectives (Hesmondhalgh/Curran and Seaton/Shirky).

The more successful responses were also clearly aware of the requirements and structure of this question and were able to give a brief overview of the newspaper industry generally, referring to for example, falling print sales and the need to diversify to ensure financial stability and offer different experiences to audiences. This was then applied specifically to *The Times* to further illustrate their understanding. Here, there was generally a good understanding of the impact of new technology with more successful responses being able to apply relevant theory and discuss how the power of ownership enabled risks to be taken by using a paywall with an appreciation of the readership interpreting this as a sign of quality and exclusivity. The best responses were aware of *Times Radio*, podcasts, social media, and the nature of the app/website being behind a paywall. Some candidates expanded their discussion to effectively include points about the impact of regulation on the digital platforms. Candidates awarded marks in the higher bands were also able to demonstrate their understanding through employing subject specific terminology related to the focus of industry.

The more satisfactory responses in the middle bands demonstrated some straightforward knowledge and understanding of the newspaper industry. However, these tended to be less detailed, lacked development and were less successful at applying knowledge and understanding to specific examples from the set newspaper product.

The responses awarded marks in the lower band tended to describe aspects of the newspaper and had limited understanding of the focus of the question, the responses often did not refer to the newspaper industry in general but confined their less well developed discussion to the set product. There were also some superficial generalisations reinforcing stereotypes of the readers of *The Times*, a common one was that they were older and therefore were less confident with technology.

Key Teaching Points

- Consider what the set newspaper illustrates about aspects of the industry, broaden this beyond the front page and only the print edition
- Use subject specific terminology related to industry
- Support points with specific examples from the industry element of the newspaper
- Learners should consider the specific examples the newspaper that can best illustrate elements of the industry for example, the website, app, radio, social media platforms etc.

Q.3 4 Explain how the newspaper industry reflects political contexts. Refer to the *Daily Mirror* to support your points.

AO1 2a & 2b Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes

As can be seen by the AO being assessed, this question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of media contexts in relation to the newspaper industry.

As with Question Q3 3, the expectation is that candidates will address the first part of the question which refers to the newspaper industry in relation to political contexts, for example how political contexts shape the industry through ownership and political allegiance and how the political context may be evident depending on the style, format and content selection of a newspaper, before applying their knowledge and understanding to the set newspaper product.

This question proved problematic for the candidates who used the Section A product in this response and in some cases only referred to the front page of the newspaper. For Section B the requirement is to consider one complete print edition of the newspaper chosen by the centre and selected key pages from the newspaper's website. For this question, candidates should draw on examples from across the complete issue of the *Daily Mirror* they have studied in their centre. It proved to be self-penalising for candidates who only referred to the front page of the newspaper and even the candidates who also referred to the double page spread from Section A did not have the breadth of knowledge required for this question, this consequently resulted in a more limited response. It was also evident that the candidates using the Section A product tended to engage in a textual analysis of the product rather than using it to illustrate aspects of the newspaper industry.

The most successful responses engaged with the first step of the question demonstrating their broader knowledge and understanding of the industry. Successful responses also drew examples from a full edition of the *Daily Mirror* and its online presence, incorporating reference to a wide range of examples including news stories, features and the editorial illustrating how the political context and the newspaper's ideology is reinforced across the brand. These stronger candidates effectively explored how stories were covered with systemic biases and restrictions according to the ownership of the paper and the target audience.

Less successful responses focused more narrowly on the 'Partygate' story and the bias against the Conservative party. These responses were able to discuss the left wing bias of the *Daily Mirror* and illustrate this political context with reference to some examples, but this lacked development due to the choice of product. Some candidates limited their ability to develop their analysis by focusing on one point, for example the image of Boris Johnson, which created a less well developed response. There was a distinction between those who understood that this was an industry question and discussed specifically 'how' the industry reflects political contexts and those who merely analysed the front page.

Candidates awarded marks in the lower bands produced more limited responses and tended to focus on basic aspects of the industry and the set newspaper that at times included simple assertions and inaccuracies, for example the red masthead illustrating the left wing bias of the newspaper and some candidates were confused over the political allegiance of the *Daily Mirror*. Less successful candidates made very general points about the political contexts of newspapers without any reference to specific examples from the set product.

The more effective responses were able to also incorporate theories and theoretical perspectives. Weaker responses tended to mention theorists without using them to further their analysis of the newspaper industry and the set product in particular.

Some more successful candidates were aware that this response provided an opportunity to draw together knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study and incorporated references to audiences and the link between political and social contexts, particularly in relation to the ideological perspective of the *Daily Mirror*.

Key Teaching Points

- Ensure that learners are prepared with an appropriate set product for the question focus, in this case that they have studied sections from a whole edition of the set newspaper and selected website pages
- Ensure that both stems of the question are addressed to illustrate a broad understanding of the industry focus
- Give guidance in relation to how to use the set product to illustrate aspects of industry
- Consider how reference to other areas of the specification can be incorporated into this response e.g. audiences
- Refer to specific examples from the product that best support the focus of the question
- Use subject specific terminology e.g. in relation to industry and newspapers

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.4 1 Explain how the producers of video games target audiences. Refer to the *Assassin's Creed* video game you have studied to support your points.

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

The focus of this question was audience and was in two parts, requiring candidates to discuss how the producers of video games target audiences and then to use examples from the set product to support points made. Those responses awarded marks in the higher bands gave an introduction discussing the importance of establishing the target audience, the devices used for the targeting specific audiences and creating a brand identity and then proceeded to offer a range of examples from a specific game to support points made. These responses effectively discussed the ways in which the producers of video games, the *Assassin's Creed* franchise generally and then the specific iteration of the game target audiences in different ways.

The most successful responses focused on the key audience word 'target', demonstrated a clear understanding that the focus was 'how' in relation to the producers and referred to examples from a specific game in the franchise, popular examples were *Odyssey* and *Valhalla*. There were some excellent, detailed responses covering a range of points from the game studied including marketing devices, techniques to target new and loyal audiences, fan targeting and interaction and using technological developments to expand audience reach. These were supported by detailed examples. Some of the best responses were articulate about how the producers were using fan reactions to make changes to the franchise that would directly reflect the audiences needs and maximise profit.

Less successful responses lacked detail, and some lacked a sharp focus on how the producer targets audiences offering instead a more general discussion of the appeal of the game for audiences. These responses also tended to lack a focus on a specific game and referenced more than one example from the franchise, producing a less focused response.

Responses in the lower band were those that tended to be more opinion led, demonstrated limited media knowledge and had limited or no understanding of 'how' the producers of video games target audiences. These responses tended to focus on the franchise in general without including examples from a specific game.

Key Teaching Points

- Be aware of the key audience term used in the question and allow this to guide the response. In this case it is 'target'. Using the key term throughout the response helps to maintain the focus
- Use terminology related to the area of assessment, in this case audiences and video games
- Ensure that points made are applied to specific examples from the set product and in this case, to a specific game studied as required by the specification
- Incorporate relevant theories/theoretical perspectives to demonstrate knowledge and enhance discussion

Q.4 2 Explain how audiences may decode advertisements in different ways. Refer to Hall's reception theory and the *Super. Human* advertisement to support your points.

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

Despite this being the final question, it was completed reasonably well by a majority of candidates and there was little evidence that they had run out of time. Similarly to Q4 1, this was in two parts, requiring candidates to explain how audiences may decode advertisements in different ways and then to apply Hall's reception theory to the set product to illustrate their understanding. It was clear that the majority of candidates had some understanding of Hall's reception theory. The most successful responses moved from a more general overview to the specifics of the set product and selected a range of examples to illustrate their points.

Successful responses were able to apply Hall's theory by suggesting a range of possible audiences who would interpret meanings depending on their pre-existing cultural capital, the demographic and psychographic category they belong to and other factors that would either predispose them to accepting a preferred reading or not. A knowledge of the purpose of the advert was helpful with some being able to reference C4's remit, ideology and the conscious choice to challenge more established representation of Paralympians. These responses were able to use the relevant terminology related to Hall's theory and offered examples to support the main elements of his theoretical perspective.

Responses in the middle bands were more straightforward and tended to move straight to the set product. Less successful responses discussed the advertisement without reference to specific detail and Stuart Hall's theory mainly in terms of whether an audience would like elements of it or oppose it/not like it or agree/disagree with the messages without anchoring their argument in detailed, specific references to examples from the product. The responses that assumed that the target audience was disabled people were limited in their ability to discuss Hall's theory as they tended to focus only on how they would respond to the representations.

Weaker candidates tended to produce a more basic response outlining who might like or dislike the advert without providing evidence for their assertions. Some candidates in the lower bands did not refer specifically to the set product at all in their response. There was also some confusion at times with some candidates discussing Hall's representation theory. Other responses in the lower bands were brief and undeveloped and made only partial reference to the programme.

There was some evidence of candidates who has issues with timing and whose responses were therefore hampered by brevity or were incomplete.

Key Teaching Points

- Be aware of the two stems of the questions that allow candidates to demonstrate their broader understanding of audience in relation to the set form
- Be prepared to support points made about audiences with specific, relevant examples from the set product.
- Focus on the question and on the specific aspect of audience being assessed, here it was reception theory

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to be clear about the focus of each element of the examination paper and what needs to be included in their response.
- Candidates would have benefited from spending some time planning their response to Q2 0
- In preparation for Section A, candidates must be taught textual analysis, the elements of media language and how to incorporate the language of semiotics to enhance their analysis.
- Question 2 0 requires comparison and an extended response which would be aided by planning and essay writing skills.
- For the comparison question it would be helpful to guide candidates to use strategies to ensure that comparisons are being made and encourage them to employ the language of comparison
- In all questions, candidates must be guided to dissect the question carefully in order to understand what is required and focus their response. This is particularly important in Section B where the product is the vehicle through which they discuss aspects of the industry and audience.
- Candidates must develop their use of subject-specific terminology and the language of analysis to enhance their responses.
- Candidates should be given opportunities to practise handwriting and producing handwritten responses under timed conditions.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 2: MEDIA FORMS AND PRODUCTS IN DEPTH

Overview of the Component

Performance in the Component 2 exam was generally very positive. Most candidates had a sound grasp of the theoretical framework of the subject and were able to apply this knowledge and understanding to useful effect when discussing their set products. There were relatively few rubric infringements, although some candidates used both of their set television products to answer each of the questions in Section A rather than using a different one to answer each of the 15-mark questions, while others used the same set product to answer both questions. A very small number of candidates combined their responses to the two questions in Section A, writing one single response in an attempt to address both questions at once. Ensuring that candidates are familiar with the format of the exam and the requirements of the different types of question that they are likely to encounter is therefore very important (past papers are particularly useful in this regard). However, it is evident that most centres are doing this very effectively already as it was clear that the majority of candidates were very well-prepared for the exam.

Areas for improvement

- While it is encouraging to see how keen candidates are to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework, it is important that they are selective in terms of which aspects of the theoretical framework and which bits of knowledge and understanding they draw on, tailoring their responses to meet the particular demands of the question. Candidates should try to ensure that they answer the specific question that is set as directly and consistently as possible, using the most relevant material, rather than trying to reproduce a pre-rehearsed response that may only address the question indirectly or inconsistently.
- Candidates should use the command words in the question to identify the key requirements of the task. For example, if a question requires them to 'explain' (as in questions 12, 22 and 32) or 'explore' (as in questions 11, 21, and 31), they need to do more than simply describe.
- Candidates should be careful to distinguish between audience questions that focus on how media products or producers target, address, attract, construct or appeal to audiences, and those that focus on how audiences use, read, interpret or respond to media products, adapting their answers accordingly. For example, a discussion of Hall's reception theory and the possibility of audiences making oppositional or negotiated readings may not be as relevant for a question that is primarily concerned with the way in which media products target and attract audiences.
- If candidates choose to discuss alternative theories or critical approaches in questions that address AO2 2 (apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to evaluate academic theories), this material needs to be clearly and carefully framed as an evaluation of the theory specified in the question. In other words, there needs to be an explicit discussion of why the alternative theory is more or less useful or valid than the theory that is being evaluated.

- Candidates should make sure that they discuss an appropriate range of examples in their responses, particularly in extended response questions – not so many that their answer lacks depth but enough to construct a coherent argument that shows a suitable breadth of knowledge. For example, discussion of the set magazines should extend beyond just the front covers.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.11, 21 & 31 Explore how *Peaky Blinders*/*Black Mirror*/*Killing Eve* uses marketing to target and attract audiences.

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.

Overall, this question was answered well. Most candidates were able to analyse the way in which audiences were targeted and attracted through the marketing of their set television product reasonably effectively. Stronger responses tended to demonstrate greater analytical depth by exploring the way in which particular marketing campaigns or materials were used to target and attract specific audiences rather than simply describing what the marketing comprised or involved (in other words, more successful responses tended to focus more on the ‘*how*’ rather than the ‘*what*’).

More successful responses fully addressed the question, while less successful or partially successful responses often addressed only part of the question. For example, some candidates focused on how the set *episode* of the television show targeted and attracted audiences rather than discussing how the *marketing* of the show was used to target and attract audiences, while others simply summarised the marketing materials used to promote the show rather than exploring how those materials were used to target and attract audiences.

A number of candidates simply recited pre-rehearsed answers that had only limited or tangential relevance to the question set. Some, for instance, offered a detailed textual analysis of the opening sequence of the set episode they had studied without addressing either the marketing of the show or how audiences were targeted or attracted. Others simply listed different audience readings of the set product (e.g. ‘*A preferred reading would be...*’, ‘*A negotiated reading would be ...*’, ‘*An oppositional reading would be ...*’), perhaps failing to recognise that this was an audience question about what media products or producers do to *target* and *attract* audiences rather than an audience question about how audiences *read* or *respond* to media products.

However, a lot of responses engaged very effectively with the question. For example, many candidates made valid and interesting points about the way in which trailers, posters and billboards were used to target and attract fans of particular genres through their deployment of recognisable stock characters, familiar narrative tropes or genre-specific iconography. The way in which stars such as Sandra Oh and Cillian Murphy were used to target and attract audiences on either a national or global scale was also widely discussed, and there was some good material on the way in which representations in the marketing materials were used to target particular social groups such as LGBTQ+ audiences or female demographics. There was also useful discussion of how audiences were targeted through the placement of marketing materials. For instance, some candidates discussed the way in which *Black Mirror* was able to target a tech-savvy audience of 25-34 year old sci-fi fans by bypassing ad-blockers and embedding marketing messages in tech-focused websites they would commonly visit.

As well as traditional forms of marketing such as billboards and trailers, many candidates discussed the way in which audiences were targeted and attracted through more unconventional marketing methods. There were interesting explorations of the use of guerrilla marketing in *Killing Eve*'s 'Public Displays of Obsession' campaign, the use of selfies submitted by fans in the marketing campaign for Season 6 of *Black Mirror*, and the use of fan art in the marketing of Season 5 of *Peaky Blinders*, for instance. A number of candidates made useful reference to Shirky's 'end-of-audience' theory or Jenkins' theory of fandom in explaining how these strategies were effective in targeting and attracting fans as well as making them active participants in the marketing of these shows.

Q.12, 22 & 32 Explain the strategies that television organisations use to minimise risk and maximise audiences.

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

On the whole, candidates also responded well to this question. There was useful discussion of the way in which genre and star appeal can be used to guarantee a pre-sold audience, thereby minimising risk and maximising audiences, and there were good points about the way in which television organisations are able to spread or minimise financial risk through co-production models or by securing tax breaks or grants from national and regional bodies such as the Copenhagen Film Fund in the case of *The Bridge*, the Rhône-Alpes Regional Fund in the case of *The Returned* or EKOME in the case of *Tehran*. The use of vertical and horizontal integration as a means of minimising risk was also referenced by a number of candidates, although with varying degrees of success, depending on how securely these concepts were understood and how clearly their role in minimising risk and maximising audiences was explained. Many candidates also discussed the way in which distribution can be used to minimise risk and maximise audiences. While some candidates made relatively simple points about the use of global streaming platforms such as Netflix or Apple TV+ or the addition of subtitles to maximise audiences, others were able to discuss more specific ways in which distribution was used to minimise risk and maximise audiences.

Although reference to theory was not specifically required, many candidates drew productively on relevant aspects of Hesmondhalgh's theory of cultural industries in their responses. Hesmondhalgh's concept of formatting was particularly well-used. Useful references were also made to Curran and Seaton's theory of power and media industries, particularly in terms of risk aversion and the tendency for television organisations to stick to safe, established, successful or proven formulas.

Similarly to questions 11, 21 and 31, stronger responses tended to provide a fuller or more detailed account of *how* particular strategies were used by television organisations to minimise risk and maximise audiences rather than just outlining what those strategies were. In other words, stronger responses tended to *explain* rather than simply *describe* the strategies used.

Q.40, 50 & 60 'Magazine representations are more influenced by economic contexts than social and cultural contexts.'

To what extent do you agree with this statement? Refer to the set editions of *Woman* and *Adbusters*, or *Woman's Realm* and *Huck*, or *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* in your response.

AO1 2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.

AO2 3 Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to make judgements and draw conclusions.

Many candidates engaged thoughtfully with this question, providing a considered, evaluative discussion of the relative influence of economic contexts and social and cultural contexts on magazine representations. More successful responses were able to make judicious use of relevant evidence from the set products to substantiate their points, constructing clear lines of argument that led to informed and well-supported judgements and conclusions. Less successful responses tended to simply describe the representations in their set products or outline aspects of the relevant contexts without forming a judgement about the relative influence of economic or social and cultural contexts on the representations in the set magazines. There was also a tendency with some responses to simply focus on the front covers of the magazines. Consequently, these responses tended to lack the necessary range of evidence and breadth of knowledge to construct a convincing argument.

Many candidates were able to make useful links between the representations of gender in the set magazines and the norms and values of the societies and cultures in which they were produced, discussing, for example, the influence of patriarchal ideology, second wave feminism or the sexual revolution on the representations in the historical magazines. Similarly, candidates generally made interesting and valid points about the extent to which the representations of gender in the contemporary magazines were shaped and influenced by social and cultural values, with useful reference to the more liberal or progressive representations in features such as Grayson Perry's 'Letter to My Younger Self' in *The Big Issue* or the 'Beyond Binary' feature in *Huck*. There were interesting discussions of the influence of social and cultural context on the representations of ethnicity and race in the set magazines too.

Discussions of the relative influence of economic contexts on the representations in the set magazines were generally less successful. This was often because candidates ended up simply discussing the production or distribution of the magazines rather than focusing on the influence of economic contexts on the representations within them. This was particularly noticeable in some of the discussions of *The Big Issue*, as a number of candidates simply explored the way in which the magazine's distribution model was used to provide vendors with a source of income, saying relatively little about the representations within the magazine.

However, some candidates were able to make insightful and often quite nuanced points about the relative influence of economic contexts on the representations in the set magazines. For example, there was some excellent material on the way in which aspirational images of female identity in the historical magazines were constructed not only in accordance with the cultural ideals of the time but also to appease advertisers and sell products, thereby serving a commercial imperative. The extent to which the representations in the contemporary magazines were liberated from these commercial imperatives and the need to make a profit due to their independent ownership or, in the case of *Adbusters*, its anti-capitalist ethos, was also usefully discussed by a number of candidates.

Q.70 How useful is semiotic theory for analysing online media products?

Refer to Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and JJ Olatunji/KSI or Zoe Sugg, and the *gal-dem* website or the *Thiiird magazine* website or the *Attitude* website in your response.

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

AO2 2 Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to evaluate academic theories.

This question was not quite as well answered as the other questions, perhaps in part because it was the final question on the paper. It was notable, for example, that candidates generally wrote significantly less on this question compared with the 30-mark questions in Section B. This highlights the importance of candidates dividing their time evenly, spending roughly the same amount of time on each of the three sections of the paper. The slightly lower performance on this question may also have been due to the challenge of having to evaluate rather than simply apply theory, as this is the only question in either of the two examined components that addresses AO2 2. However, there does seem to be some evidence that candidates are becoming more accustomed to the requirement to evaluate theory in Component 2, as a number of candidates were able to do this very effectively.

Candidates demonstrated varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of semiotic theory in their responses. There was generally a sound grasp of the idea that meanings are produced through a process of signification and that signs can function at the level of denotation and at the level of connotation, typically evidenced through references to the encoded meanings within the set products and discussion of what particular elements might signify or connote. It was also pleasing to see some candidates discussing how Barthes' concept of myth could be used to explore the way in which particular constructed meanings in the set products were made to appear self-evident through a process of naturalisation. While this approach was much less common (it was only adopted by relatively few candidates), it often yielded an insightful discussion of the way in which semiotic analysis can facilitate a better understanding of the ideological messages and meanings that underpin media products, enabling those messages and meanings to be more effectively deconstructed.

A more common approach was to discuss the various narrative codes identified by Barthes (i.e. the hermeneutic/enigma code, the proairetic/action code, the semantic code, the symbolic code, and the cultural/referential code). This was done with varying degrees of success, often depending on how secure the candidate's understanding of these particular codes was and how fully they were able to demonstrate the usefulness of such an approach as a means of analysing online media products. Many candidates simply identified basic examples of enigma codes within the set products, for instance, without explaining why or to what extent this might be useful. The action code (or proairetic code) was also rather loosely discussed, with many candidates simply interpreting this as any action that occurs within a text, overlooking the defining function of the proairetic code in terms of creating narrative anticipation by suggesting a future action or what might happen next. Although less widely referenced, there was, however, some useful discussion of semantic, symbolic and cultural codes. For example, there were some good points about the symbolic construction of gender and the significance of particular cultural references in *gal-dem*, *Thiiird* or *Attitude*.

The quality of evaluation in candidates' responses tended to vary quite widely. Many candidates demonstrated an awareness of semiotic theory by applying relevant semiotic terminology in their responses (using terms such as *signifies*, *connotes* etc.), but made little or no attempt to discuss the extent to which semiotic theory is useful for analysing either online media products in general or their set online products more specifically. In some cases, candidates simply described features of their set products or discussed the representations they offered or the way in which they targeted or engaged their audiences, without making any reference to semiotic concepts or theory at all.

However, there were responses that offered a thoughtful and effective evaluation of the relative usefulness of semiotic theory for analysing online media products. Many candidates were able to highlight the way in which semiotic theory could be used to analyse the underlying messages and meanings within online products and the way in which those messages and meanings were encoded through a system of signs. Many candidates also made valid and pertinent points about the limitations of semiotic theory as a tool for analysing online products, discussing whether and to what extent such a critical approach might be useful for exploring the hypermodality of online media products, or the interactions between producers and users that these media forms facilitate, or the different ways in which online media products might be read or interpreted.

Some candidates identified particular theories or critical approaches that might be more useful than semiotic theory for analysing online media products. While this approach was perfectly valid, less successful responses tended to simply discuss or apply other theories or critical approaches rather than explaining *why* those other theories or approaches might be more useful than semiotics for analysing online media products. More successful responses tended to make explicit evaluative comparisons between semiotic theory and other relevant theories or critical approaches, discussing their relative merits or limitations and clearly explaining why semiotics might be more or less useful than those other approaches. For example, many candidates made valid points about why Shirky's end-of-audience theory, Baudrillard's theory of postmodernism or Hall's reception theory might provide a more useful framework for analysing online media products, explaining how those theories could be seen to shed light on particular aspects of online media products that semiotic theory might not illuminate as effectively.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 3: CROSS-MEDIA PRODUCTION

Overview of the Component

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

We have now reached a period of welcome stability in the annual non-exam assessment cycle: the specification is well established and is no longer subject to the interruptions of the pandemic. This has allowed teachers and lecturers to become familiar with the requirements of Component 3 and to recognise what stays the same each year and what changes with each set of briefs. Messages from exemplar work, CPD events and Eduqas communications are clearly being taken on board by centres, and it is clear that the majority of centres are increasingly confident in their delivery and assessment of this component.

This confidence stems from a real understanding of the purpose of the non-exam assessment. It is an appraisal of learners' knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework, assessed via their own production work. Last year's report contained the phrase 'Component 3 is more similar to Components 1 and 2 than it first appears: the underlying key media concepts are the same, just assessed via a different outcome'. This resonated with both readers of the report and those who heard it repeated at CPD events because it encapsulates that the way for candidates to be successful in the non-exam assessment is to apply their academic understanding of the media to practical work.

Successful submissions were characterised by:

- Focused research, including textual analysis of existing products and research into the industry context
- Thorough planning, linked to research
- Statements of Aims and Intentions with precise examples of plans
- Close adherence to conventions of the media form, including details like shot types and layout
- Use of codes and conventions of the genre, perhaps with consideration of subgenres or hybrid genres
- Planned positioning of the audience
- Meeting the brief's requirements with consistency
- Careful media language use, with the effects of camera shots, colours, fonts, layout etc. all considered before production work even begins
- Representations of social groups that are planned to be insightful and/or purposeful, with the media language used to construct the representations being carefully considered
- Both tasks planned together from the start and being coherently related

Where work for the television or music marketing briefs is particularly accomplished, consideration should be given to entering it for the [WJEC/Eduqas Moving Image Awards](#).

Less successful submissions were characterised by:

- Less focused or very general research, sometimes set at a whole-class level
- Generalised planning, without a focus on details
- Descriptive Statements of Aims and Intentions that lack justification for decisions and/or does not cover all of the bullet points
- Not fully adhering to media form conventions, such as inappropriate camera shots or unconventional layouts (including overly large copy text in magazines)
- Only using basic iconography of the genre
- Audience positioning not being considered
- Not meeting all the requirements of the brief
- Media language use not being planned and often devised as the work is produced
- Simplistic or not appropriate representations, sometimes without a focus on people
- One task, often the second, not being given the same attention as the first

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

This year's briefs all had an international element, with candidates being asked to produce media products targeting global audiences. Perhaps unsurprisingly, products for outside the UK often targeted English-speaking countries, but many pieces in foreign languages were also seen, usually with helpful translations provided. Candidates who successfully considered the differing audience demographics, psychographics and contexts achieved higher marks.

The majority of centres gave their candidates some choice of brief, though a significant minority offered just one brief, which remains acceptable. Magazines and film marketing remain the most popular briefs, with music marketing not far behind and television being less selected. Nevertheless, every combination of Task 1 and Task 2(a) or Task 2(b) was seen many times during moderation, with the full range of achievement represented.

The requirement for centres to give candidates a free choice of genre was fulfilled by more centres than ever before and there were very few instances of centres where all candidates attempted the same genre (or a restricted range). Although work was required to target a mainstream audience of 18–35-year-olds, this still allowed for a wide range of genres to be chosen. As in previous years, candidates who thoroughly researched their genre tended to perform better, as they could use more subtle conventions in their work. Most candidates opted for fairly well-known genres and there is scope for more use of sub-genres and hybrids to be used by candidates, which would reflect the current trend for diversity across the media at present.

Once again, successful candidates nearly always undertook strong research. Research into genre codes and conventions remains the best-served area, with most candidates referencing at least some research in this avenue. Those who achieved highly also tended to research their representations thoroughly, with the way in which different social groups are represented in the media today being used as the basis for purposeful or insightful representations (often through either subtlety or subversion). Industry research was a little stronger in previous years (perhaps because the global aspect fore fronted this), though it remains an area where candidates could improve by moving beyond research into production companies and considering trends within the entire media industry.

Statement of Aims and Intentions

The preciseness of plans in the Statements of Aims and Intentions was the main differentiator between candidates. Those who achieved highly provided exact examples of what they intended to do in their production work, with justification. An often-successful structure was to refer to research and then say how this research would be incorporated into the cross-media production.

Existing media products are usually a fruitful source of research to refer to in the Statement of Aims and Intentions and they remain somewhat underused, with a number of candidates referring to, say, genre conventions very generally without providing specific examples. Those who did provide such examples were more precise about their sources and therefore often more precise about their own intended work.

Use of academic theories was mixed. Some candidates effectively discussed how their knowledge of a theorist would be applied to help shape their work, but others provided a very superficial reference that added little to justify plans. It is worth highlighting that there is no requirement to include academic theory within the Statement of Aims and Intentions and candidates should therefore not try to shoehorn it in.

The intended use of media language and construction of representations were the most common areas for candidates to find success. Those who did so included detailed plans, linked to research, and showcase their technical knowledge through the likes of specific camera shots to create detailed plans. Less successful candidates tended to describe their intentions, often with little detail of how they would be achieved or reference to the research that gave them their ideas in the first place.

There remain a number of candidates who do not address all five bullet points printed above the box in which they write their Statement of Aims and Intentions. In particular, the industry context and digital convergence were often either briefly addressed or entirely absent from many submissions. This could often lead to quite unbalanced work, where some bullet points were addressed in an excellent manner but others not at all. Candidates doing this could not fully access the mark scheme.

A similar issue was candidates who only discussed their second task as an afterthought or not at all. It is important to remember that the component is called 'Cross-Media Production' and therefore both tasks are integral. Candidates are therefore advised to discuss both tasks throughout their Statement of Aims and Intentions.

Moderators reported fewer instances of candidates exceeding the word count this year. The word count for the Statement of Aims and Intentions is 500 words. An allowance of 10% is permitted, meaning that the first 550 words of a candidate's work can be assessed. After this, marking should cease, and the assessor should note this has occurred on the coversheet.

A small but notable minority of Statements of Aims and Intentions were written in the past tense. Centres are reminded that the Statement of Aims and Intentions is not an evaluation. It should be written entirely between the completion of research and planning work and the commencement of production work.

Cross-Media Production

Most production pieces demonstrated an understanding of the global requirements of the briefs. Two main approaches were used: either appealing to a global audience or differentiating between audiences in different countries. The brief chosen often had a large bearing on this. Less successful work tended to treat the worldwide audience as one homogeneous mass.

More successful production work considered both Task 1 and Task 2 as two parts of a whole and produced pieces that were interrelated. This not only applied to the likes of house style but also to the construction of representations, with successful candidates often planning their representations across pieces by either spreading different representations across different production pieces (common in the magazines brief) or enhancing representations by adding depth to personas across pieces (often seen in the music marketing brief).

As always, careful planning for the tasks was the key to success, with precisely set up audio-visual camera shots, photos that left room for text to be added and well-scripted interviews leading to high-quality work.

There appeared to be fewer examples of production work featuring no or very few people, meaning that the vast majority of candidates were able to create representations with a sense of purpose. The best candidates used their representations, alongside other media language, to encode messages (including ideologies), such as feminist outlooks, environmental concerns and the importance of mental wellbeing.

There were very few instances of artificial intelligence being used to create images or audio-visual content, in line with the [guidance for managing AI](#) available on the Eduqas AS/A Level Media Studies webpage. However, some candidates did submit work with blocks of text (magazine articles and film blurbs especially) that had been written by AI. It is important that centres carefully check that all written material is the candidate's own. There are many free websites that can evaluate text to show whether copy has been written by AI or a human. There were a few isolated uses of computer-generated voices in podcasts submitted; these should also be avoided.

A few candidates exceeded the amount of non-original material that can be used. This problem is growing on websites, often due to the website builder software encouraging the use of templates. Candidates should take care to remove all non-original material, including the likes of backgrounds and merchandise, from templates. Commercial music being used as a sound bed for podcasts was also seen at times, despite only royalty-free music being permitted.

Brief 1: Television

Create an audio-visual sequence from a new television programme and associated online or print materials to promote the same programme.

*You should create a cross-media production that is an **international co-production from a UK broadcaster** (such as the BBC or ITV) **and an overseas partner** (such as AMC or the Seven Network). Your cross-media production should target a **mainstream global audience of 18–35 year olds**.*

This brief was the least often undertaken. Nevertheless, a range of achievement was seen in moderation. Many of the submissions recognised that an international co-production needs to appeal to a global audience and therefore has different qualities from a production produced primarily for a UK audience. This was often achieved through genre choice and setting. Some interesting documentaries were seen this year, in line with the genre's increasing current global appeal.

Task 1 was to produce a sequence from the television programme where a new character or participant is introduced. Some engaging sequences were seen, with candidates carefully selecting camera angles and cutting between them to engage and position the audience. Where shots had less consideration of mise-en-scène or were over-long, work tended to be less successful. The requirement for a new character or participant to be introduced was sometimes omitted and therefore acts as a reminder to candidates to ensure they plan to meet all of the brief's requirements.

Task 2(a) was not frequently chosen, though some imaginative websites were seen where it was. Those choosing to produce a 'Characters' or 'Participants' page often used this as an opportunity to deepen representations. 'Episodes' pages were less common. The embedded audio-visual piece, a 'Going Global' segment, was mixed. While most candidates included the required interview with a member of the cast or crew, discussion of the global appeal of the programme was often more limited, again serving as a reminder to candidates to read the brief requirements carefully.

The print option, Task 2(b), was more popular than websites. Posters tended to be the most successful part of this task, with many candidates carefully targeting their non-UK audience here. Some recognised that the programme being British could be a selling point by, for example, using the BBC name to indicate quality. Double-page spreads were also often engaging, with those focusing on characters often enhancing their representations. However, codes and conventions of the magazine form were often not used effectively, which is discussed in more detail in the magazines brief.

Task 2: Magazines

Create original print pages for a new magazine and associated online or audio/audio-visual material to promote the same magazine.

*You should create a cross-media production for a **publishing organisation that operates internationally** (such as Hearst or Condé Nast). Your cross-media production should target a **mainstream audience of 18–35 year olds with an interest in your chosen genre**.*

Being the most popular option, the full range of attainment was seen across the magazines brief. Work at the top end of the mark scheme was of professional standard, with those obtaining fewer marks often showing less familiarity with the codes and conventions of magazines, especially print. There seemed to be slightly fewer genre choices that did not allow for the construction of representations this year (such as baking magazines), with those that did venture into hobbies sensibly focusing on people (such as the chefs behind the baking) to allow for the construction of representations. There were, however, a few topics (often based around very niche interests) that seemed unlikely to sustain editions of magazines in two different countries.

Print work for Task 1 was very varied. The best work showed a clear differentiation between the UK and non-UK covers, recognising that each edition of the magazine had a different audience. It was pleasing to see how many candidates recognised the importance of global branding here, with most magazines maintaining a consistent house style across countries. Covers were largely successful, often embedding representations through the cover star's pose anchored by the main cover line. Where covers were less successful, it was often because the covers lacked media form conventions like direct address from the model or overlaps on the masthead. Double-page spreads were, overall, less successful than magazine covers and this remains the biggest area for improvement in this brief. Some candidates had considered each page as a separate entity and not considered how they would look when placed side-by-side. Furthermore, many of the specific issues around layout and text sizing highlighted in previous years remain and centres are pointed to the 2024 and 2023 reports for guidance on tackling some of the most common flaws. The most practical advice that can be offered to centres is for all Media Studies classrooms to have a stock of magazines on hand that candidates can refer to when researching and creating their print work.

Task 2(a) was the most common submission for the second task. Some of the magazine websites produced were impressive in design, often aping current design trends such as large hero images linking to a featured article and use of bold fonts and white space. Embedded audio-visual work that felt integral to the website, rather than merely present, was also a feature of high-achieving online content (and often one area where representations could be constructed). Less successful websites often had a less focused design and frequently presented homepages that did not fulfil their primary role of being a contents page of the website. Some websites were not fully related to their magazines, with some even being websites for a shop or fashion brand.

Although podcasts still make up the majority of submissions for Task 2(b), there was an increase in YouTube videos. Either was successful where the requirements of the brief (namely a focus on the launch of the international edition of the magazine, including an interview with the editor) were included. Many candidates included sequences ostensibly recorded abroad (but rarely actually so), which worked effectively. There were, however, some podcasts and YouTube videos that did not focus on the international launch and therefore met few content requirements of the brief. Some candidates did not make a podcast or YouTube video produced by the magazine, despite the brief making it clear that this was a requirement.

Brief 3: Film Marketing

Create print marketing materials for a new film and associated online or audio/audio-visual material to promote the same film.

*You should create a cross-media production for a **film studio that is part of global conglomerate** (such as Columbia Pictures or New Line Cinema). Your cross-media production should target **a mainstream global audience of 18–35 year olds**.*

Once again, film marketing was the second most popular brief, and its number of submissions was not far behind magazines. Codes and conventions of the media form were often very well handled here, perhaps given candidates' familiarity with film posters and other marketing for films. Genres were often very clear, and a wide range were seen, though horror was probably the most common. The popularity of this genre with audiences makes such a choice understandable, though it is a genre that needs careful handling to produce representations with depth. Often, a subgenre (such as psychological horror or gothic horror) can open up more opportunities to construct representations.

Task 1 required candidates to produce a poster for the UK and another country, alongside a DVD or Blu-ray sleeve. Posters were generally successful and often very in line with media form conventions. Some non-UK posters targeted audiences excellently, though some showed little variation from their British counterparts. Like magazines, some of the best representations were encoded where direct address was employed. Pleasingly, there were fewer examples of found billing blocks this year. DVD/Blu-ray sleeves usually contained effective covers and spines that were in line with conventions and used media language effectively, though back covers sometimes lacked attention to detail, especially around technical information. In line with the guidance for magazines, having a selection of DVDs/Blu-rays in classrooms for candidates to refer to is useful, as is the guidance on the BBFC's website.

There was a fairly even split between the choice of second tasks. The websites of Task 2(a) were usually well completed, showing a good understanding of online marketing techniques. Most websites added genuine depth to the film's promotion through behind-the-scenes insights. There were fewer examples of actors, rather than characters, being profiled this year. The majority of candidates chose an interview with an actor as their audio-visual content, which helped to construct a representation beyond the characters, though some did not include the discussion of the première necessary.

Task 2(b) was more successfully completed than last year, perhaps because of the focus being a film podcast or YouTube video, both of which are familiar to candidates. Podcasts were by far the more popular option here. Candidates generally met the requirements well, though there was a huge variation in the quality of interviews. The best offered real insights into the production that would interest an audience and focused on the film's global appeal. Less successful work tended to have less insightful questions (and therefore answers) and sometimes did not even ask about global appeal. The importance of scripting interviews cannot be overstated.

Brief 4: Music Marketing

Create an original music video and associated online or print material to promote the same artist or band.

*You should create a cross-media production for a **record label that is part of a global conglomerate** (such as RCA Records or Parlophone Records). Your cross-media production should target **a mainstream global audience of 18–35 year olds**.*

Music marketing remains the third most popular brief and has a very healthy following. Very few candidates misunderstood the requirement to create a new artist or band and most did so successfully. Often, a strong persona of the artist or band came through, with candidates using both tasks in a complementary way to construct this. A wide range of music genres were seen, though the pop genre remained the most popular.

This brief tended to be where uneven work across the tasks was most likely to be seen. When this did occur, Task 1, the music video, was invariably the more successful task. Many different approaches were taken. Some candidates crosscut between a narrative and performance footage, while others integrated performance footage into the narrative (often very successfully). Much lip-syncing was excellent. Candidates who were less successful tended to include a lot of repeated footage. While some repeated footage is acceptable (and in keeping with the media form), it should not be excessive and is self-penalising as it can only be credited once. The source songs used for the music video came from myriad different artists, though Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo and Lana Del Rey often featured and were often successful due to the lyrics of their songs being ripe for interpretation in a music video.

This brief had the biggest gulf in the numbers submitted for each of the Task 2 choices. Task 2(a), the website, was rarely chosen. At their best, websites enhanced artist or band representations through careful colour schemes, layouts and photography. Lower down the mark range, opportunities to construct representations were missed, with tour diaries and 'Global Inspiration' pages that did not add depth to the representation of the artist or band. It was clear that some candidates had not dedicated enough time to this task and there was often quite a difference in quality between music videos and websites.

The vast majority of music marketing candidates chose Task 2(b), which required print work. The tour poster, set for the first time this year, proved successful. Many candidates embraced the poster's opportunity to visually construct the representation of the artist or band, and careful selection of colours and fonts helped to build this, especially when paired with a striking central image. Double-page spreads used similar techniques to further enhance the representation of the artist or band, though many were often less successful because of a lack of adherence to media form conventions.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

With such a large number of centres submitting work for this qualification, it is impossible to address all aspects of centre assessment in this report. Centres are therefore advised to read their personalised moderator's report, available to download from the Internal Assessment Mark Input System on the [WJEC Portal](#) until December. Nevertheless, there are many general trends that can be commented on.

The majority of centres' marking was in line with the nationally agreed standard. Many centres have clearly engaged with exemplar material on the WJEC Portal and CPD events, including the free assessment review events. Where a centre's assessment was not accurate, the rank order could usually still be agreed.

Statements of Aims and Intentions were generally marked accurately. The level of detail in the plans was used to reward candidates and most centres recognised that candidates who referred to research were more likely to score highly. Descriptive work was sometimes generously marked. How well candidates have displayed their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework should always be at the forefront of assessors' minds when marking the Statements of Aims and Intentions.

Marking of candidates' response to the brief (the second column of the mark scheme) was largely accurate. Instances of centres overweighting the third bullet point of the mark scheme (on whether the specific requirements of the brief have been met) continue to decline and most centres are holistic in their assessment of this column. Assessment of audience positioning, mode of address, genre conventions and industry context was mostly accurate. However, like last year, there are still many centres that overmark candidates' use of conventions relevant to the chosen media forms. Quite often, work that is not in line with the conventions of the media form is awarded more marks than can be justified. For Band 3 and above, work should look like the media product it is trying to be. For example, double-page spreads must have a standard column layout and appropriately sized copy text (often 8 or 9 point). DVD and Blu-ray sleeves should have back covers that are conventional and contain all the required technical and rating information. Websites must follow a standardised layout. Often, a comparison of work (printed if appropriate) with a real media product is a useful intermediate step when a candidate is evaluating their own work.

Assessment of candidates' use of media language to communicate meanings and construct representations (the third column of the mark scheme) was also accurate for most centres, with candidates being correctly rewarded for the complexity of their media language use and control of connotations. Marking tended to be most accurate here when considering the construction of representations, with most centres correctly identifying how appropriate, purposeful and insightful the representations were. Overmarking tended to occur when representations had not been clearly constructed by candidates, with work that featured few faces (due to a lack of people entirely, masks or backs turned to the camera) sometimes being given more marks than could be justified. There was also a minority of centres who considered only representations in this column of the mark scheme. All media language use, whether it is to construct representations or not, should be considered here and credited appropriately.

While the majority of candidates submitted two production tasks of equal quality, there were inevitably some in which one task was considerably stronger than the other. Most centres assessed these submissions accurately, using the preamble above the marking grid to guide them. There were still some centres who overweighted the better task, and these are advised to refer to this guidance.

Most assessors justified their marking in Section C of the coversheet helpfully, with the most useful comments usually involving a combination of phrases from the mark scheme and, vitally, specific examples from the candidate's work. This made it clear to the moderator how the mark awarded had been arrived at and were therefore much appreciated. Other good practice includes evidence of internal moderation and explanation of how rubric infringements have been dealt with, such as confirmation of when marking of overlength work ceased.

Candidates' completion of Section A of the coversheet is still variable. Many candidates provided sufficient detail of the production process, making it clear that the correct procedures had been followed. Others, however, provided very limited detail. The [video guide to completing the coversheet](#) is recommended viewing to ensure coversheets are completed correctly.

There were fewer missing signatures from coversheets this year, though some centres still needed to be contacted where authentication in Section A or Section C of the coversheet was absent.

The final sections of the coversheet, Sections D and E, give candidates and unassessed participants the option to grant GDPR consent, which allows the work to be used in CPD events or as exemplars. While this is optional, it is appreciated when candidates can give consent, as it allows Eduqas to offer higher quality professional learning.

Nearly all centres used the new coversheet, which has an explicit declaration about the use of artificial intelligence. As this coversheet was introduced in January 2024, before the briefs for this series were released, older versions of the coversheet are no longer acceptable and should be destroyed.

Submission of the marks and work was generally a smooth process. The noteworthy change this year was the direct upload of sampled candidates' work to the Internal Assessment Mark Input System on the WJEC Portal, rather than the separate Surpass system used previously. The simplified process was universally welcomed by centres and hopefully relieved a little pressure at what is a very busy time of year.

Centres nearly always met the submission deadline of 15 May. Now that Surpass keycodes are not required, work can be uploaded as soon as the marks have been submitted, which automatically generates the sample. A number of centres uploaded their samples before the deadline, which was appreciated.

Very few clerical errors, such as mismatched marks or incorrect totalling of marks, occurred, but they were obviously concerning when they did occur. It is vitally important to check that marks have been totalled correctly (the PDF version of the coversheet will total marks automatically) and that the correct mark is entered on the WJEC Portal.

Most uploads were well organised and used sensible filenames, with most centres following [the guidance on the Eduqas website](#). It was particularly appreciated when files were named in a consistent manner to make the work easy to navigate.

Most centres adhered to the expectation that all work is directly uploaded, rather than being hosted elsewhere (such as YouTube). The exception to this is websites, where a link is required. Most centres provided this on the coversheet. Some also uploaded separate documents containing links, which was often helpful. Some centres had to be contacted because they provided an editing or preview link to the website rather than the published link. This was particularly the case with websites built in Canva; here, candidates should publish their websites and submit that link, rather than choose Canva's option of a public link, which does not produce an interactive website.

The vast majority of other work was uploaded in appropriate file formats. However, there were a few examples centres uploading Photoshop (.psd) and Microsoft Publisher (.pub) files, which cannot be opened by all moderators and therefore are not permitted.

Most centres submitted print work as it would be seen by the audience. Sometimes, pieces of work that should have been one document were uploaded as multiple files, such as double-page spreads uploaded as separate pages or DVD or Blu-ray sleeves uploaded as separate front covers, spines and back covers. On occasion, print work was submitted at a very small size, making it difficult to read. It is therefore important that centres check work is readable and ensure export settings are of high enough quality, especially when exporting as a JPEG.

There are still some centres submitting excessively large files, which can take some time for moderators to download. Video files were the main culprits, though some audio files and even pieces of print work (often those originating from Photoshop) were also hundreds of megabytes. It is perfectly acceptable for teachers and lecturers to assist, or even take the lead, in the exporting of work to ensure the file size is reasonable. The free [HandBrake](#) software remains very useful for compressing video files.

Most centres fulfil these administrative duties well, of course. In fact, the overarching impression at the end of the moderation season is, once again, that centres up and down the country are delivering Component 3 with care, passion and rigour. Furthermore, the candidates within these centres are working with dedication to produce impressive production work.

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>

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

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Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

Regional Rep Team

Our regional team covers all areas of England and can provide face-to-face and online advice at a time which is convenient to you.

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