GCE AS Examiners' Report

Media Studies

AS Level

Summer 2026

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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

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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

In Component 1, candidate performance was positive overall, with evidence of strong preparation and improved time management, particularly in Section B. Candidates generally demonstrated secure knowledge of set products, although higher-level responses consistently balanced detailed textual evidence with relevant theoretical and contextual understanding.

In Q10, successful candidates made balanced comparisons, integrated media language, context and theory effectively, and demonstrated sophisticated essay-writing skills. Q20 showed good engagement with the unseen advertisement, although many candidates lost focus by analysing representation rather than media language or making unnecessary comparisons with set products. Q33 remained challenging, with stronger responses accurately linking political contexts to the *Daily Mirror*, while weaker answers confused ownership, political alignment and industry theory. In Q42, candidates showed improved knowledge of audience targeting, though some lacked precise episode-specific evidence.

Across the paper, common issues included imprecise media terminology, inappropriate or superficial application of theory, descriptive rather than analytical responses, and limited textual evidence.

In Component 2, candidate performance was strong, with secure knowledge of the set products and improved understanding of key concepts across the paper. Stronger responses consistently integrated theory with detailed textual evidence and maintained focus on the command words. Common weaknesses included descriptive responses, generic theory application and insufficient evaluation.

In Section A, candidates demonstrated good understanding of television genre conventions and Steve Neale's theory. Higher-mark responses integrated repetition, difference and hybridity naturally, while weaker answers identified conventions without explaining their significance or became narrative retellings.

In Section B, performance on ownership questions was generally secure. Candidates understood conglomerate ownership, but higher responses supported definitions with precise examples. The longer industries question proved more challenging, with many candidates analysing media language or representation instead of focusing on ownership patterns and industry issues.

Candidates showed strong knowledge of online audiences and participatory culture in Section C. The best responses evaluated the extent of audience influence, considering platform ownership and commercial priorities. Centres should continue to develop evaluative skills, purposeful theory application and precise use of set-product evidence.

In Component 3, most centres followed Eduqas administrative procedures successfully, with timely submissions and correctly completed coversheets. Recurring issues included the upload of unsupported file formats and print products (such as DVD/Blu-ray covers) as separate files.

Candidates' Statements of Aims reflected stronger research than in previous series, with fewer forced theoretical references. Stronger candidates used research into genre, audience and industry to inform clear, concise Statements of Aims written before production. Industry context remained the weakest area, particularly for television, and centres should ensure statements focus on planning, remain within the word limit, and are supported by relevant research.

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Most candidates' productions met the requirements of the briefs and candidates produced creative work demonstrating secure understanding of genre conventions, with music videos particularly strong. However, common weaknesses included inconsistent application of industry conventions, omission of required features, technical errors such as incorrect product formats or running times, and some over-rewarding where work met the brief but lacked authentic industry practice.

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MEDIA STUDIES

GCE Advanced Subsidiary

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 1

Overview of the Component

In response to the previous summer series, it was encouraging to see how centres and candidates had acknowledged feedback, particularly regarding Section B time-management and audience-focused concepts. Overall, candidates demonstrated a confident command of the set products and showed a secure understanding of the theoretical framework. Their responses indicated a clear awareness of the varied demands across the paper, notably the Representation and Audience responses which were handled with assurance, suggesting thorough and effective preparation for this component.

Most candidates attempted all questions, and incomplete scripts were uncommon. However, the Media Language advertisement question proved challenging for some candidates as responses often drifted toward a representation style approach rather than analysing the advert's purpose, construction, and intended meanings embedded by the producer. This suggests a continued need for focused preparation with unseen products, ensuring candidates can apply media language concepts with precision and maintain a more targeted analytical approach.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.10 Compare how representations in the music videos construct versions of reality. [25]

In your answer you must consider:
- the similarities and differences in the representations
- how far the representations relate to relevant media contexts.

Assessment Objectives:

AO2 1 and 2:

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

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

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

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The question invited a variety of representation explorations which candidates effectively did, including lively explorations of gender and ethnicity. Candidates could have explored either of the set texts 'Formation' by Beyonce or 'Underdog' by Alicia Keys. Most candidates referred to 'Formation' and tended to be more confident with their analysis and contextual focus.

Candidates attaining marks in the higher bands demonstrated a confident and effective application of the theoretical framework. These candidates engaged with more complex aspects of representation and demonstrated clear awareness of selection and combination, particularly in relation to how the media producers constructed versions of reality using techniques including archive footage, handheld camera and real settings. Some candidates in these bands referred to the documentary or nostalgic aesthetic, which was perceptive. There were frequent and detailed applications of media language to analyse the media products. Responses in the higher bands were balanced in their comparisons and clearly connected the versions of reality represented with relevant contexts e.g. addressing social inequalities in the music videos by empowering underrepresented/marginalised groups. Many candidates had clearly engaged deeply with the empowerment of the artists through their detailed mise-en-scene analysis ranging from the clothing worn by the artists or the settings they inhabited. This led to strong contextual insight.

The application of media theory was consistently strong, with candidates making relevant and well-judged references to key theorists, including Stuart Hall. In particular, Hall's ideas on gender hierarchies and the way stereotyping emerges from power imbalances reducing individuals or groups to oversimplified simple traits, were applied with clarity and confidence. Candidates who applied theory in this way were able to explore how their chosen music videos actively challenge wider societal issues. Particularly strong were references to George Gerbner's cultivation theory, with candidates noting how repeated historical portrayals of the Black community as weak, vulnerable, or dangerous are directly confronted and subverted within the videos. Further effective theoretical engagement included the use of Claude Lévi-Strauss' binary opposition and David Gauntlett's identity/pick and mix theory, both of which were applied appropriately to deepen analysis and demonstrate a confident understanding of how media texts construct meaning.

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

Responses in the middle band tended to concentrate on more straightforward or obvious aspects of representation. There was a tendency to be over reliant on the analysis of the lyrics from the stimulus material 'Together' by Chance the Rapper at the expense of other technical/visual elements used in the music video. Some of these responses leaned more heavily toward analysing one product over the other, particularly the set one studied. References to context were generally straightforward and/or satisfactory and sometimes lacked detail. Some candidates in this band either

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name dropped theorist without appropriately applying or lost focus of the response with inappropriate theory application such as that of Steve Neale's genre theory.

Very few candidates were underprepared for this response. However, responses placed in the lower bands tended to simply describe the key features of the two products, particularly 'Together' with limited, undeveloped or absent judgements and conclusions related to contexts. A common issue among lower-band responses was an imbalance in contextual comparison. This limited engagement weakened the comparative element required by the question. Additionally, the choice of theoretical perspective is crucial. It must be valid, relevant, and clearly support the candidate's analysis. Some responses, like previous series, overemphasised Stuart Hall's reception theory, which while relevant with preferred/hegemonic reading, detracted from the core requirement of analytical comparison between the texts. Several candidates demonstrated basic to limited use of media language when referring to techniques used in the products such as 'clips' rather than specific shots, 'switches to…' instead of cuts to…, 'dull' rather than low key lighting and 'shaky' rather than handheld camera. Finally, while only a small number of candidates made this error, it is important to note that responses cannot be awarded above Band 2 if they only engage with one of the texts, regardless of whether aspects of the response meet upper band criteria.

Q.20 Explore how media language communicates meaning in the advertisement. [10]

Assessment Objectives:

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

The unseen product for this question was a print advertisement for a Cadbury's campaign, Yours for 200 Years (2024). This proved to be a divisive product for candidates. It was evidently accessible for those that had prepared well for it through their study of advertisement products. It was encouraging to see candidates across the ability range engage with the extract in detail through various media terminology and contexts. Candidates achieving higher bands responded directly to the question, offering an insightful analysis of a range of media language elements used to communicate meaning, including:

- mise-en-scene such as colour, settings, clothing, character expression /movement and props
- mode of address
- layout and design
- written elements
- iconography

Candidates accessing marks in the higher bands were confident in exploring a range of media language elements used by the producers and linked this appropriately to the purpose of the advertisement. These responses were logically structured and would remain focused to the question, discussing advertising techniques and brand identity that the producers used to appeal to their target audience. The unseen product allowed candidates to approach their response from a range of different starting points. There was some excellent, detailed analysis demonstrating understanding of the theoretical framework and application of relevant theory such as Roland Barthes' semiotics theory. Sophisticated responses applied the language of

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semiotics appropriately to develop their analysis further which is to be encouraged. Higher band responses typically recognised how producers used specific techniques, such as the colours purple and gold, to connote quality**,** luxury**,** and royalty, reinforcing the brand's trusted status. Candidates also noted how the use of direct address**,** particularly through the word 'yours'*,* was designed to position the audience to feel a sense of personal connection and closeness to the brand.
There was some perceptive engagement with the 'myth' element of the product, particularly in recognising how the depiction of milk production within a domestic setting connotes naturalness and is crafted to reassure and appeal to consumers. Further exploration of 'myth' also led candidates to consider how references to cocoa content in chocolate bars work to construct authenticity and reinforce the product's heritage.

The unseen text is always drawn from one of the forms studied for Section A, candidates are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework in relation to the selected form. However, candidates must remember that the focus of this response is Media Language. Many candidates approached this response as a gendered representation one at the expense of understanding the purpose and analysis of the product, for example referring to Cadbury's favouring patriarchy as a means of selling their chocolate. Some candidates explicitly compared the product to the set 'Tide' product, which was inappropriate as this was not a requirement of the question, whilst others suggested that the poster was a 1950's/60's representation, which was inaccurate. By analysing the representation within the product in the detail that they did, such responses lost focus of the question and did not demonstrate a range of media language techniques used to create meaning making it hard in most cases to reward higher than Band 3.

Candidates in the middle of the mark range typically identified media language techniques and their associated connotations but their analysis often lacked detail or remained focused on more obvious aspects of visual techniques, such as clothing and colour. They tended to overlook the wider variety of mise-en-scene and written element techniques available for exploration. As a result, they produced a reasonable and/or straightforward analysis of the print advertisement that tended not to cover a broad range of points. It is important to note that without engaging with a broader range of media language elements, candidates are unlikely to access the higher bands.

Candidates awarded in the lower bands often misapplied theory such as inserting Stuart Hall's reception theory inappropriately or over-elaborating gender representation theory, neglecting the media language elements used to communicate meaning and the intended purpose of the advertisement. Some candidates analysed purely written techniques at the expense of any other visual aspect. A small number of responses were overtly descriptive with only basic application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework to analyse the product. In such cases, the limited and undeveloped understanding made it difficult to award higher than Band 2.

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Q.30 Assessment Objectives

Q.31 AO1 1a

- **Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media.**

Q.32 AO1 1a and 1b

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

Q.33 AO1 2a and 2b:

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

Q.31 Name the media organisation that owns the *Daily Mirror.* [1]

Responses mostly accurately responded with Reach, Reach PLC or Reach Publications, which were all credible. However, there were a variety of responses which included; 'BBC', 'BBFC', 'News Corp', 'Bauer' or 'IPSO' which were all inaccurate and not credible. There were few candidates who did not answer the question at all.

Q.32 Briefly explain **two** factors that affect print newspaper circulation. [4]

Overall, most candidates successfully identified two valid factors and provided explanations that enabled them to access the full range of marks. Several candidates also offered more holistic explanations, which were equally creditworthy. Technological developments were a common focus, often explored through references to digital convergence, digital shifts, news apps, and digital subscriptions, all of which were valid. Some candidates chose to examine two digital based factors, such as digital apps and digital subscriptions, and provided sound explanations for both, which was also acceptable.

In their explanations, several candidates highlighted the appeal of user-generated content (UGC) and citizen journalism. Others discussed the issue of 'relevance', noting that print news can quickly become outdated, a credible and well-reasoned point. Many candidates also referred to economic contexts, including the cost of print circulation and the price of newspapers, and how these influence circulation figures. Additionally, some explored shifts in societal values, such as changing social trends, the age of audiences, and a general decline in interest in print newspapers, all of which were valid considerations.

Interestingly, a number of candidates interpreted the question as asking which factors might positively impact print newspaper circulation. They referenced key events that could increase demand, such as political elections, Royal events, or major global disasters. These responses were also credible when supported with clear and relevant explanations.

Some responses lacked sufficient clarity, which limited the marks that could be awarded. For example, statements such as **'**Regulation' followed by claims like 'IPSO's control has led to circulation decrease' or 'IPSO ensures false information isn't spread' were too vague to be credited highly. These answers did not clearly explain the mechanism of regulation or its impact. In contrast, candidates who linked regulation to a concrete example, such as the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal and explained how this event damaged audience trust and affected circulation produced credible, well-developed responses aligned with the indicative content.

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There were also responses that focused on vertical integration, suggesting that companies controlling multiple stages of production can produce print copies more quickly. These answers were generally undeveloped and did not demonstrate a credible understanding of how vertical integration relates to the question.

Q33 Explain how political contexts influence the newspaper industry. Refer to the *Daily Mirror* to support your points. [10]

In this question, candidates were rewarded for drawing together knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study, including different areas of the theoretical framework and media contexts. As with previous series, some candidates struggled with this question, largely because they were either too general with their reference to the *Daily Mirror* or offered limited reference to political contexts to aid their response.

Candidates performing in the higher bands typically opened with the wider political contexts influencing the newspaper industry, before moving into well chosen, detailed examples drawn from the set edition or as encouraged by the specification, a separate full edition or selected key pages from the *Daily Mirror*'s online website. It was particularly encouraging to see responses anchored to specific publication dates**,** demonstrating secure contextual understanding.

Stronger answers evidenced a clear grasp of the paper's left-wing Labour alignment and how this ideological stance informed its representation of events and issues. These candidates engaged thoughtfully with how such representations reflect the values and beliefs of both the newspaper and its target audience.

High-band responses also offered precise and accurate references to the newspaper without drifting into unnecessary analysis, maintaining a firm focus on industry contexts. They applied relevant theory, most notably Curran and Seaton's Power and Media Industries, evidencing clear understanding that the newspaper sector is dominated by a small number of powerful companies, positioning the *Daily Mirror* as a comparatively lone left-leaning voice within a predominantly right-wing press landscape.

There was some misunderstanding with candidates who assumed that the owners (Reach plc) of *Daily Mirror* held strong left-wing ideologies, which is inaccurate. Stronger responses understood that Reach plc have maintained their position in the UK market by diversifying region news. They clearly understood that they also own the right-wing newspaper *Daily Express* and that Reach plc's diverse pattern ownership has allowed them to create the conditions for more adventurous media products.

Candidates in the middle band often produced imbalanced responses**,** offering satisfactory political contexts and some, but not always, appropriate reference to the *Daily Mirror*, frequently relying on the set 'Partygate' edition. Some candidates demonstrated stronger contextual understanding than textual engagement, or vice versa, which restricted the overall development of their answers. While some did comment appropriately on aspects of the newspaper's construction, these observations were either overly analytical or insufficiently developed to meet the higher band criteria.

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Lower-band responses tended to offer limited engagement with political contexts**,** influencing the newspaper. Several candidates shifted instead toward audience response readings**,** applying Stuart Hall's reception theory in detail but with little attention to industry frameworks. A number of responses contained notable inaccuracies, particularly confusion around the *Daily Mirror'*s political allegiance and its associated values, attitudes and beliefs. Weaker answers frequently name checked theorists without using them to deepen exploration of the newspaper industry**.** A small number of responses were very brief, limiting meaningful exploration, suggesting that exam time management may need improvement.

Question 40

Q.41 Identify **two** ways by which radio producers categorise audiences. [2]

Assessment Objectives:

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

Many candidates successfully identified ways by which radio producers categorise audiences, including mainstream, niche/specialised, demographics such as gender, age, social class, ethnicity/race interests and socio-economic groups or psychographics including lifestyle, values and attitudes. Other commonly cited and valid approaches included explorers, reformers, adventurers, resigned and fans.

However, some responses either lacked specificity or accuracy and so did not meet the criteria for credit. These responses included 'passive', 'active', 'reactive', 'past experiences', 'time of the day', 'different radio stations such as BBC1', 'statistics' and 'entertainment'.

Q.42 Explain how radio productions target audiences. Refer to **at least one episode** from either *Woman's Hour* or *Have You Heard George's Podcast?* to support your points. [8]

Assessment Objectives:

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

This question required the candidates to refer to the specific episode(s) from either of the set radio productions of *Woman's Hour* or *Have You Heard George's Podcast?*

Responses, overall, were promising, evidencing candidates had thoroughly prepared themselves for this question and acknowledged feedback from the previous series as they were demonstrating a clear understanding of audience concepts as referenced in the specification. Candidates had also evidenced better time management allocating sufficient time to Section B where very few candidates had incomplete answers.

Candidates in the higher bands demonstrated a confident and insightful exploration of how producers of the radio productions target their audience, showcasing excellent, detailed, and accurate knowledge and understanding. There were a variety of responses from both radio productions, but stronger responses tended to come from *Have You Heard George's Podcast?* from notable episodes, 'Flying the Flag', 'A Grenfell Story', 'Listen Closer' and 'Sabrina's Boy'. These specific responses often included excellent and detailed references to the set product, particularly in relation to the techniques used such as the selection of guests/contributors, the

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content/issues embedded which would complement the BBC's remit and the use of digital platforms. This would then lead to the candidates linking to how the audiences were targeted. There was strong and relevant application of audience theory, with many candidates drawing on Stuart Hall's reception theory, specifically focusing on the dominant or hegemonic reading intended by the producers. While not explicitly required by the specification, some candidates went further by incorporating A-level concepts such as David Gauntlett's identity theory and Blumler and Katz's uses and gratifications theory, applying them in appropriate and meaningful ways.

Some candidates were overtly analytical at the expense of exploring the techniques used to target the audiences and generally would have been awarded in the lower bands. There was also some confusion between BBC Radio 4 and Channel 4. Some responses had strong knowledge and understanding of targeting and methods used but did not refer in enough detail to a specific episode to support their response. For example, with *Woman's Hour*, some candidates mentioned that there were guest panellists in their episode of focus but did not specify who they were and how this would target the intended audience, hence lacking in development. Whilst there are limitations of what can be written for a response of this kind, specific evidence is desired from the episodes studied.

Some responses in the lower bands were largely descriptive and demonstrated limited reference to the set products. These basic responses often referenced the product's targeting of audiences through issues but would offer little evidence to elaborate or compliment. Additionally, some candidates attempted to reference Stuart Hall's reception theory but did so without meaningful application, often over-elaborating the 'negotiated' or 'oppositional' readings, which was lacking in relevance to the question asked and led to a loss of focus on how audiences are targeted.

Summary of key points

- Centres should prepare candidates so that they are able to answer questions from across the full range of specification content. Candidates should be able to engage with questions that test all bullet points outlined in the specification knowledge grids.
- When theory is used in a response, it should be relevant, applied effectively and should be a helpful tool for analysis or discussion of the set products. Candidates are not credited for downloading theory, trying to 'shoehorn' irrelevant theory into a response or simply naming theorists, often in brackets.
- For Media Language responses, particularly advertisements, candidates should consider the purpose of them and refrain from being overtly focused on representation analysis
- As per the specification, candidates are encouraged to study a whole print edition of the *Daily Mirror* (ideally separate from the set edition studied) and at least 3 pages on the *Daily Mirror* online to elevate explorations of how it functions as part of the newspaper industry
- Candidates should refrain from being overtly analytical with Section B extended responses and refer to the specific aspects of the products used in relation to the industry/audience focused question.
- Candidates must develop a strong understanding of media contexts and how these contexts shape both media products and production processes. They also need to be able to explore each set product in direct relation to its historical, cultural, social, and industrial contexts to produce more informed and insightful analysis. They should consider leading with the contexts to strengthen their focus particularly with the Section B extended response.

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MEDIA STUDIES

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COMPONENT 2

Overview of the Component

Overall, candidates demonstrated a secure understanding of the theoretical framework and were generally well prepared for the examination. There was clear evidence that centres had engaged thoroughly with the specification and that candidates were familiar with the set products across all sections of the paper. Responses frequently demonstrated confident knowledge of media language, media industries and audiences, although the extent to which this knowledge was applied to the specific requirements of individual questions varied considerably.

Performance was strongest where candidates addressed the demands of the question directly, selecting appropriate examples from the set products to support well-developed arguments. The most successful responses integrated theoretical concepts naturally within their discussion, using theory to illuminate analysis rather than allowing it to dominate responses.

Candidates generally demonstrated secure knowledge of genre conventions and media ownership, together with a sound understanding of developments within the contemporary digital media landscape. Knowledge of audience participation, prosumer culture and the importance of online communities and fandoms was often well developed.

Where responses were less successful, candidates frequently relied on descriptive accounts of the set products or reproduced theoretical knowledge without demonstrating its relevance to the question. In a number of cases, candidates adopted a familiar approach regardless of the focus of the question, resulting in detailed textual analysis in which discussion of media industries or audiences was required. The strongest responses remained firmly focused on the assessment objectives and the wording of the question throughout.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Explore how the set episode of *Peaky Blinders*/*Black Mirror*/*Killing Eve* uses genre conventions. Refer to Steve Neale's genre theory in your response.

Assessment Objectives:

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

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.

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Overall, this question was answered well. Candidates demonstrated a secure understanding of genre conventions and showed good knowledge of the conventions associated with the set television products. There was encouraging evidence that centres had developed candidates' understanding of genre as a dynamic concept rather than a fixed category, with many responses recognising hybridity and the ways in which genres evolve to meet changing audience expectations.

The strongest responses demonstrated a secure understanding of Steve Neale's concepts of repetition and difference, explaining how familiar conventions were repeated whilst simultaneously being adapted or subverted to maintain audience interest. Rather than simply identifying genre conventions, these candidates explored how conventions structured audience expectations and considered the significance of genre hybridity in shaping contemporary television drama. Theory was integrated naturally throughout the discussion and supported by detailed reference to the set episode.

Successful responses selected examples from across the whole episode and demonstrated detailed textual knowledge. Analysis remained focused on the relationship between genre conventions and audience expectations, rather than becoming descriptive accounts of the narrative.

Less successful responses demonstrated knowledge of genre conventions but relied heavily on identifying conventions without explaining their significance. In some responses, Steve Neale's theory was introduced but not fully applied to the analysis of the set product. These responses often developed into narrative description with only limited discussion of repetition, difference or hybridity.

Centres should continue to encourage candidates to use theory to support analysis rather than treating it as a separate element of the response. The strongest responses demonstrated that detailed textual analysis and carefully integrated theoretical discussion are far more effective than extensive discussion of theory in isolation.

Section B – Questions 41, 51 and 61

Briefly explain what is meant by conglomerate ownership. Refer to *Woman*/*Woman's Realm*/*Vogue* magazine in your response.

Assessment Objectives:

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

Overall, candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of conglomerate ownership. Most responses were able to identify that a conglomerate consists of a parent company which owns a number of subsidiary companies, and many candidates successfully identified the ownership structure of the specified magazine.

The strongest responses supported this knowledge with accurate exemplification taken directly from the ownership of the set product. These responses moved beyond generic definitions and demonstrated secure understanding of the relationship between the parent company and its subsidiaries, illustrating this through relevant examples from the magazine industry.

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Less successful responses frequently relied on generic definitions of conglomerate ownership with limited or no exemplification. Although many candidates correctly identified, for example, IPC as the parent company, fewer were able to explain this through the ownership structure of the specified magazine. Some responses provided only basic definitions without supporting examples, limiting the marks available. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to support definitions with precise exemplification drawn directly from the ownership of the set products.

Section B – Questions 42, 52 and 62

Explain the significance of patterns of ownership in the magazine industry. Refer to *Woman*/*Woman's Realm*/*Vogue* magazine to support your response.

Assessment Objectives:

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

This question proved more demanding than the 5-mark ownership question. Whilst many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of the set product and its historical context, fewer maintained a consistent focus on the industry issues required by the question. The strongest responses recognised that the focus of the question was the significance of ownership patterns. References to the set product were used selectively to explain how ownership influenced commercial priorities, ideology, representations, target audiences and the construction of media products. These responses demonstrated a clear understanding that examples from the set product should support discussion of industry issues rather than become the focus of the response.

Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of the cultural context of the 1960s and showed good understanding of the relationship between media products and the dominant social values of the period. Stronger responses linked these observations directly to ownership structures and commercial priorities.

A significant number of candidates approached this question as though it were assessing media language or representation. These responses frequently analysed magazine covers, advertisements and representations of gender in considerable detail but did not explain how these reflected patterns of ownership. Consequently, many responses became detailed textual analyses which only briefly addressed media industries.

Centres should remind candidates that the wording of the question should determine the approach taken. References to the set product remain essential; however, exemplification should be used to explain how ownership influences the messages, values and structure of media products, rather than providing detailed textual analysis for its own sake.

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Section C

To what extent are audiences actively involved in online media production? Refer to *JJ Olatunji*/*KSI*/*Zoe Sugg* in your response.

Assessment Objectives:

AO2 1 and 2
Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to:
- analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts,
- to make judgements and draw conclusions.

Candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of the online set products and generally showed confident understanding of the contemporary digital media landscape. There was particularly strong knowledge of developments in audience behaviour, with many candidates discussing the shift from passive consumers to active prosumers. The importance of online communities, participatory culture and fandoms in supporting the success of contemporary digital media products was frequently explored with confidence.

Knowledge of the set products (AO1) was generally secure. However, application and analysis (AO2) proved more variable. Whilst many candidates identified examples of audience interaction successfully, fewer analysed the significance of this interaction or evaluated the extent to which audiences influence media production.

The strongest responses developed balanced arguments throughout, recognising that although audiences are increasingly active participants within digital media, audience participation frequently occurs within platforms controlled by major media organisations. These candidates considered the influence of platform ownership, algorithms, monetisation strategies and commercial priorities when evaluating the extent of audience power.

Less successful responses often assumed that audience participation automatically equated to audience control. In these responses, discussion of audience interaction remained descriptive and conclusions were frequently asserted rather than supported through analysis of the set products.

Some candidates referred to theoretical perspectives that do not form part of the AS Specification and while this will be credited where appropriately applied, at times theoretical discussion became disconnected from the question and developed into extended "theory dumps" which added little to the analysis. The strongest responses used theory selectively and purposefully, ensuring that theoretical concepts strengthened rather than replaced analysis of the set products.

Centres should continue to encourage candidates to develop evaluative responses to questions requiring consideration of *'To what extent'*. Successful responses maintained focus on the command phrase throughout and reached balanced, well-supported judgements based on detailed evidence from the specified set products.

Summary of key points:

Centres should ensure that candidates are able to:

- apply theoretical perspectives to the analysis of the set products rather than reproduced in isolation;
- pay close attention to the wording of each question and ensure that responses remain focused on the assessment objective being assessed;

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- support arguments with detailed and precise reference to the set products rather than generalised description;
- distinguish clearly between questions assessing media language, media industries and audiences, adapting their approach accordingly;
- develop evaluative responses which fully address command phrases such as 'Explore' and 'To what extent'.

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MEDIA STUDIES

GCE Advanced Subsidiary

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 3

Overview of the Component

The overwhelming majority of centres and candidates submitted full productions as detailed in the briefs and work reflected the range of briefs. The most popular briefs by far were the print-based options especially the magazine and film marketing briefs. Pleasingly, most candidates were encouraged to work within the genres of their choice although some candidates should be given guidance on the advisability of certain genres and whether or not the conventions are either suitable or advisable. There was evidence of some candidates creating representations of places rather than social groups which limits their access to the full range of the mark scheme. Some centres offered a range of briefs; however, in the main, centres tended to follow one or two briefs.

Candidates responded positively to the briefs and were able to produce work that demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of media forms and genre conventions framed by theoretical framework. It was clear that most centres had set appropriate tasks in order for candidates to meet the requirements of the brief and the need for the tasks to be independently developed and produced.

All centres are recommended to access exemplar work on the WJEC secure site to ascertain the standards for Component 3.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Administration

The administrative procedures prescribed by Eduqas are designed to facilitate an effective moderation process and ensure that candidates' work is viewed and moderated appropriately. Most centres adhered to these procedures and uploaded work in advance or on the deadline, using appropriate file formats. It is extremely helpful where centres have labelled work with the name of the candidate and title of the document, as this allows moderators to identify quickly and easily who the work belongs to and view each part of the production efficiently.

As in previous years, it is important to point out to centres that it is crucial that productions, such as DVD covers or double page spreads, are uploaded as one accurately sized document, rather than the back, front and spine or each page being submitted as separate documents. This enables the moderators to see the artefacts to the candidates' best advantage. Please note that it is important to ensure the file types are those that have been authorised for submission, rather than files such as .pub or .psd, as these require specialist software to view and therefore are not appropriate for submitting candidates' work. Files which ask the moderator to pay for the privilege of opening them remain inappropriate.

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Coversheets

Most of the coversheets were completed appropriately, including signatures of candidates, teachers, and dates to authenticate the work. The majority candidates identified research undertaken to inform their production and link to the brief. Most candidates completed the Statement of Aims and Intentions in Section B of the coversheet as required.

The Statement of Aims and Intentions must be completed after the research stage of planning before the production begins. Therefore, this should be written in future tense. Fewer candidates than in previous years but enough to comment upon wrote in the past tense suggesting that they had written the Statement of Aims and Intentions after completing the production which should not be the case. Centres should ensure they are giving clear guidance with regards to this, and the Statement of Aims and Intentions should be signed off by the candidate and teacher prior to the production commencing and be a guide to candidates as they work on the productions.

Assessment Objectives: AO3

Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning. Candidates must respond to the set brief for the year of assessment. Briefs are released by Eduqas annually, on 1st September in the year prior to assessment. Most candidates met the requirements of their chosen brief and were able to apply suitable knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework to their production work. In a few cases candidates did deviate from the specific stipulations of their brief with regards to industry or audience. This should be reflected in the assessment of the work.

Most candidates adhered to the more detailed requirements of the brief in terms of length and features. However, centres are reminded that simply meeting the requirements of the brief is not enough to place the work into the higher bands for Column 2. The first bullet point of column two of the marking grid does require a consideration of how conventions are used relevant to the chosen form, genre, and industry context of the set brief. In some cases, this was not considered and consequentially, some candidates were over-rewarded for meeting the requirements of the brief. The production should adhere to the codes and conventions of the chosen form and be recognisable as such. This was not always the case.

Candidates should use their research findings to inform their own decisions about their production work. For example, magazine work should have a clear house style, with layout and design features reflecting typical industry conventions. Some candidates' magazine productions did not feature consistent use of fonts, columns, and colour to demonstrate the brand identity of the product, and in some cases were lacking industry features such as page numbers. Equally, the film marketing production brief saw some productions missing institutional information on the DVD cover or appropriate age rating certification or guidance that conventionally and industry standards would expect to see.

Statement of Aims and Intentions

It is essential that candidates have undertaken appropriate research into similar media products before writing the Statement of Aims and Intentions. Candidates should reference their research to explain how they will apply this knowledge and understanding to the creation of their own productions. Research into comparable products is essential and should enable candidates to explain what they have learnt from their research and their decision-making process when putting the productions together. There was much less evidence this year that candidates had been directed to mention particular theorists which is

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positive; candidates will be credited where appropriate for relevant application of theorists' ideas, but these should not be 'shoe-horned' into discussion.

A number of candidates significantly exceeded the word limit and, in such cases, teachers must cease assessment of the statement once the upper threshold has been reached and the allocation of marks should reflect this. They should also note this on the cover sheet and only mark the first 350 words. Similarly, candidates whose Statements of Aims and Intentions were below 10% of the word limit should have this acknowledged on the cover sheet and be marked accordingly.

Production

As mentioned, a majority of candidates followed print briefs (Brief 2: Magazine or Brief 3: Film Marketing), with a larger than usual number following the music marketing online brief. It was pleasing to see that, this year, a small number of candidates opted for the television brief which was to create an opening sequence for the first episode of a new television programme in a factual or fictional genre of their choice. A variety of genres were produced throughout the briefs and a majority of these were assessed appropriately.

Brief 1: Television

A handful of candidates attempted Brief 1 audio-visual this year. However, a common theme for these candidates was not completing all the elements required in the brief. Some candidates attempted to work within the crime genre but failed to elicit the necessary tension within their opening sequences by not having any crimes take place. It was difficult, in some of the television sequences to understand the plot/narrative which made the genre difficult to discern. All examples seen in the samples successfully produced media productions which targeted a 'Millennial/Generation Y' audience although more emphasis could have been placed on making the products suitable for Netflix or Apple TV+.

Centres are reminded that the briefs document is helpful, and it guides candidates to research their own examples of opening sequences from programmes created by the specified broadcasters and targeting the same audience as detailed in the brief that can be found across many genres (or sub-genres), for example, *Slow Horses*, *Messi's World Cup: The Rise of A Legend* (Apple TV+), *Emily in Paris* and *Celebrity Bear Hunt* (Netflix) and that 'learners should carefully consider the representations that are constructed by the characters or participants featured. They should plan how to achieve this through the media language employed.'

There were no examples seen of the brief's online task.

Brief 2: Magazines

There was more evidence this year of candidates or centres attempting to create an online website for a magazine although most of the work seen in the samples were print-based.

A wide range of genres were engaged with, and it was mostly evident that candidates had researched their genre and developed their knowledge and understanding of the conventions of magazines and the genre. There was also evidence, however, of candidates and centres not engaging or fully understanding the appropriate codes and conventions of magazines. It was clear some magazines did not follow a conventional layout in terms of use of columns for the double page spread or front pages, and where key information such as page numbers, barcodes, prices were not included. A number of candidates either wrote articles into the middle of the page where the staples would be or across the whole page

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which breaks conventions. The magazine brief was commonly over-rewarded in light of the above-mentioned issues.

Stronger candidates considered and focussed on how brand identity can be established through, for example, the colour palette and typography as suggested in the brief. Centres are reminded that 45 seconds of original audio or audio-visual material should be embedded into one of the pages of the website and that +10% over that is superfluous and should be disregarded during assessment.

Brief 3: Film Marketing

A significant number of candidates completed the film marketing campaign, but only a very few of these completed the online option. Responses for both options commonly displayed understanding of appropriate genre signifiers and understanding of conventions by candidates. The horror and romantic comedy genres were extremely popular. Most candidates were able to engage with the instruction to 'create a media production for a film company that is a subsidiary of a major studio (either Searchlight Pictures or Working Title)' although some would have benefitted from more extensive research into the output of Searchlight Pictures in particular.

As in previous years, some candidates did not conform to recognised elements of DVD/Blu-ray covers such as the layout, use of thumbnails, blurbs, or age ratings despite these being explicitly stipulated in the brief. It should be noted DVD or Blu-ray covers should be uploaded to the correct scale / size and as one document rather than separate documents for the spine, front, and the back.

Some images on some ‘The Cast’ webpages resembled images from social media rather than what might be expected on a website promoting a film.

Brief 4: Music Marketing

There was an increase in the number of candidates who submitted music videos but there were very few music marketing websites in the sample. The music videos were generally of a high standard although not all reached the 3 minutes and 30 seconds requirement. This should have been noted in the assessment and marked suitably as this is self-penalising. Most candidates were able to create a media production which targeted a ‘Millennial/Generation Y’ audience, however, centres are reminded that the brief says, 'the song must not have an existing official music video.'

Summary of key points:

- Centres should guide candidates to complete suitable research, with a focus on the brief to ensure candidates are engaging with appropriate case studies and especially industry context. This is particularly relevant when considering industry context as this was the weakest element within the Statement of Aims and Intentions.

- Appropriate research will support the candidate to ensure a clear understanding of genre, style, tone, and industry is developed prior to developing the production. The lack of research into Netflix and in particular Apple TV+ was noticeable in Brief 1 and led to issues with the media productions.

- It is vital that this research is undertaken before writing the Statement of Aims and Intentions so that centres can support candidates in realising suitable productions which fulfil the brief.

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- Centres are reminded that candidates should be guided to adhere to the word count for the Statement of Aims and Intentions or the centre should mark the work up to the top of the word limit. Some Statements were significantly over the word count, and this led to over rewarding for some candidates. Writing succinctly and focusing on the key areas of the theoretical framework supported by the candidate's research remains the key to the success of this element of the NEA.

- DVD or Blu-ray covers should be uploaded to the correct scale / size and as one document rather than separate documents for the spine, front, and the back.

- Centres should ensure that candidates are aware that, 'the song must not have an existing official music video' in Brief 4.

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