



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

SUBJECT.
GCSE Media Studies

SUMMER 2023

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MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 1

General Comments

It was encouraging to see the 2023 Component 1 examination being very positively received through an extremely high majority of well-answered papers. There were many examples of excellent engagement with the theoretical framework and many centres had prepared candidates well with in-depth studies of the set products. The demands of the specification, particularly in Section B, were often responded to extremely well and this demonstrated that many centres had prepared their candidates adequately in terms of both time-management and understanding how questions need to be answered. It was encouraging to see that long-form responses in this component were, on the whole, dealt with considerably better than in 2022 and 2019. A focus point for a very small group of learners would be ensuring part questions such as Q1a and Q1b are answered in isolation and not combined to make one longer response; this provides a challenge for examiners to assess against the mark scheme.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 How does this film poster for *Spectre* communicate meaning?

Explore the following elements:

- (a) narrative [5]
- (b) genre [10]

Assessment Objective:

AO2 1a: Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media

Candidates across the mark range were able to access this question well, and there was a secure understanding of the *Spectre* film poster. The mark value for each question was demonstrative of the level of analysis available and is similar to the question structure for 2022 and provided candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate effective textual analysis.

For part (a), candidates were able to use their skills in textual analysis to discuss either the character roles or the proposed storyline that may be signified by the image construction. Many very good answers discussed Propp's narrative theory and used terminology such as antagonist, protagonist and binary oppositions by deconstructing colour, body language, facial expressions and costume. It is useful to note that application of theory is not required here to access the full range of the mark scheme.

The most successful responses referred to gesture codes, action codes and enigma codes to lead into a discussion about the role the figure in the background might play in the plot. These candidates were also able to make reference to signifiers of the setting for part of the narrative being the Day of the Dead festival in Mexico.

It was also encouraging to see alternative approaches to analysis including responses that deconstructed the name 'Spectre' and linked this to possible plot implications, that discussed the use of the logo '007', and made effective reference to intertextuality to show understanding of the Bond franchise's 'typicality' in terms of narrative structure.

Weaker responses were unable to explore narrative and wrote a deconstruction of the image including the colour and placement of the font, or described what the poster presented without reference to the narrative. It is encouraged that centres prepare candidates for all possible areas of media language that are referenced in the specification.

In part (b), candidates were asked to focus on generic features, and good and excellent answers were able to very quickly identify the genre of action or spy (espionage). Other valid responses looked at elements of the thriller, romance and horror genres that were identifiable on the poster.

While it is important to recognise that narrative tropes and typicalities (such as hero vs. villain) are indeed key generic features of action and spy, this question should not have contained a repeated response from part (a) without clear reference to this link. A few candidates were unable to identify the genre and therefore were restricted to the lower bands.

The best responses for this question were able to discuss gesture codes and enigma codes and focus on tropes and conventions that are typical in the genre they identified. Successful candidates that opened their response with the clear identification of a correct genre and were able to then work through the features that further supported their statement such as the pistol, suit, skull and red flower in the pocket. Links to Steve Neale's genre theory were appropriate, but not necessary, as this is not a named theorist in the specification. Some Band 1 and Band 2 responses were not able to appropriately apply the theory and therefore this was unhelpful to their textual analysis of the poster.

There was a small group of candidates who had misinterpreted the question as an analysis of gender and therefore failed to appropriately meet the requirements of the assessment objective. There were also responses that classified the poster as sci-fi, which could not be rewarded. It is encouraged that an exploration of the genre should be part of the study of this set product.

Centre should note, as also stated in the 2022 Examiners' report, that there were a significant number of candidates who relabelled their questions in the notebook or merged their responses, indicating that they had not acknowledged the difference between (a) and (b). It would be good practice in centres to expose them to a range of question papers to experience the different structures that this question can have.

Q.2 (a) Explain how cultural contexts influence magazines. Refer to GQ magazine to support your points.

Assessment Objective:

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

Both the set product featuring Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson and the unseen text featuring Tom Holland provided opportunities to explore the impact of cultural context on the magazine industry. Because the question did not specify which edition of GQ the candidates should use, it provided an opportunity for a range of responses in which different elements from each edition could be discussed. It is very important to acknowledge that cultural context is not to be confused with representations of ethnicity, as this was the most common misinterpretation from this question.

As in previous series it is recommended that a clear understanding of context is explained first, and the set product and the industry it derives from is then used to support and exemplify the answer. Responses where there was a full textual analysis or discussions of The Rock's ethnicity were not rewarded unless there were explicit links to cultural contexts.

A fair majority of the responses from the series demonstrated their understanding of cultural changes in perceptions of masculinity, consumer culture, metrosexuality and the #oscarssowwhite movement indicated as relevant by the publication dates. The stronger responses understood that magazines needed to reflect the contemporary issues of the time, including events and cultural movements. The very best answers, in the short space given in the booklet, were able to show how cultural context had progressed between the two issues of GQ.

Centres are encouraged to teach the definition of each 'context' thoroughly and dissuade candidates from applying issues of representation unless absolutely appropriate. For a cultural context question the ideal phrasing in responses include 'at the time of production...' or 'this is reflected in the choice of...' to show that clear link between the product and the time of publication.

(b) Compare the representation of men in these two covers for GQ magazine.

In your answer, you must consider:

- **the choices the producers have made about how to represent men**
- **how far the representation of men is similar in the two magazines**
- **how far the representation of men is different in the two magazines.**

Assessment Objective:

AO2 1a and 1b: Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media to make judgements and draw conclusions

It was encouraging to note that the standard of responses to this question was particularly strong. Many candidates had been well prepared to produce long form responses and to use the bullet point steer in their answers. It was encouraging to see so many candidates discuss the representation of gender with clarity and there were very few 'non-attempted' responses for this question.

The unseen product for this question was a cover of GQ magazine (2021) featuring Tom Holland and this provided a rich text to compare to the set product featuring The Rock.

The text was accessible, and although it was not expected for candidates to necessarily be aware of the cover star on an unseen product, it was positive to see so many could understand why Tom Holland had been used and there were examples of wider knowledge being brought into the discussion.

While the performance on this question was strong, centres are encouraged to develop candidates' ability to make judgements and conclusions. Many responses, even those in the highest mark bands, were finishing their work with a simple sentence rather than embedding evaluative skills throughout their analysis.

On the whole the largest quantity of candidates opened their writing with a clear determination of their argument (similar, different) and then went on to use the 3 bullet points to structure a really clear textual evaluation of the two front covers. Candidates discussed masculinity, spornosexuality and metrosexuality with ease, tying this to cover lines and visual codes on each cover. There were rich discussions about colour palettes, gesture codes, costume, facial expressions and links to the coverlines that further explored issues of masculinity such as 'what it means to be a man'. Context of the history of GQ was awarded highly as there was an understanding of the branding and identity of the product as a leading men's magazine and what this meant about the representation. The very best responses used highly perceptive conclusion and judgement skills to explore the differences in male representation in the relatively small 5-year time frame between the two publications.

Responses in the lower bands were sometimes awkward in expression or were not secure on how to effectively explore gender representations. There were examples of ethnicity being explored in too finer detail, and not carefully linking this to the representation of gender as per the phrasing of the question. The candidates that explored this intersectionality and tried to include Alvarado's theory did so to varying degrees of success. Centres are reminded that there is no requirement to include theoretical application and many candidates could reach the higher bands with strong textual analysis and discussion of representation.

Responses in the higher bands were structured as through the lens of the producer making key choices about the magazine design, and there was good evidence of the use of the factsheets provided by Eduqas to help with this viewpoint. Intertextuality was well used in particular with reference to Tom Holland and his role as Spiderman, and heroic presentations of gender. There was a confident use of subject specific terminology in these higher band responses alongside a secure essay-like structure.

- Q.3**
- (a) Name the radio station that broadcasts *The Archers* [1]**
 - (b) Give two ways audiences can listen to *The Archers* [2]**
 - (c) Briefly explain the difference between a public service radio broadcaster and a commercial radio broadcaster. [4]**
 - (d) Explain how the BBC uses different platforms to distribute radio programmes. Refer to *The Archers* to support your points. [10]**

Assessment Objective:

- (a) AO1 1a: Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media**

(b), (c) & (d) AO1 1a and 1b: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media

(a) Name the radio station that broadcasts *The Archers* [1]

Most candidates were able to supply one of the two possible answers for this response: BBC Radio 4 or Radio 4. Answers like BBC, BBC Four, Channel 4 and BBC Sounds were not accepted. The question does ask for this specificity and centres should develop a range of factual revision resources for AO1 questions like this. A very small group of candidates answered with BBFC or OFCOM which were both incorrect.

(b) Give two ways audiences can listen to *The Archers* [2]

To achieve both marks, candidates were required to identify two formats, technologies or methods correctly. BBC Sounds and live on Radio 4 were the most popular responses, as were 'in the car' and through the website or daily and omnibus. We accepted responses that referred to TV, as this is a common method many households would use with a digital television subscription, however the answer 'BBC iPlayer' was not accepted. There is currently no option to listen to any Radio 4 shows through this platform, and this is primarily a video streaming platform and the only radio-based content is from festivals covered by Radio 1. Candidates who referred to BBC iPlayer Radio (the previous name for BBC Sounds) were awarded a correct mark. This question did not need a full sentence structure, and for AO1 candidates can be encouraged to bullet point or list answers so they can save time for the higher tariff questions.

(c) Briefly explain the difference between a public service radio broadcaster and a commercial radio broadcaster. [4]

This was a challenging question for candidates, resulting in a large number of incorrect responses and not-attempted responses. The question also had many misinterpretations including reference to television channels such as ITV and hospital and community radio.

The best responses were able to define and exemplify each type of radio through the differences in funding. It is important that centres teach candidates the key types of radio, rather than focusing on the BBC as a public service broadcaster, because many candidates without this knowledge were held back from the full range of marks available for this question.

Good responses for this question correctly acknowledged the licence fee paid by households and compared this to advertising based revenue for commercial radio. There were some issues with inaccuracy with references to public service radio being government funded or paid for by a tax.

Excellent responses were able to correctly refer to the licence fee, lead into detail about a remit and usually exemplify with reference to the BBC and its aims to educate, entertain and inform. For the commercial radio we had a range of examples such as Heart, Capital and Kiss with links to them being revenue focused from sponsorship and advertising. Not all candidates had to give examples to achieve the full marks for this question. *The Archers* was mentioned in some responses as an example of the BBC fulfilling its remit, but referencing the set product was not a requirement of this question.

A small number of responses attributed the features of commercial radio to the BBC, and public service to an alternative station.

- (d) **Explain how the BBC uses different platforms to distribute radio programmes. Refer to *The Archers* to support your points.** [10]

It is important to acknowledge that this section is focused on the theoretical framework of Media Industries. There were many responses that focused too heavily on Audience, which is the focus of question 4. Centres are encouraged to teach their learners the structure of the question paper as detailed in the specification so that candidates are familiar with which knowledge to apply for each set of questions.

Because this was an industry-focused question, there was a requirement for candidates to look at BBC's distribution methods as a tool to further expand their brand, products and identity. Many successful responses referred to increasing audiences, fanbase or interactivity, but responses should not have discussed Uses and Gratifications theory as it is not relevant here.

The most successful responses were able to explore the range of distribution methods for *The Archers*; including the website, BBC Sounds, FM/DAB radio and even social media campaigns to show how this diversified their audience and provided a range of methods to access the content. A wider understanding of the BBC also featured in these responses where candidates were able to make comments on the different strands of the BBC Radio organisation to appeal to different audiences.

Responses in the middle band listed the many platforms available but did not always look at the benefits for the BBC as the organisation. Whereas answers that referred to technological convergence and the motivation behind widening distribution were rewarded highly in this question.

- Q.4 (a) **Identify two audiences for *The Sun* newspaper.** [2]
(b) **Briefly explain how newspaper websites attract audiences.** [4]
(c) **Explain why audiences read print newspapers. Refer to *The Sun* newspaper and the Uses and Gratifications theory in your answer.** [12]

Assessment Objective:

- (a) **AO1 1a:** Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media
(b)& (c) **AO1 1a and 1b:** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media

- (a) **Identify two audiences for *The Sun* newspaper.** [2]

Most candidates were able to provide two different audiences as a response to this question, and the very large majority opted for right-wing and male. There was a particularly broad range of correct responses that included reference to the NRS social grading (C2DE) and literacy and education level. A few incorrect responses included middle-class, rather than maybe lower-middle-class, and left-wing labour supporters.

Some of these responses may be attributed to confusion or mis-phrasing, for example some candidates wrote '8-year olds' and were not awarded a mark, whereas other candidates wrote 'people with a reading age of 8 years or above' which was awarded a mark.

(b) Briefly explain how newspaper websites attract audiences. [4]

Many responses for this question were able to reference general journalistic features but were not always linked explicitly to the website/online version of newspapers. The best responses were able to refer to convenience, immediacy, interactivity with comments and breadth of content. Responses that linked to examples from The Sun website included links to puzzles, sport, social media links and bingo as evidence of why websites might attract audiences. Candidates that also referred to the free-of-charge element and the paywall/subscription model showed strong knowledge of set product and its development over time.

(c) Explain why audiences read print newspapers. Refer to *The Sun* newspaper and the Uses and Gratifications theory in your answer. [12]

This question asked candidates to apply the Uses and Gratifications theory in their explanation of why audiences still read print newspapers, with an expectation that examples from the set product (*The Sun*) would be used to illustrate the points. Responses were also rewarded if candidates also referred to *The Guardian*, but these references should have supplemented and not replaced examples from *The Sun*.

The best responses were able to work through each category of the Uses and Gratifications theory and identify a reason why readers prefer the print editions of *The Sun*. Discussions that linked personal identity to political allegiance, surveillance to learning, entertainment/diversion to the additional features of the paper and personal relationships to a combination of the features were frequent through the responses. There were some developed responses that looked at the nostalgic reasons behind buying a physical paper for social interaction and others that talked about the older audience disliking technology and devices.

Lack of reference to Uses and Gratifications or reference to just one element restricted the response to Band 1 or Band 2. Implied reference to the theory was identified but centres are reminded that this is the only theory that is required to be taught in the GCSE specification and therefore should be rigorously taught and applied to the set products accordingly.

Summary of key points

- Candidates should be taught the different Contexts of Media and should be well-practised in demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of Contexts in relation to the set products.
- Centres are required to teach Uses and Gratifications for the study of audiences, but any other theory should be taught only as appropriate to the level of the learner. Propp, for example, is appropriate and can be handled well by all ability levels whereas some A Level theorists are disadvantageous to the learners who are not able to apply them effectively.
- Candidates should understand the structure of the examination paper, and particularly where each area of theoretical framework will feature. This is particularly relevant for Section B which has the Industry and Audience questions.
- Candidates should use past papers and SAMs to be exposed to a range of questions and their demands. Clear understanding of what is required of questions with command words 'Identify' and 'Explain' will improve time management across the paper.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 2

General Comments

2023 saw the return to 'normal' GCSE assessment, so in this series it was especially pleasing to see how well centres and candidates had risen to this challenge. There was a sound understanding of the requirements of the different elements of both sections of the paper and the level of engagement with both the set products and the relevant areas of the theoretical framework was generally good. One area which varied across the paper, however, was the candidates' ability to focus on the question set. There was a marked lack of focus in responses to Question 4, where many candidates did not engage with the 'global' part of the question, compared to a generally clear focus on both parts of Question 1. One area where there continues to be some inconsistency was in approaches to Contexts of Media. While some candidates were rewarded on Questions 2 and 3 for their excellent knowledge and understanding of media contexts and their influence on specific aspects of the set products, many are still struggling to show a clear grasp of this area of the specification, indicating that they may benefit from more explicit teaching of the contexts of their set products and more practice in making links between products and contexts. There was also a continued increase in the use of named theorists used across all of the questions and, while in some cases this enabled candidates to demonstrate good or excellent understanding of the theoretical framework, for many more it resulted in responses which lacked relevance and focus.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) Explore how costumes create meaning in this extract. (10)

Assessment Objective:

AO2 1a: Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media

Candidates performed very well on this question, which required textual analysis of costumes used in the set extract from the chosen television product (*Luther* or *The IT Crowd*). Most candidates were able to explore how characters' costumes created meaning, indicating that this question was accessible to the full range of ability. While many candidates were able to suggest connotations of characters' costumes at a satisfactory level by linking them to character traits (Roy's casual dress code connotating his laid-back personality), or job roles, (Ripley's smart dress code connoting professionalism), a lot of responses remained quite generalised in their focus preventing access to the higher bands. In the higher bands, candidates identified specific elements from the costumes of two or three characters then suggested how the finer details were used to create meaning. Popular examples from *Luther* included Alice's wig and red lipstick, Zoe's earrings and Luther's unbuttoned shirt. In responses to *The IT Crowd*, examples from the Indicative Content such as Prime's coat and shades, Moss's check shirt and glasses and Roy's t-shirt all featured frequently.

Higher band responses also explored meanings in greater depth, exploring the purpose of costumes in relation to specific character archetypes, generic conventions and aspects of representation such as stereotypes.

Appropriate use of subject-specific terminology was another strength in responses to this question, many candidates employing key words from the Eduqas GCSE Media Studies Glossary such as connotation, narrative, realism and genre. A range of appropriate terminology was used successfully to explore character roles and functions in *Luther* such as protagonist, antagonist and femme fatale, while enigma codes and intertextuality were frequently applied to Prime's costume in *The IT Crowd*. Propp's narrative theory proved useful in this question and it was excellent to see the confident application of this area of the theoretical framework for Media Language. However, some candidates attempted to use other, less relevant theories, the most popular of these being Uses and Gratifications, with Maslow also appearing less frequently. These applications of audience theory usually hindered rather than helped a candidate's ability to produce a focused response so it is important that centres help candidates learn which theories are appropriate for engaging with different areas of the theoretical framework. In the lower bands, responses were more descriptive but with most still demonstrating basic ability to explore the meanings of costumes in a general way, such as the suits worn by all the detectives in *Luther* connoting power, Alice's dark costume connoting evil or Moss's costume connoting geek or nerd characteristics. These responses often lacked analysis of details of costumes or tended to describe rather than analyse them. In summary, the key determiner between the higher and lower band responses for Question 1a was the depth and consistency of the analysis. Higher band responses were analytical and detailed throughout whereas lower band responses were more generalised and descriptive when discussing examples of costumes. It was, overall, encouraging to see how well centres had prepared for the extract-based questions, indicative in the confident use of examples from the set extracts and the candidates' overall ability to explore the use of media language to communicate meaning.

(b) How typical of the genre are the locations used in this extract? (10)

Assessment Objective:

AO2 1a and 1b: Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media to make judgements and draw conclusions.

This question required candidates to explore the locations used in the television extract and make judgements and conclusions about genre typicality based on their analysis. Overall, it was handled well by candidates across the mark bands, who were generally able to explore their set extract in its generic context. As with Q1 a, detailed analysis was required to achieve the higher bands and the variety of locations in both extracts enabled many candidates to reach the highest band. The quality of the analysis tended to be the determiner between satisfactory and good responses this year, since most candidates were able to make some judgements and conclusions about the typicality of locations in relation to the crime drama or sitcom genre. In the higher bands, there was some excellent, detailed analysis of *Luther's* office as atypical location, linking this to his status, his mental state and his character role as maverick detective.

There were also some particularly effective analyses of how elements of mise-en scene in the 8+ club location were used to create situation comedy in *The IT Crowd*. Appropriate use of subject specific terminology including verisimilitude, mise-en-scene and iconography was also a key feature of stronger responses. Popular examples in the middle band included the use of the city of London as a typical, relatable location for both genres, and responses in the lower bands were still usually able to make some basic judgements and conclusions about typicality of locations, such as the police station in *Luther* being typical for the crime drama genre or the IT Office typical for workplace sitcom. These responses, however, took a more descriptive approach to exploring the locations. There was a good balance between locations being deemed typical and atypical, the best responses often exploring locations from both perspectives. These judgements often reflected points in the Indicative Content, such as the debatable typicality of the quiet corner- with no witnesses but in broad daylight - chosen for Alice's attack on Zoe, and the 8 nightclub, creating comedy in a genre typical way but challenging the conventions of a regular, familiar meeting place. Overall, performance on Question 1 b demonstrated sound analysis of locations and good ability to use examples from the set extract. Many responses also used references to other TV programmes from the chosen genre to make judgements about the typicality of the set product and this reflected the good practice in centres of teaching the set product in relation to its generic context. *The Sweeney* and *Friends* were, as expected, the most frequently cited examples. However, candidates should be reminded that analysis of further examples should not be the main focus of their answer at the expense of quality analysis of the extract, since this did prevent some potentially good responses from demonstrating enough depth and detail in their analysis to achieve the highest bands.

Q.2 Explain how media contexts influence crime dramas or sitcoms. Refer to *Luther* or *The IT Crowd* to support your points. (10)

Assessment Objective

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

This year's question invited a wide range of responses and rewarded candidates' different approaches to media contexts. The question required a demonstration of knowledge of media contexts and an understanding of the influence of these contexts on the chosen television genre and set product. Most responses focused on social and cultural aspects of contexts but some included points on historical and economic contexts which were usually linked to media institutions including BBC and Channel 4. The stronger responses to this question used accurate knowledge of particular aspects of society and culture to demonstrate understanding of the influence of contexts on specific aspects of the set products, including casting, production values, representation of social groups, and patterns of distribution and consumption. Responses in the higher bands made appropriate reference to the set product to show their understanding of how particular societal shifts and cultural products influence the representations in television products. Movements and events such as #blacklivesmatter and the 2010 Equality Act were cited as contexts impacting on casting and progressive representations in *Luther*, with responses to *The IT Crowd* frequently referring to *Countdown*, *Fight Club* and *The Matrix* to show their understanding of the influence of cultural contexts.

Some responses usefully referred to aspects of the set historical television products to explain how changing social and cultural contexts influence aspects of television products such as casting and representation. These references to *The Sweeney* or *Friends* were generally well used to explain changing contexts and their influence on television genres, but candidates should be reminded to make sure they also refer to aspects of the set products as required by the question.

In this series, 6% of candidates failed to attempt Question 2, which was only a slight improvement on 7% last year, so this again highlights the importance of teaching contexts in relation to all of the set products. In Component 2, knowledge and understanding of media contexts will be assessed in *every* examination series and candidates may be required to refer to specific media contexts (historical, social, cultural, political) in *any* of the questions.

In your response, you must:

- ### Assessment Objectives:

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Indeed, candidates' ability to engage with the 'how stereotypical' part of the question was a key determiner in their success, with higher band responses making judgements about the polysemic or 'problematic' nature of the representations of ethnicity in their chosen videos based on alternative readings of examples. It was particularly pleasing to see how well candidates had engaged with the new set product, *Intentions*, which proved a rich text for exploring representation of ethnicity and invited some excellent debates about the extent to which the roles of Bieber, Quavo and the women of Alexandria House reinforced stereotypes of ethnicity.

Application of appropriate terminology was also a distinct feature of higher band responses, candidates successfully using key concepts from the theoretical framework including misrepresentation and under-representation, as well as terms such as progressive/regressive and empowering/disempowering, to make judgements about the purpose, effects and contextual influences of the representations chosen in the set music videos.

Responses in the middle and lower bands often lacked focus, and it was of particular concern this series that some candidates, usually those who chose *Roar*, were unable to offer any relevant analysis of the representations of ethnicity in their set music videos, instead offering wholly irrelevant responses to last year's question on gender. Some candidates are still struggling to explore representations of ethnicity, concluding, for example, that 'there are no representations of ethnicity' in *Roar* or failing to recognise that white American is an ethnic identity. It is essential, therefore, that centres ensure candidates are well prepared to respond to questions addressing representations of different social groups across both their music and television set products.

It was pleasing to see many candidates across the mark range refer to the contexts of their music videos this series, reflecting the good practice of teaching candidates to make links between contexts and specific aspects of their set products. However, responses still varied lot in their ability to meet this requirement of the extended response question. Those who engaged successfully with contexts made appropriate reference to aspects of society and culture which had impacted on the representations of ethnicity in the music videos, such as the #blacklivesmatter movements influencing the positive representations in *Intentions* or therapy music genre impacting on the stereotypes used in *Bad Blood*. The historical context of racial oppression was frequently cited an influence on the subversion of stereotypes in the shoeshine scene in *Uptown Funk*, and some responses explained how the history of colonialism had influenced Katy Perry's powerful role in taming the jungle in *Roar*. In the lower bands, contexts links were either not made or often lacked relevance, such as Katy Perry's relationship with Russell Brand impacting on the representation of gender in *Roar*. It is therefore important that centres prepare their candidates to make links to relevant contexts when exploring the set music products and practising the extended response questions.

A continuing trend this year was the increased use of theorists to explore the music videos and this proved a useful tool for many candidates to explore their chosen examples. There were some excellent applications of Alvarado's theory of ethnicity and racial stereotypes, which was often used to explore the representations of Mars and The Hooligans in *Uptown Funk* as well as Zendaya's 'dangerous' character Cut-Throat in *Bad Blood* and the black women and children in *Intentions* as social group to be 'pitied'. Propp's character theory also appeared frequently and candidates generally used it to make relevant points about the roles assigned to specific characters such as Selena Gomez playing the villain in *Bad Blood* or Katy Perry as the hero of *Roar*.

Some of the most successful candidates were awarded the highest band not for their reference to theorists, but for their understanding of more complex aspects of the theoretical framework such as post-colonialism, cultural appropriation, white saviourism and western beauty standards. It was concerning that some theory applied to Question 3 this series lacked relevance to the question. Surprisingly, Laura Mulvey's male gaze was mentioned frequently and this was usually not helpful to candidates. The other theory which was over-used in Question 3 was Uses and Gratifications, lengthy applications of which often led to responses which lacked focus and relevance. There continue to be rubric infringements on Question 3, a small number of candidates only exploring one set music video, more still choosing the videos by both female artists and of particular concern, some centres preparing candidates to explore Pharrell Williams' *Freedom*. This highlights the importance of referring closely to the latest version of the specification which includes updates on set product changes for the 2024 and 2025 examination series.

Q.4 How do music websites promote artists to a global audience? Refer to the official *Katy Perry* website OR the official *Taylor Swift* website to support your points. (10)

Assessment Objective:

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

This question required demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework and had an Industry focus, more specifically, the promotional strategies music websites use to reach global audiences. It was particularly pleasing to see that the attempt rate for this final question had increased from last year with just 3% of candidates failing to attempt it, compared with 5% in 2022, this reflecting both the accessibility of the question and candidates' improved attention to time management.

Higher band responses engaged on a more complex level with areas of the theoretical framework such as the increasingly convergent nature of media industries across different platforms and used appropriate references to the chosen set product to illustrate their understanding of the commercial nature of music websites. *Taylor Swift's Netflix* documentary link was used as a good example of synergy, as were *Katy Perry's* links to her fashion brands, and another successful approach was to focus on a particular promotional campaign such as the launch of *Taylor Swift's Reputation* album, which achieved global reach rapidly due to the buzz created through the convergence of multiple platforms linked other website.

Another key feature of higher band responses was the use of appropriate, subject specific terminology, specifically industry terms such as convergence, synergy, brand identity, streaming revenue and digital distribution. Centres are advised to encourage candidates to practise the use of industry key words throughout the course, many of which can be applied across the different industries studied in the specification.

Most candidates were able to identify a range of promotional strategies used to achieve global reach, including links to artist's social media, links to music streaming sites, newsletter subscriptions, global tour news and branding through merchandise. However, many responses failed to reach the higher bands for two main reasons: lack of focus on the question and little or no reference to the set product.

Some candidates produced a response more appropriate to last year's question about how music websites make money, with little attempt to address the 'global' part of the question. These responses sometimes demonstrated good knowledge of promotional strategies but did not show understanding of how they were used to reach audiences globally, highlighting the importance of reminding candidates to zoom in on key words in the question and construct their answer in response to the specific question set. Also, despite the question having an Industry focus, some candidates used it as an opportunity to discuss audience responses and apply Uses and Gratifications theory to their set product. Again, this limited the relevance of their response and highlighted a need for practice in distinguishing between questions which require knowledge of how media *industries* reach/target/attract audiences and those which focus on how *audiences* use and respond to media products in different ways. Finally, while most candidates made some reference to their chosen set product, there were significant number of responses which took a very generalised approach to music websites and made no reference at all to the *Katy Perry* or *Taylor Swift* website. The second part of the question made clear the requirement for reference to the set product so centres are advised to make sure candidates practise using specific examples from different pages of the chosen website as a vehicle for their demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework.

Summary of key points

- Centres are reminded to highlight the importance of Contexts of Media as a key aspect of the course. It is listed in the specification as an additional area of study which links to all four areas of the theoretical framework so candidates need to study the contexts of each of their set products and develop an understanding of how they have influenced the final product as well as its processes of production and patterns of consumption.
- It is important that candidates are well prepared to respond to Representation questions focusing on any strand of the theoretical framework, as listed in the specification grids, and they should be exploring in detail the representations of different social groups in their television products as well as the music videos, websites and associated social media for their two music artists.
- Centres are encouraged to use strategies to introduce, apply and revise subject specific terminology throughout the course, especially in relation to knowledge and understanding of Media Industries, as this is a useful strategy to help candidates access the higher bands.
- Use of name theorists is an area candidates need guidance on, more specifically, which theorists are useful for responding to questions on the different areas of the theoretical framework. Unless the question has an audience uses/responses focus, extensive application of Uses and Gratifications is not usually helpful in constructing a focused, relevant response.
- A final reminder for centres to check the updated lists of set products for examination in 2024 and 2025 to ensure these changes are accurately applied to the appropriate cohorts. These are listed in Version 7 of the specification which is available on the Eduqas website.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 3

General Comments

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

There was a good range of productions submitted by centres in response to the set briefs this year. The majority of candidates responded appropriately to the set briefs for assessment in 2023 although there was some evidence of the briefs being misinterpreted in some centres. The focus of this component is the application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework to communicate meaning; most candidates were able to successfully do this and it was clearly evidenced through their Statement of Aims and final productions.

The component was approached in different ways by centres, some offering only one option of production or brief whilst others gave candidates a choice of briefs, both of which are acceptable approaches. Where candidates are given a variety of options, it is important that all candidates fulfil the requirements of the chosen set brief and that centres ensure there is parity of assessment across the various briefs.

The print options remain the most popular, with many candidates choosing to complete either Brief 2 or Brief 3. Brief 3 saw an even split between the two genre options available for 2023: science fiction and romantic-comedy.

Centres are reminded that candidates should be given the opportunity to engage in thorough independent research and planning tasks specific to their chosen brief to ensure the knowledge and understanding of the conventional form is secure before attempting to complete their productions. All centres are advised to access exemplar work on the WJEC Secure site to ascertain the standards for Component 3 before assessing the work in their own centres.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Administration:

The majority of centres uploaded work to Surpass in advance of the deadline, using appropriate file formats. While PDF files are acceptable, they do not always show print production work to its best quality and it may be advisable to upload original files such as JPEGs in order that the work can be seen clearly. There were some cases of problematic file formats being uploaded within Zip files. Files such as psd. and GIMP project files are not suitable file formats and cannot be accepted for moderation. Centres are reminded to check the list of appropriate file formats and to check files before uploading to Surpass to ensure they can be opened to avoid any delays in the moderation of the work.

It greatly helped the moderation process when each file was clearly labelled with the candidate's name and the description of the piece of work, e.g. 'double page spread'; however, this was not always the case. Several centres failed to upload elements of candidates' work, for example cover sheets, or uploaded cover sheets that were incomplete, which delayed the process considerably and required new key codes to be created. It is of paramount importance that all elements of this unit are uploaded by the deadline and by using one key code per candidate. There were a few instances of work being uploaded upside down or part of the work being cut off when scanning copies of the work; this is not permitted and delays the moderation process whilst correct re-submissions are uploaded. Similarly, several centres uploaded the DVD cover as three separate files – the front, back and spine individually. Candidates should be creating and submitting this as one file production piece.

Most candidates' cover sheets were completed fully and submitted with the NEA work. It is helpful for moderation if the cover sheet is clearly labelled and submitted as one complete document rather than several separate files. Several centres did not complete the Statement of Aims in the allocated space on the coversheet and instead attached it on a separate word document. Centres are reminded that the Statement of Aims should be submitted in the space provided in section B of the coversheet and the word count should also be included in the box provided.

For centres choosing a website option, candidates submitting a website production must include the URL as a hyperlink on the coversheet in section A in order for the moderator to easily access the site. It is vital that centres make sure any permissions/access to websites is checked before sending website links and that the website does not expire after a certain amount of time to avoid the moderation process being delayed.

Some candidates completed Section A in detail, taking the opportunity to outline their research, planning and production processes. This aids moderation and it is especially important for candidates who have taken photographs in unusual or distant locations to explain how they created their images to confirm that these are original. Some candidates failed to complete Section A as required, which made it very difficult to assess how their research and planning had impacted upon the production. These stages should be signed off by the assessor and include the dates that each stage has been completed. It is also crucial that the box regarding non-original material is completed fully; this was omitted on several occasions which made it difficult to moderate and to understand which images were original.

Many teachers included detailed comments in Section C, giving examples from candidates' work to support the assessment decisions. This is extremely important and helpful, especially as annotation is not a requirement on the work itself. Where phrases from the generic marking grid are used, it is important to ensure that these match the mark awarded, which was not always the case. There were some cases of no teacher commentary on Section C which made the moderation process difficult as it was not always clear why the work had been given the mark it had, it is crucial that this section is completed fully and signed off. There was evidence from some centres of internal moderation of the work on the coversheets which is desirable to complete, where possible, to ensure the assessment is robust.

Meeting the requirements of the brief

Candidates must respond to the set brief for the year of assessment. A minority of candidates appeared to have responded to an incorrect brief or not followed the set genres specified in the briefs which inevitably limited their ability to meet the requirements of Component 3.

Quite a number of centres had permitted candidates to complete and submit specialist magazines for Brief 2 which led the assessment to be generous for column 2 as the requirements of the brief had not been met.

Most candidates adhered to the requirements for length and quantity of work, although some produced less than the required number of, for example, magazine or web pages, which should be reflected in the assessment of these productions. There were a small number of centres that submitted 2 individual articles for Brief 2 rather than one double page feature article as specified in the brief.

While research and planning is not an assessed element of Component 3 and does not need to be submitted, research is essential to ensure that candidates are able to complete a successful production that responds to the brief. Where candidates did not discuss their research in Section A of the coversheet, their lack of awareness of the codes and conventions of the chosen form was usually evident in their production work.

To ensure parity across centres and forms it is essential that candidates adhere to all aspects of the set brief:

- The content and style of the production must be suitable for the target audience range specified in the brief. Some candidates extended the range of the target audience and chose to feature characters/models which would not engage the specified target audience which needs to be reflected in the assessment of the production. Candidates should not amend the target audience in the brief in any way.
- All productions must adhere to the codes and conventions of the chosen form, this should be informed by completing detailed research and planning before starting the production. For example, film marketing campaigns should have clear branding and reflect the conventional layout of the form. Some candidates did not feature consistent use of fonts, layout and genre conventions to demonstrate the brand identity of the product. There was often an inconsistency between the branding on the DVD cover and posters. When completing Brief 2, there were instances where candidates did not show consideration for the centre fold of the double page feature article, this demonstrates a lack of understanding of the conventional form and should be reflected in the assessment of the production.
- All of the minimum requirements listed in the brief must be included in the productions, for example the required number of original images, the stipulated number of characters and range of camera shots. Some music videos, for example, did not include any performance footage and some websites did not include the required audio or audio-visual content. If the work does not meet all of the requirements specified in the briefs, this must be reflected in the assessment of the production.
- Candidates need to ensure that they meet the requirements of Column 3 of the marking grid where they are required to use media language to communicate meanings and construct representations. Where candidates did not include any images of people, their ability to construct representations was limited. Some productions contained images of people with their backs to the camera, which limited the ability to construct representations and often lead to generous assessment.

Statement of Aims:

Most candidates completed the Statement of Aims and Intentions in Section B of the cover sheet as required. It is essential that candidates include a word count and adhere to the 250 word limit (+/- 10%).

Many candidates exceeded the word limit, sometimes by a significant margin. In such cases, teachers should cease marking the statement once the upper threshold has been reached. It is perfectly acceptable for candidates to use bullet points in the statement to maximise the word count.

The Statement of Aims and Intentions must be completed after the research and planning stage, but before production begins and must be written in the future tense. Most candidates did adhere to this requirement; however, some candidates appeared to have produced an evaluation after the production had been completed written in the past tense, which is not the purpose of this task. The Statement should be signed off by both candidate and teacher before the production process begins, this will ensure the production is fully planned and the intentions address the set brief.

Most candidates adhered to the requirements of this element of the component and those in the higher bands demonstrated their ability to discuss how they intended to apply their knowledge and understanding within their productions. Knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework was evident through references to media language and the use of subject-specific terminology. Some candidates referred to theories and theoretical perspectives; however, these must be appropriate and applied correctly and concisely rather than a descriptive approach to keep within the word count. Applying theoretical perspectives is not a requirement for the Statement of Aims and should only be applied accurately and appropriately.

The most successful statements were supported by specific, detailed examples of how candidates intended to construct representations within their own productions referring to specific aspects of media language such as body language, costume and facial expressions. Some candidates adopted a descriptive approach which made it difficult for them to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework within the word count.

Production:

The print briefs were by far the most popular option. A small number of centres opted for the audio-visual briefs and there was evidence of both the music video and key sequences. There was evidence of highly sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework across all of the briefs.

Centres are reminded that all images included in the production must be original and generated by the candidate. The inclusion of found images, even where they have been significantly manipulated, is not acceptable. Some teachers identified that candidates had used some 'found' images and had assessed the work accordingly. In some cases, it was difficult to determine whether candidates' images were original as this information was not available on the coversheet. There were some excellent examples of the use of original images and footage where candidates had paid detailed attention to the construction of appropriate representations through the use of clothing, expression, gesture and setting. The quality of some images was also an issue; it is important that the images have been taken specifically for the purpose of creating the production and not found incidentally or taken in class/school when this doesn't fit the conventions of the form. For example, there were quite a number of productions which featured images of a characters in a school uniform, on a family holiday and at a wedding. Whilst candidates are free to take their images wherever they wish, the images must be taken with the purpose of the production in mind to be able to communicate meanings and construct representations effectively. There were a number of examples where blurry images had been used on the productions; this is not conventional for the form and needs to be assessed as such in the assessment grid for column 2.

There was evidence of accurate application of the assessment grid; however, a significant number of centres had assessed work generously, extremely so in some cases. Some candidates were generously assessed where the production work did not conform to the codes and conventions of the specified form as stated in column 2 of the assessment grid. Common issues such as unconventional layouts of the magazine double page feature article and the DVD front and back covers lead to assessment being generous in some cases. There was also a tendency to over-reward construction of appropriate and purposeful representations in some cases. There were a number of candidates that submitted work with no characters/models in and instead chose images of landscapes or items such as make-up. This lead the assessment to be considerably generous as the ability to communicate meanings is significantly limited without using images of people.

BRIEF 1: Television/Online

Either:

- (a) Create a key sequence from a new television drama in the crime drama or comedy drama genre.**

Or:

- (b) Create a functioning homepage and one other linked page with embedded audio/audio-visual material for a website for a new television drama in the crime drama or comedy drama genre.**

Your production must target an audience of 16-25 year olds.

Several centres chose this brief to complete and there were some examples of excellent knowledge and understanding of the conventional form of key sequences demonstrated. These conventions were often edited in thoughtfully to create a successful and thrilling key sequence that were highly engaging. The most successful candidates had adhered to the requirements of the set brief and incorporated a range of shots to establish representations of characters and the genre. The crime drama genre was the more popular option and some candidates have clearly studied the genre thoroughly and had put a considerably amount of effort into costumes, settings and props to anchor the genre and to engage the audience.

BRIEF 2: Magazines/Online

Either:

- (a) Create a front cover and a double page feature article for a new general lifestyle magazine aimed at teenagers.**

Or:

- (b) Create a functioning homepage and one other linked page for a website for a new general lifestyle magazine aimed at teenagers.**

Your production must target an audience of 13-17 year olds.

Option A was one of the most popular options for submission this year and there were some excellent realisations of the set brief, there were a few online options submitted.

The majority of candidates adhered to the set brief of general lifestyle magazines and this was evident through the range of topics addressed through the cover lines such as fashion, beauty, well-being and celebrities. Several centres seemed to have misinterpreted the brief and many candidates' submitted magazines which would be deemed as specialist. Specialist magazine topics focussing on one topic such as mental health, football, fitness, baking, travel and walking were submitted which meant that a high mark in column two of the assessment grid could not be awarded due to not meeting the requirements of the brief.

The most successful candidates had researched existing products in the general lifestyle genres which clearly helped candidates apply the knowledge and understanding of the form and genre within their own productions. Some of the work was extremely successful in the application of the conventions of general lifestyle magazines which constructed complex representations and demonstrated a highly appropriate mode of address with a range of topics being included which would appeal to the specified target audience. There were some excellent examples of original branding on the front cover which was replicated in the double page articles which helped create a sense of brand identity across both products.

However, there were a significant number of candidates who did not have a secure understanding of the conventional layout and design of double page articles. A large number of candidates did not adhere to typical layouts and conventions of the form such as not taking the centre fold into consideration for example, images and text were often placed over the centre fold of the article. There were also cases of candidates not using the space of the article appropriately and leaving large areas blank, which is not conventional of the form. Several candidates submitted two separate articles rather than one double page feature which meant they had not met the requirements of the set brief.

There were also a number of candidates who failed to establish representations on their front covers due to the mode of address being inappropriate, for example there were instances of people having their backs to the camera which made it difficult to establish representations. A number of candidates who chose to create a specialist magazine included images such as landscapes, cars and food which contained no imagery of people, this limited their ability to secure a higher mark in column 3 as no representations could be constructed. Where images of people had been included, there was sometimes evidence of six very similar images being used across the front cover and double page feature article – this limited the ability to construct complex representations and often lead to work being generously assessed.

BRIEF 3: Film Marketing

Create a DVD/Blu-ray front and back cover (including spine) and a banner poster for a new film in the science fiction or romantic comedy genre.

You may, if you wish, produce film marketing material in a sub-genre or hybrid genre of your choice. Your production must target an audience of 16-25 year olds with an interest in the genre.

This was a very popular option within centres and there was evidence of excellent examples of both genres. The most successful candidates developed a coherent campaign, demonstrating a brand identity for the film across the DVD cover and poster. Some struggled to develop a clear 'brand identity' that linked the poster and DVD cover together, for example they included very different images and font styles across the campaign.

Once again, research into film marketing campaigns is essential to inform candidates' production work.

The romantic comedy genre tended to be popular; however, quite a large number of candidates' submitted work with characters in school uniform, whilst this could potentially form part of the narrative and representation of the characters, centres are reminded that candidates should be encouraged to consider dress codes as a way of communicating meanings. To secure assessment in Band 5 the meanings communicated and representations constructed need to be complex and purposeful. This genre also saw several candidates use images from a family wedding, whilst this may have had some relevance to the genre, some lacked purposeful constructions of representations and the ability to communicate meanings was not always effective. There was often a lack of 'comedy' portrayed through the imagery which demonstrated an inconsistent understanding of the conventions of the form.

The science-fiction genre was a popular option and there was evidence of excellent and creative ways to embed the conventions of the genre, such as using the inside of a cheese grater and an electric shaver to create futuristic settings and props whilst still taking original images as per the requirements of the brief. There were a number of candidates who used non-original imagery for this genre which is not permitted and was not always reflected in the assessment.

Applying the conventions of the DVD and poster form proved challenging to some candidates who did not conform to recognised conventions and did not include key elements of the brief such as the director and actor names on the front cover. The layout and design of DVD back covers was an area of challenge in many cases as some candidates did not conform to typical conventions, particularly in the bottom half of the back cover where the technical information is usually found. There was also often replication of images across the poster and DVD and some candidates failed to include the required number of images across the production. There were a number of students who copied and pasted an existing billing block and technical information, this is not permitted and all content should be created originally. A number of candidates had the text on the spine the wrong way around, this demonstrates an inconsistent understanding of the conventions of the form but was often not reflected in the assessment.

There were a small number of candidates who did not include any characters in their productions, not only does this not meet the requirements of the brief but it also makes constructing representations impossible. There was also a tendency to include images of people with their faces covered or having them all facing away, whilst this may be appropriate for some characters, there should also be some clear constructions of characters incorporated within the production.

Centres are reminded that the use of found images in thumbnails, as backgrounds and as part of special effects are not permitted; all images must be original and generated by the candidate. It is also not permitted to include hand drawn images or digital illustrations/animations; the brief requires original photographs.

Nearly all candidates created a landscape banner poster, but there was some evidence of candidates who created a portrait poster which meant that the candidate had not met the requirements of the brief and this should have been reflected in the assessment awarded.

BRIEF 4: Music Marketing/ Online

Either:

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

Or:

- (b) Online: Create a functioning homepage and one other linked page for a website promoting a new artist or band in the pop music genre.**

You may, if you wish, produce a music video in a sub-genre of pop music, for example 'indie pop' or 'electro pop'. Your production must target an audience of 16-25 year olds.

Although this brief was not chosen by a large number of candidates, there were some good examples of work for this set brief. There was evidence of candidate work that fully adhered to the codes and conventions of the genre, for example by constructing representations relevant to the genre, featuring performance and narrative footage, and interpreting the lyrics effectively to communicate meanings.

A small number of candidates did not include any performance footage to establish the identity of the artist/band. In such cases, candidates had often been over-rewarded due to the lack of representation of the artist being constructed. There were some submissions which tended to be random footage pieced together to a soundtrack but these lacked narrative and the ability to construct representations was difficult meaning that the assessment was often generous. Several candidates submitted a music video in the portrait orientation, which is not conventional of the form; candidates should be filming in landscape.

As stated in reference to other briefs, where candidates dressed in school uniform and filmed entirely in a school setting, it was much more difficult for them to construct representations appropriate to the genre. Where candidates had carefully considered clothing, gesture and expression and other elements of media language, the productions were much more successful.

A small number of candidates completed the music website option, often very successfully communicating the genre of music and star persona of the artist. Audio-visual elements included interviews with the singer or performance footage of the artist/ band at a concert or in a studio, both of which were highly appropriate to the brief.

Summary of key points

- All candidates must complete independent research of the chosen form before starting planning and production of the media products. This will ensure a foundation of knowledge that can support the construction of the final production and candidates will have a secure knowledge and understanding of the conventions of the form and the genre that has been chosen.
- Candidates must adhere to the requirements of the chosen brief in all aspects. These requirements should be used as a checklist to guide candidates during the production process. Where significant elements of the brief are missing or not incorporated in a conventional manner, this must be reflected in the assessment of the work according to column 2 in the assessment grid.
- Through their production candidates must demonstrate their ability to apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework to communicate meaning. Candidates must consider the ways in which they can construct appropriate representations even when using their peers as their characters. Careful consideration of costume and locations can ensure that appropriate representations are constructed. Candidates should be advised not to include images which do not clearly show the characters/models and images of landscapes/props which do not help communicate meaning and/or construct purposeful representations.
- It is crucial that centres access exemplar work on the WJEC Secure site to ascertain the standards for Component 3 before delivering the component and before assessing the work. Internal moderation of marks is recommended to ensure assessment is robust before inputting candidate marks.



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk