GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Media Studies

A 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

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

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

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Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
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Executive Summary

Performance on Component 1 was positive, with centres preparing candidates effectively for the examination. Most candidates demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of both the set products and the relevant aspects of the theoretical framework. Responses indicated that candidates generally understood the differing requirements of each section of the paper and had been well supported in developing the necessary skills. There was a noticeable improvement in tackling the extended response question, particularly in demonstrating analysis and evaluation (AO2.1 and AO2.3), with most candidates making relevant comparisons between products. Candidates also managed their time well, as evidenced by the high proportion attempting every question and the very low number of incomplete scripts. However, some concerns remain. The quality of handwriting and the number of illegible responses continue to present challenges, highlighting the importance of regular handwritten practice before examinations. In addition, essay-writing skills require further development for some candidates, particularly in structuring extended responses coherently, with weaknesses most evident in Section A.

In Component 2 too, performance was generally very strong, with most candidates demonstrating thoughtful engagement with the course content and a secure understanding of the theoretical framework. Centres had prepared candidates well, resulting in very few unanswered questions or rubric infringements. However, there are several areas for improvement. Candidates should ensure they address the specific wording of each question throughout their response, using key terms consistently and making explicit judgements where questions require evaluation or conclusions. When evaluating academic theories, alternative theories should only be used to assess the specified theory rather than replace it. Time management could also be improved, with candidates advised to spend equal time on each section of the paper, reflecting its equal weighting. Responses should focus primarily on the specified set episodes of television products and designated magazine pages, using other material only for context where appropriate. In Component 2, legibility of handwriting also remains a concern, and centres are encouraged to provide regular opportunities for candidates to practise writing by hand under timed examination conditions.

Component 3 continued to be an engaging part of the course, with many candidates demonstrating enthusiasm for the non-exam assessment. Most centres successfully integrated the component with the rest of the specification, enabling candidates to apply their understanding of the media theoretical framework through practical production. Strong submissions were distinguished by focused research into existing media products, audiences and industry contexts, detailed planning, and clear Statements of Aims and Intentions supported by specific examples. Successful work adhered closely to media form conventions, used genre codes effectively, demonstrated thoughtful audience positioning, and carefully planned media language and representations. The most effective projects also maintained consistency across both production tasks. In contrast, weaker submissions were characterised by broad or generic research, limited planning, descriptive statements lacking justification, inconsistent use of conventions, simplistic genre and representation choices, insufficient attention to audience, and failure to meet all aspects of the brief. In some cases, candidates devoted significantly less attention to the second production task than the first.

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MEDIA STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 1: MEDIA PRODUCTS, INDUSTRIES AND AUDIENCES

Overview of the Component

Overall, for this component, it was encouraging to see how positively centres and candidates had responded to the demands of the examination and how well candidates had been guided by centres. The candidates generally demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding both with regard to the set products and the relevant aspects of the theoretical framework. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of what was required in the different elements of the paper, showing that they had been well prepared for the demands of this component. In particular, there was an evident improvement in candidates' ability to effectively tackle the challenges of the extended response question assessing AO2 1 and AO2 3. The majority of candidates engaged in comparisons at some level. Most candidates attempted all of the questions and there were very few incomplete papers signifying that candidates had been well taught in managing timings.

The quality of handwriting and the number of illegible responses continue to be of some concern. It is of paramount importance that candidates are given opportunities to handwrite responses in preparation for the examination. Essay writing skills also proved problematic for some candidates, particularly with regard to the extended response question. Several candidates struggled to structure some responses coherently, particularly in Section A.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1 0

Explore how media language influences meaning in this music video extract. [15]

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

The unseen product set for this question was an extract from the music video *Quarter Life Crisis* (Baby Queen, 2023). The focus was media language and candidates needed to use their understanding of this area of the theoretical framework to consider how media language influences meaning in the extract. This was a rich unseen resource offering candidates plenty to discuss and this question was generally answered well, and it was clear that the vast majority of candidates had been well prepared.

The best responses were fluent in discussing visual and technical codes and accurate in their use of terminology. The most successful responses were from candidates who understood the requirements of the question and were able to apply their understanding of all elements of media language in relation to the audio-visual example, including visual and technical codes and narrative. Successful responses avoided a descriptive response and instead explored how elements of media language were used. These candidates were able to identify specific uses of media language, using terminology to describe the purpose and effects of choices made with detailed description of examples followed by an exploration of how meaning was influenced. Some higher-level responses were able to apply Barthes semiotics theory to explain how signs encode meanings and also recognised postmodern features including intertextuality and the use of horror conventions and bricolage in costume

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choices. Some candidates also effectively referenced Goodwin in their discussion of the music video's codes and conventions. Candidates who produced more accurate, developed responses also used the language of semiotics to develop their analysis further, which is to be encouraged. The more successful responses were also well structured and gave an overview of their understanding of the meaning of the music video, relating this to their knowledge of the music genre and then selected examples from across the product to support this.

Candidates in the middle of the mark range demonstrated some straightforward understanding of aspects of media language and often recognised the connotations of the visual elements but failed to then explore them in any detail. They produced a reasonable and straightforward analysis of the music video extract with a generally accurate application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework but tended not to cover a broad range of points or to develop a response to the 'how' element of the question. Many responses used the lyrics of the song to talk about meaning instead of the audio-visual elements which restricted their analysis. This could contribute to the analysis of media language where candidates referred to audio codes, for example pace and crescendo but analysis of lyrics alone was not relevant to the question.

In less successful responses, there was a tendency to focus on very literal interpretations leading to a more descriptive approach and some obvious points were made about for example, colour codes. These candidates tended to explain what they could see without analysing why these elements were incorporated into the music video form and how they influenced meaning. It was of some concern that these responses were also less confident with exploring a range of elements of media language and failed to support points made with specific examples from the unseen product, instead adopting a superficial, generalised approach which demonstrated often only a basic understanding of the theoretical framework and little use of subject-specific terminology.

Less successful responses tended become more descriptive and speculative, often deciding that the product was a response to COVID-19, or that it was about a mental health crisis without analysing evidence from the actual product to support these assertions. There was also a tendency for candidates to drift into more passive description rather than critical analysis. Many answers focused too heavily on lyrics or slipped into representation analysis instead of maintaining a strict media language focus.

Some candidates did approach this as a representation question analysing how the protagonist's representation was constructed and referencing feminist theorists, resulting in the response failing to address the focus of this question.

Key Teaching Points

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

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Question 2 0

Compare how the representations in the film poster and the advertisement convey ideologies about gender. [30]

In your answer you must:

- consider the similarities and differences in how the representations in the film poster and the advertisement convey ideologies about gender
- make judgements and draw conclusions about how far the representations reinforce or challenge ideologies about gender
- consider how the representations in the film poster and the advertisement reflect social and cultural contexts

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

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

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

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

The more successful responses were very knowledgeable about the *Tide* advertisement and the historical context and were able to discuss the construction of representations in detail. These stronger responses also focused on how the representations conveyed ideologies throughout their response. These candidates were able to place the advertisement securely within its time, exploring more traditional, stereotypical representations as part of a broader social and cultural landscape citing post-war changes and the intertextual references to Rosie the Riveter and film stars. More perceptive responses discussed the *Tide* advertisement as offering a positive representation of women at the time, comparing this then with *The Mother*. Similarly, the film poster offered some useful comparisons, and successful responses were able to explore the changing definitions of the role of 'mother' with some sophisticated discussions that acknowledged new stereotypes of 'strong, independent women' who also meet contemporary beauty standards that include greater diversity. Context for the poster was generally handled well, and students seem increasingly aware of the importance of transferring knowledge from one section of the course to another.

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Candidates attaining marks in the middle band, whilst engaging in comparisons, produced responses that were less detailed and analysis that was more straightforward and reasonable. These candidates had been well prepared for discussing the set product but in these responses, there was a tendency to download information about the historical context without applying it to examples from the advertisement. These responses tended to focus on more straightforward analysis of the products and failed to consider how ideologies of gender were conveyed in any detail. Whilst candidates at this level did incorporate reference to relevant theory, this tended to be undeveloped and was not consistently used to enhance analysis.

With less successful responses, the nature of the comparisons was a little superficial and 'basic', for example referring to the fact that both products feature women, both women are wearing make-up, both are mothers. With the more limited responses context in relation to *Tide* tended to be downloaded and was not used to enhance analysis. While the comparative structure has improved across all bands, some less successful responses frequently lost sight of the specific prompt. The most successful responses were those that remained explicitly focused on the 'ideologies of gender' aspect of the question, whereas weaker responses fell back on generalised representation analysis. Some less successful responses also moved away from the question focus and discussed audience targeting and the appeal of both products.

When advising candidates on the use of theory, it is important that the theory/theoretical perspective chosen is valid, relevant and can be used to support the points the candidate wishes to make about the products. There were several examples of candidates who tried to include theories which were often irrelevant or not applied appropriately or where theorists' names were simply added in parentheses without being obviously included in analysis. Stuart Hall and Van Zoonen were the most popular theorists applied, some candidates mentioned bell hooks in terms of the patriarchal oppression but most who mentioned her focused on ethnicity, missing the focus of the question. A few Band 5 answers referred to Judith Butler and effectively applied the idea of gender performance and expectations of society. There was, however, a worrying lack of understanding of Mulvey and male gaze theory which was regularly incorrectly applied.

Key Teaching Points

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

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Section B: Understanding Media Industries and Audiences

Question 3

3 1 Briefly explain what is meant by a specialised radio programme. [2]

AO1 1a: Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework
Most candidates were able to answer this correctly for one mark, but many responses did not fully relate to the concept of 'specialised radio programmes' beyond the concept of a 'specific' theme or audience. Many candidates referred to radio stations instead of programmes such as 'Talksport' or 'Radio 4'. When the question was answered well, candidates referred to niche interests and audiences, linking these concepts to the set products or other relevant examples.

3 2 Briefly explain what you understand by digital convergence in the radio industry. [2]

AO1 1a: Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework

This question was answered more confidently across the responses seen with candidates referring to multiple platform use and expansion due to advances in technology and online media. This was generally applied to the set product as a form of exemplification with most students displaying good knowledge and understanding of the availability of the set products on a range of different platforms.

For both these short questions many candidates wrote brief, truncated responses as if they were answering a simple 1-mark question. These responses did not demonstrate enough depth and explicit detail to secure full marks.

3 3 Explain the impact of technological changes on distribution in the radio industry. Refer to either *Woman's Hour* or *Have You Heard George's Podcast?* to support your points. [9]

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

This question was generally well answered with evidence of knowledge and understanding of the impact of technological changes on the radio industry; stronger responses were able to focus specifically on distribution. Candidates were able to present good knowledge of how technology has changed the way audiences consume radio. The examples used by those candidates accessing marks in the higher bands were relevant and detailed and supported by theory/theoretical perspectives.

The more successful responses were also clearly aware of the requirements and structure of this question and were able to give a brief overview of the radio industry generally, referring to for example, the switch from FM to DAB offering greater flexibility and the diverse range of platforms available for the distribution of programmes to cater for changing audiences. Stronger responses demonstrated understanding of convergence and how radio has adapted and showcased a robust institutional knowledge of the BBC, its public service remit, and how these factors influence digital distribution strategies, supporting their points with precise examples.

Best responses made specific reference to their set product in ways that were relevant to the question, from George's Common Ground forum, to Anita Rani's use of TikTok and Instagram, highlighting how this allowed for more interaction from the audience and the

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building of a community. There were also some good responses relating to regulation, linking to Livingstone & Lunt.

Responses in the middle bands were largely satisfactory in terms of the level of knowledge and understanding that was displayed in relation to application to the set products. These tended to be quite generic, referring to where the product is now available, stemming from the previous Q32 perhaps and some responses failed to link points to specific examples from the set products. At this level, discussion of *Woman's Hour* was largely relegated to discussions referring to BBC Sounds and the BBC website with less reference to how technology was utilised within the episodes such as calls to action, use of social media etc., to involve the audience.

Responses in the lower bands tended to lack specific, concrete examples of digital distribution practices, relying instead on generalised assertions about the media industry rather than the required depth relating to the set product. These responses stuck to simple observations about availability on different platforms without really going into specific detail. The focus of these more basic responses tended to be the ability of people to listen at their own leisure with many candidates still referencing women having busy lives due to childcare etc. in relation to *Woman's Hour*. This was explored with more security with *HYHGP* and the appeals of podcasts for younger listeners. Many responses in the lower bands just referred to BBC Sounds without really connecting to the set product.

Key Teaching Points

- ✓ Consider what the set radio product illustrates about aspects of the industry
- ✓ Encourage the use of subject specific terminology related to industry
- ✓ Support points with specific examples from the industry element of the radio programme
- ✓ Learners should consider the specific examples from the radio programme that can best illustrate elements of the industry for example, the website, app, podcasts, social media platforms etc.

3 4 Explain the ways in which social and cultural contexts may influence radio production.
Refer to *Woman's Hour* or *Have You Heard George's Podcast?* to support your points. [12]

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

As can be seen by the AO being assessed, this question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of media contexts in relation to the radio industry.
As with Question Q3 3, the expectation is that candidates will address the first part of the question which refers to the radio industry in relation to social and cultural contexts before applying their knowledge and understanding to the set radio product.

Evident in the more successful responses was good discussion regarding the BBC's remit for both products along with their push for diversity after the Ofcom report, this was applied well. More successful responses used background information about the product to underpin the demands of the question in terms of how social and cultural contexts shape production. Those candidates who studied *HYHGP* applied their knowledge and understanding of contexts through reference to a good range of episodes in particular, Grenfell, Flying the Flag and Popcorn which allowed the candidates to link the themes to the demands of the question along with synoptic elements regarding audiences and issues of representation. References to *Woman's Hour* episodes focused on the evolving place of women in society

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evidenced by the topics chosen, guests and presenters. Chosen episodes allowed candidates to discuss how the programme covers the social and cultural issues related to women's lives. The best responses had not only listened to the episodes, but they also had a clear understanding of their production context and who they were produced for, and they used this to inform their responses. In the more successful responses, both *HYHGP* and *Woman's Hour* were discussed in detail discussing the way that they reflected increased diversity. The ability of the BBC and their funding model to take risks were discussed with good application of Hesmondhalgh and Curran and Seaton.

In the middle band there was a tendency to download historical context, particularly with reference to *Woman's Hour* without relating this specifically to social and cultural contexts. There was a lot of relevant discussion regarding the initial production of *WH* in 1946 with many referencing 'how to hang your husband's suit' but again, not really exploring more recent themes and discussions as confidently. These responses failed to explicitly tie the social and cultural factors back to the choices made within the set products themselves. Here, examples were often less specific discussing the presenters and general topics related to women such as the menopause and contraception. Quite a few candidates referred to episodes linked to Andrew Tate, but it was not obvious that specific episodes of the programme had been studied. Candidates at this level discussing *HYHGP* tended to give general examples focusing on the construction of representations.

Some candidates were still referencing *LNWH* which was partly relevant when linked to a discussion of the watershed. However, this is no longer the set product so more extended discussions were detrimental to the response. There was some crossover with Q33 and technology in places which is to be expected as a cultural context, but this was generally only seen in responses in the lower bands.

Candidates in the lower bands tended to describe episodes and their themes and demonstrated limited understanding of social and cultural contexts.

Some more successful candidates were aware that this response provided an opportunity to draw together knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study and incorporated references to audiences and the link between the construction of representations and cultural and social contexts.

Key Teaching Points

- ✓ Ensure that both stems of the question are addressed to illustrate a broad understanding of the industry focus
- ✓ Ensure that candidates are prepared with specific examples from the set product for the question focus
- ✓ Give guidance in relation to how to use the set product to illustrate aspects of industry
- ✓ Consider how reference to other areas of the specification can be incorporated into this response e.g. audiences
- ✓ Use subject specific terminology e.g. in relation to industry and radio

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Question 4

4 1 Explain how newspapers target specific audiences. Refer to the *Daily Mirror* to support your points. [10]

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

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

The most successful responses focused on the key audience words 'target' and 'specific' and demonstrated a clear understanding that the focus was 'how' audiences are targeted. These candidates also addressed both stems of the question demonstrating an awareness of how all newspapers need to target their audience in the present challenging climate. The most successful responses demonstrated their understanding of the newspaper's target audience and drew on a detailed knowledge of the audience demographic and psychographics. They were able to confidently explore how different audiences are targeted through form and content of both the newspaper website and a range of examples from a newspaper print and online edition were taken from across the different sections. These included references to the front cover as well as the plug, features, advertisements, sports pages and the interactive elements available on the website. The partisan nature of the newspaper was discussed well and the accessible format and style that broadens the audience as well as more specialised content was discussed in detail.

Less successful responses restricted their discussion to the 'Partygate' set product and offered a detailed textual analysis without relating this to the question which limited their answer. In the responses in the lower bands there was also a tendency to focus on a generalised and simplistic interpretation of the 'uneducated' readership with a low reading age in terms that failed to acknowledge the broad appeal of a mainstream tabloid and need for accessibility. Inaccurate generalisations were made about for example, the colour of the masthead indicating the political persuasion of the newspaper. These responses tended to be more opinion led, demonstrated limited media knowledge and had limited or no understanding of 'how' newspapers target specific audiences.

Key Teaching Points

- ✓ Ensure that candidates are prepared with the correct set product for the question focus, in this case that they have studied sections from a whole edition of the newspaper and selected website pages
- ✓ Be aware of the key audience term used in the question and allow this to guide the response. In this case it is 'target'. Using the key term throughout the response helps to maintain the focus

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- ✓ Use terminology related to the area of assessment, in this case audiences and newspapers
- ✓ Ensure that points made are applied to specific examples from the set product
- ✓ Incorporate relevant theories/theoretical perspectives to demonstrate knowledge and enhance discussion

4 2 Explain the importance of fans to the video game industry. Refer to Henry Jenkins' fandom theory and the *Assassin's Creed* video game you have studied to support your points. [10]

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

Despite this being the final question, it was completed reasonably well by a majority of candidates and there was little evidence that they had run out of time. Similarly to Q4 1, this was in two parts, requiring candidates to explain the importance of fans to the video games industry and then to apply Henry Jenkins' fandom theory to the set product to illustrate their understanding. It is expected that candidates will have studied a specific example of a game from the *AC* franchise. It was clear that the majority of candidates had some understanding of Henry Jenkins' fandom theory.

The most successful responses moved from a more general overview to the specifics of the set product and selected a range of examples from the game studied to illustrate their points. Their understanding of Jenkins' theory was made evident by their ability to apply it to selected examples and to employ the relevant subject-specific terminology, for example 'textual poaching' and 'participatory culture'. These better responses were able to explain Henry Jenkins' fandom theory and apply it in detail to a specific game from the *Assassin's Creed* franchise to explain how a fandom is developed through the repeated, familiar elements in each game. The better examples were able to apply the theory using examples such as walk through videos, Comicon and fan art and fiction, with some excellent examples that detailed how Ubisoft are incorporating the activities of the fandom into their websites and production processes.

Candidates awarded marks in the middle band demonstrated satisfactory knowledge and understanding but produced more straightforward responses that tended to be undeveloped in terms of specific references from the game studied and showed more straightforward understanding of Jenkins' theory that was often not applied in any detail. Several responses at this level focused more on how audiences were targeted, rather than focus on fan engagement and the benefit to Ubisoft.

Weaker candidates tended to produce a more basic response focusing on why fans liked the game or were too basic in their observations, for example simple assertions that without fans nobody buys the game so you can't make money, rather than their significance in its promotion and success. Some candidates in the lower bands did not refer specifically to the set product at all in their response or referred more generally to the *AC* franchise rather than applying knowledge and understanding to a specific game. Other less successful responses were brief and undeveloped, and some made no reference to Jenkins' theory only briefly answering the first stem of the question.

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Key Teaching Points

- ✓ Be aware of the two stems of the question and that this enables learners to demonstrate their broader understanding of audience in relation to the set form
- ✓ Learners should be prepared to support points made about audiences with specific, relevant examples from the set product. In this case, a specific game from the *AC* franchise
- ✓ Learners should be prepared for the possible focus of an audience question and on the specific aspect that may be assessed, in 2026 this was fandom related to Jenkins' theory
- ✓ Learners should be aware that they may be required to refer to a specific theorist or theory in their response. Where this is the case, they should be confident in applying aspects of the theory and in using terminology related to the theory.

Summary of key points

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

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MEDIA STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 2: MEDIA FORMS AND PRODUCTS IN DEPTH

Overview of the Component

Performance in the Component 2 exam was again generally very positive this year, with significant evidence of thoughtful engagement with course content. It was clear that the majority of candidates had been well-taught and were able to apply their understanding of the theoretical framework of the subject to the different questions set. There were very few examples of questions not being attempted, and relatively few rubric infringements, which was very encouraging.

Areas for improvement:

- It is important that candidates address the specific question that has been set as clearly and consistently as possible. Making consistent use of the key words from the question should help in this regard. The relevance of each section of the candidate's response to the specific question that has been set should be clearly established. With this in mind, candidates may benefit from further guidance about how to frame the points they make in order to ensure that they are addressing the question consistently and explicitly throughout their response. Where questions require candidates to make judgements and conclusions (e.g. 'how far' or 'to what extent' questions) or to evaluate theory, it is important that candidates ensure that they are doing this.
- As noted last year, if candidates choose to discuss alternative theories or critical approaches in questions that address AO2 2 (apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to evaluate academic theories), this material needs to be clearly and carefully framed as an evaluation of the theory specified in the question. In other words, there needs to be an explicit discussion of why the alternative theory is more or less useful, valid or relevant than the theory that is being evaluated. Simply substituting a discussion of the specified theory for another theory is not the same as evaluating the specified theory.
- Some candidates wrote approximately the same amount for each of the 15-mark questions as for each of the 30-mark questions. As each section of the paper is equally weighted, with the two 30-mark questions requiring an extended response involving discussion of two set products rather than one, it is recommended that candidates spend the same amount of time on each section of the paper (i.e. the same amount of time on Sections A, B and C).
- In questions that require analysis of, or supporting reference to, the set episodes of the television products studied, or the set editions of the magazines studied, candidates should focus primarily on the set episodes of the television products and the specified pages from the set editions of the magazines in their responses. While incidental reference may be made to other episodes or pages (e.g. for context), the primary focus for discussion or analysis should be on the set episodes of the television products or the specified pages from the set editions of the magazines.
- Legibility of handwriting continues to be an issue. It is strongly recommended that centres provide candidates with appropriate opportunities to write by hand under timed conditions, using this to identify whether further access arrangements might be required.

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Comments on individual questions/sections

Questions 11, 21 and 31

Explain why audiences may interpret television products in different ways. Refer to the set episode of *Peaky Blinders*/*Black Mirror*/*Killing Eve* in your response. [15]

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

This question was generally well answered. There were interesting discussions of the way in which factors such as gender, age, nationality, sexuality, race, ethnicity and regional identity, as well as values, attitudes and beliefs can lead audiences to interpret television products in different ways. It was also pleasing to see some candidates make informed and productive reference to relevant concepts such as cultural capital. For example, some candidates discussed the way in which interpretations of *Black Mirror* might depend on the audience's ability to recognise and understand the intertextual references that feature in the set episode, while others discussed how the historical references in the set episode of *Peaky Blinders* might be interpreted differently depending on the audience's knowledge of the inter-war period in which the programme is set. A significant number of candidates referred to Stuart Hall's reception theory in their responses, demonstrating an understanding that television products can be interpreted in different ways. While some candidates simply described or outlined what the preferred (dominant-hegemonic), negotiated or oppositional readings of the set product they had studied might be, more successful responses explained the factors that might lead audiences to make those different interpretations, engaging more fully with the requirement to explain *why* audiences may interpret television products in different ways. A relatively small number of responses simply focused on how the programme-makers/encoders encouraged the audience to interpret the set product in a certain way with no real consideration of the different ways in which the set product might be interpreted, therefore failing to fully address or engage with the central premise of the question. Similarly, some candidates discussed audience *targeting* rather than audience *interpretations* (i.e. focusing more on what the producers of the text had done to target or attract the audience rather than what the audience might do with the text).

Questions 12, 22 and 32

Explore how the representations of gender in the set episode of *The Bridge*/*The Returned*/*Tehran* convey values, attitudes and beliefs. [15]

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.

As with questions 11, 21 and 31, the more successful responses to questions 12, 22 and 32 were those that engaged fully with the question. While many candidates made interesting points about the representations of gender in the set product they had studied, some failed to discuss how those representations could be seen to convey particular values, attitudes and beliefs, therefore only addressing part of the question. More successful responses explored *how* the representations in the set product conveyed values, attitudes and beliefs while less successful responses simply described what those representations were. Some responses also digressed into other areas of representation rather than focusing specifically on representations of gender. There were, however, some very interesting discussions of how the representations of gender in the set products might be seen to convey patriarchal values, attitudes and beliefs or more liberal, progressive values. Many candidates offered

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thoughtful discussions of issues relating to stereotyping, gender roles and objectification, drawing productively on Hall's theory of representation, and the feminist theories of van Zoonen and bell hooks. Again, though, the most effective responses were able to show how these aspects of representation related to particular values, attitudes and beliefs rather than simply discussing, for example, the extent to which the representations of gender in the set product reinforced or challenged stereotypes. Some candidates made useful links between the values, attitudes and beliefs that were conveyed through the representations of gender and the wider social, cultural and historical contexts in which the set products were produced. For example, some candidates made insightful points about the way in which the representations of gender in the set episode of *The Bridge* could be seen to reflect the more liberal, progressive values of the social context in which the programme was made, while some candidates made interesting points about the influence of Catholicism on the representations of gender in *The Returned*.

Questions 40, 50 and 60

Lévi-Strauss's theory of structuralism suggests that binary oppositions play a key role in conveying meanings.

Evaluate this structuralist theory. Refer to the set editions of *Woman* and *Adbusters*, or *Woman's Realm* and *Huck*, or *Vogue* and *The Big Issue* in your response. [30]

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

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

This question was answered with varying degrees of success, largely depending on how well Lévi-Strauss's theory of structuralism was understood and how successfully it was evaluated, as these were the key assessment objectives for this question. While the validity, relevance or usefulness of Lévi-Strauss's theory was thoughtfully evaluated by many candidates, in some cases there was a tendency to apply rather than evaluate Lévi-Strauss's theory. Some candidates convincingly argued that the binaristic framework that underpins Lévi-Strauss's theory could be seen as too simplistic to account for the different ways in which meanings are produced in media products (some, for example, cited the 'Beyond Binary' feature in *Huck* as evidence of this). Some made valid points about the way in which Lévi-Strauss's theory could be seen to overlook the role of the audience/reader in determining textual meaning, while others suggested that structuralist theory tends to downplay the significance of the contexts in which media products are produced and consumed. Equally, many candidates argued that Lévi-Strauss's theory provides a useful framework for exploring the way in which meanings are produced in media texts, demonstrating how it could be used to explain the way in which particular meanings are conveyed in the set magazines. While some suggested that Lévi-Strauss's theory would work best in conjunction with other theories, such as Barthes' theory of semiotics, in some cases, candidates simply discussed other theories that could be applied to the set magazines rather than framing that discussion as an evaluation of the strengths or limitations of Lévi-Strauss's theory of structuralism.

A common issue with a significant number of responses was that candidates ended up simply describing the ways in which their set magazines contrasted with one another, essentially arguing that the two magazines could be seen as binary opposites (one mainstream, the other alternative; one contemporary, the other historical etc.). This approach tended to be quite limiting as it demonstrated only a partial understanding of structuralist theory, overlooking a central component of Lévi-Strauss's argument – the idea

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that binary oppositions play a pivotal role in producing or conveying meanings. The most successful responses demonstrated a clearer understanding of this, discussing, for example, the way in which *Adbusters* could be seen to derive its countercultural meaning through its oppositional relationship to consumer culture, the way in which *Huck* could be seen to establish its independent, alternative ethos through its defiance of mainstream norms and conventions, or the way in which *Woman's Realm* either implicitly or explicitly constructs and defines the world of women in binary opposition to the world of men.

Question 70

'The main purpose of online media products is to make a profit.'

To what extent do you agree with this statement about the influence of economic contexts on online media products?

Refer to JJ Olatunji/KSI or Zoe Sugg, and the *Thiiird magazine* website or the *Attitude* website in your response. [30]

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

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

Again, this question was answered with varying degrees of success. The most successful responses were able to construct a coherent, substantiated argument that responded directly to the question, using evidence from the set products to support particular lines of reasoning. However, in some cases, there was a tendency to simply sketch or outline a narrative account of the careers of KSI or Zoe Sugg, or to provide a general overview of *Attitude* or *Thiiird*, without clearly explaining how that material related to the question of whether or not the main purpose of online products is to make a profit. More successful responses therefore tended to draw clearer, more effective, better-supported judgements and conclusions, engaging more explicitly and more consistently with the question.

There also tended to be a stronger conceptual understanding in more successful responses, with candidates drawing more productively on relevant aspects of the theoretical framework. Many candidates made useful reference to Hesmondhalgh's theory of cultural industries, for example, considering the extent to which their set products could be seen to minimise risk and maximise audience in the pursuit of profit. More successful responses tended to identify specific strategies that had been used to minimise risk and maximise profit. There was interesting reference to formatting and the use of established formulas and celebrities in the set products, for example, and there was also some interesting material on vertical and horizontal integration. For instance, a number of candidates discussed Stream Publishing's acquisition of *Attitude* as a means of minimising risk and maximising audiences, facilitating economies of scale by merging editorial resources with their existing title *Winq* to form a gay media superbrand. Hesmondhalgh's suggestion that the radical potential of the Internet has been partially contained by its incorporation into a large set of profit-oriented cultural industries was also thoughtfully discussed by some candidates.

Equally, many candidates put forward convincing arguments suggesting that the main purpose of their set products was *not* simply to make a profit. Zoe Sugg's work as a digital ambassador for the mental health charity MIND and a co-founder of 'Digital Detox Day' was cited as evidence of this by a number of candidates, for instance, as was KSI's involvement in annual charity football matches with the Sidemen. The role of the *Attitude* and *Thiiird* websites in providing a sense of community and belonging for historically marginalised

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groups while raising awareness of specific social inequalities and political issues was also thoughtfully discussed by a large number of candidates. More successful responses were generally able to support their points more effectively with more detailed discussion of specific articles or videos from the set products.

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MEDIA STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 3: CROSS-MEDIA PRODUCTION

Overview of the Component

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

Teachers and lecturers will know that the non-exam assessment is many candidates' favourite part of the course, even amongst those who initially approach practical work with trepidation. This was the case again this year, with the moderation process providing an enjoyable insight into the enthusiasm with which Component 3 is approached across the country.

Once again, the majority of centres did not see Component 3 as an island within the specification, but as inherently linked to the rest of the course. It is a method for candidates to show the same knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media as Components 1 and 2 but through a practical outcome.

Successful submissions were characterised by:

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

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

Less successful submissions were characterised by:

- Less focused or very general research, sometimes set on a whole-class basis
- Generalised planning, without a focus on details
- Descriptive Statements of Aims and Intentions that lack justification for decisions and/or do not cover all of the bullet points
- Not fully adhering to media form conventions, such as inappropriate camera shots or unconventional layouts (including overly large copy text in magazines)
- Only using simple genre iconography
- Audience positioning not being fully considered
- Not meeting all the requirements of the brief

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- Media language use not being planned and/or being devised as the work is produced
- Simplistic or not appropriate representations, sometimes without a focus on people
- One task, often the second, not being given the same attention as the first.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The briefs this year were united by requiring candidates to create productions for a 'Generation Z' audience. The vast majority of candidates carefully considered this target market when producing their work. Many candidates discovered through research that, although Generation Z is a demographic, its consumers often share many psychographic traits and used this knowledge to inform their media language use – for example, by embedding ideologies or diverse representations into their production work.

Applying their knowledge and understanding from Components 1 and 2, many candidates recognised that audiences today – and especially Generation Z – are not a homogenous group and are carefully segmented by media producers. The set industry contexts were designed to work in tandem with the set audience and many high-achieving candidates carefully considered how subsidiary production companies (set by the television brief), publishers that operate across digital and print platforms (magazines brief), independent producers (film marketing brief) and record labels that are divisions of the 'Big Three' (music marketing brief) could be harnessed to appeal to Generation Z.

Naturally, this led to a wide range of genres (including sub-genres and hybrids) being chosen by candidates to suit the audience and industry context, which is appropriate given the varied interests of Generation Z and the producers targeting them. When choosing a genre, the majority of candidates were mindful that their production work must be suitable for the entire defined audience but can be skewed towards a certain segment of the audience, such as a particular age, gender or interest. This meant that some quite niche genres (such as Muslim women's fashion) were seen and proved effective, though some very specialist genres (such as magazines targeted at modern witches) did lack the commercial appeal to fully fulfil the industry context. Virtually all centres adhered to the rubric that, unlike the Eduqas GCSE Media Studies specification, A Level candidates choose their own genre, and this must be entirely the candidate's choice.

It is, however, acceptable for centres to set one, two, three or even all four briefs. Approaches varied from all candidates undertaking the same brief with the same choice for the second task to a completely free choice across briefs and the second task. All are acceptable ways to deliver this component. Magazines remained the most popular brief, though music marketing has edged ahead of film marketing as the second most popular brief. The television brief remained a minority choice.

As ever, research and planning were hallmarks of successful work. In line with previous years, genre research was evident in the vast majority of candidates' work. This year saw the strongest audience research since the specification began, likely due to the wealth of articles available on the characteristics of Generation Z. The upward trend in industry research noted in last year's report continued in many submissions, though research into production companies still dominated this category. Candidates who researched broader industry trends often performed strongly as they embraced the changing media landscape.

Statements of Aims and Intentions

As the specification matures, the quality of Statements of Aims and Intentions has risen. Successful responses comprised detailed plans for production work with justification that demonstrates knowledge and understanding from the theoretical framework.

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While many different approaches were taken (including writing in bullet points), the most consistently successful structure within a paragraph was to refer to research (be this textual analysis of existing products, industry or audience research or academic theory) and then how this research would inform media language use within the production.

Candidates who were very precise about their plans (such as naming exact camera shots, fonts, colours, editing techniques and the like) tended to score higher marks. Some candidates showed impressive broad knowledge in their planning but lost marks for not including precise details of how these would be executed through the media language. This was most commonly seen when discussing audience targeting, with many candidates often identifying an insightful facet of the Generation Z audience but then not being precise about how this would actually be addressed in their production work – for example, many candidates cited research that Generation Z value 'authenticity' but did not explain how this would be incorporated in their work.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are still some candidates who describe their plans with no real justification. While such Statements of Aims and Intentions are often detailed, they do not hit most other aspects of the mark scheme, limiting their marks. Some candidates even discussed aspects completely outside the brief, such as justifying film release dates, which could not be credited.

Coverage of the bullet points provided above the Statement of Aims and Intentions on the coversheet remains an issue for a significant minority of candidates. By far the most common reason for this is overly focusing on Task 1 at the expense of Task 2. Other areas often underserved include digital convergence and the industry context, though the latter was less frequently absent this year. Discussion of audience targeting and positioning improved this year, again perhaps due to the Generation Z audience set.

There seemed to be fewer examples of academic theories being shoehorned into Statements of Aims and Intentions with little merit and most candidates seemed to be aware that there is no requirement that they must incorporate academic theories into the response. When used well, however, academic theories did enhance many Statements of Aims and Intentions. This was most often seen through media language and representation theories. The theories employed were usually those named in the specification, though others (such as Andrew Goodwin's music video theory, Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory and the uses and gratifications theory) were often used successfully. A notable number of candidates planned to subvert or challenge theories through their production work, and this was often fruitful.

Even fewer candidates went over the 500-word limit this year than last. Some, however, went well over. In most occurrences of this, the assessor correctly stopped marking after a 10% allowance (550 words) and made this clear on the coversheet. Some candidates wrote well under 500 words, and these short responses were self-penalising.

Unfortunately, there was a notable rise in Statements of Aims and Intentions that had been written with the use of artificial intelligence. While AI does have some permitted use in the non-exam assessment (such as assisting with research), using AI to write any work submitted for assessment is a form of plagiarism and completely unacceptable. It was somewhat concerning that there were a number of Statements of Aims and Intentions that moderators could instantly see were not written by the candidate that had escaped the scrutiny of the teachers/lecturers who know the usual quality of the candidate's work. It is the responsibility of centres to be vigilant of inappropriate AI use, in line with the JCQ guidance. Given the Statement of Aims and Intentions is a relatively short piece of writing, completing it entirely within lessons may be the most straightforward way of addressing this. It may also

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be worth highlighting to candidates that AI is actually very poor at writing Statements of Aims and Intentions, as it tends to overuse grandiose academic terminology at the expense of detail.

Instances of candidates having been given a writing frame for the Statement of Aims and Intentions remain low, though there were some occurrences and centres considering this should be reminded that it is a form of malpractice.

Cross-Media Production

The standard of production work submitted was similar to previous years, with the broad range of achievement seen. Targeting of the audience was strong this year, with many candidates appealing to Generation Z's viewpoints and attitudes through the content and mode of address (with controlled use of Gen Z slang being particularly engaging).

As ever, better work was well planned, with precisely set up audio-visual camera shots, photos that left room for text to be added and well-scripted interviews nearly always leading to success. The planning of photoshoots for print work was often a key discriminator. Those that researched carefully realised that such shots are very carefully planned by media producers, with magazine photoshoots, for example, often having a distinct theme or focus. This also helps to construct representations and avoid the often-seen scenario of an insightful representation that is constructed through the copy but not the photos alongside it. Many high-achieving candidates carefully considered how Tasks 1 and 2 would work together and planned to spread their representations across the particular pieces of work, ensuring they included the required number of social groups. Elsewhere, work that planned to encode viewpoints and ideologies (such as feminist outlooks, environmental concerns and the importance of mental wellbeing) also achieved well.

Less planned work inevitably led to lower quality productions. For example, unscripted podcasts, audio-visual content with little consideration of camera placement and a series of very similar images in photoshoots limited candidates' control of media language (and, in many cases, media form and genre conventions). There were even some candidates that used photos or footage that did not seem to be taken for the non-exam assessment, sourcing it from proms, nights out, concerts and holidays. Most of these were either not suitable for the media form being produced (selfie shots in magazines being a recurring example) or did not construct representations with any sense of purposefulness.

Once again, there were still some candidates that submitted work with no or very few images or footage of people or of people whose faces could not be clearly seen. Inevitably, work like this struggled to score highly because of the lack of representations and addressing of the audience.

Adherence to media form conventions was mixed. Better work had clearly carefully studied real-life examples, whereas less successful work often did not seem to fully understand the codes and conventions of what was being produced. This was more commonly seen in print work, such as magazine pages or Blu-ray sleeves. It is important that candidates research media form conventions carefully. Past advice that all good Media Studies classrooms should contain a collection of magazines and Blu-ray sleeves for candidates to refer to remains valid. When researching, candidates should be prepared to synthesise information from different sources to ensure they can address all aspects of the brief – for example, a single online video may not contain every requirement for a Task 2(b), but studying a selection should give candidates exposure to most, if not all, requirements of the brief.

Past advice about the use of artificial intelligence (including the guidance for managing AI available on the Eduqas AS/A Level Media Studies webpage) seems to have been heeded

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by centres as there were very few examples of AI-generated imagery or videos, which are not permitted. Nevertheless, centres must continue to be alert to this. Many pieces of creative software push AI features heavily, including Adobe Creative Cloud (such as Adobe Firefly and Generative Fill), Canva (such as Canva AI and the 'Magic' features) and Wix (such as the Wix Harmony tool). It is important that candidates do not employ such features when creating their work.

Unfortunately, there has been a significant rise in AI-generated text, especially for magazine articles and Blu-ray sleeve blurbs, being submitted. As with Statements of Aims and Intentions, this is not acceptable, including where such features are built into the editing software. Once again, it is important that centres are alert to this and have processes to prevent and detect this form of malpractice.

There has also been a noticeable rise in work submitted that has been based on templates provided by the editing software. To be clear, templates should not be used by candidates. It is acceptable for candidates to use very basic templates for sizing purposes (such as a Blu-ray sleeve with the spine marked out or a website template with space for the header and content), but anything beyond this is not acceptable. This includes the likes of templates that include suggested layouts (including column formats) and pre-chosen fonts and colour schemes. Again, vigilance is key here, as many increasingly popular pieces of layout software, such as Canva and Wix, are based around templates much more than traditional software like InDesign. Candidates should be instructed to ignore such templates and wizards (including stock images) and to use a blank template populated entirely with their own content.

There was a slight rise in candidates using non-free music in their work. Even if such music has been licensed by a content creation tool (as is very common for Instagram and TikTok), it should not be used. Instead, music and sound effects should be sourced from royalty-free sound websites such as Bensound's Free Music for Videos, Purple Planet Music or BBC Sound Effects.

Brief 1: Television

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

*You should create a cross-media production for a **subsidiary production company** (such as Lime Pictures or Buccaneer) to be shown on either **Apple TV+ or Amazon Prime Video**. Your cross-media production should target **a 'Generation Z' audience**.*

As with previous years, this was the least taken brief, though it has risen slightly in popularity. The brief seemed to inspire those who took it, though the full range of achievement was seen. Better work in this brief considered the Generation Z audience and the primary distribution method being via a streaming service.

Task 1 was to create a sequence from the end of the final episode of the first series of the television programme. Better work considered this timing well and considered how to draw the series to a close, while less successful work tended to ignore this part of the brief. In successful work, narratives were often resolved to a greater or lesser extent, in line with Tzvetan Todorov's narratology theory. There were some interesting approaches seen in non-fiction work, such as a travel programme 'revisiting' previous destinations. In fictional work, the crime drama genre was commonly chosen by candidates, often leading to chase scenes and interrogations. Where the camerawork was considered for these, they were more successful. Interviews in documentaries were also often successfully constructed, particularly when camera angles reflected researched examples and cross-cutting was used

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as participants were speaking. In some cases, across all genres, narratives lacked clarity or extracts relied heavily on dialogue rather than visual storytelling, limiting access to the higher mark bands.

Task 2(a), a website to promote the television series, was not commonly chosen. Most candidates who did undertake this option chose to complete the 'Profiles' page and used this as an opportunity to deepen representations. More successful embedded audio-visual pieces tended to be filmed on the programme's set.

The print option of Task 2(b) was more frequently seen and many candidates produced appropriate pieces to promote their audio-visual work. In many cases, however, this task was less successful than Task 1 from the same candidate, perhaps indicating an uneven focus. Promotional posters were often more successful than Blu-ray sleeves, which sometimes did not conform to media form conventions.

Brief 2: Magazines

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

*You should create a cross-media production for a **publishing organisation that operates across digital and print platforms** (such as Future plc or Bauer Media). Your cross-media production should target **a 'Generation Z' audience**.*

There is no threat at all to the magazine brief's dominance as the most popular choice. A wide range of genres were seen again, though magazines based around fashion, sport and music (often within subgenres of these) were most popular. There were fewer examples of magazines that did not feature people heavily this year, though some candidates did still do this and limited their marks for constructing representations. Better work considered the likes of brand identity across both the print work of Task 1 and the website or podcast/YouTube video of Task 2.

The full range of achievement was seen across Task 1. At the top end of the mark range, professional level layouts and designs were seen with carefully crafted photography, excellent use of text in headlines, standfirsts and captions and insightful copy. Front covers were usually the most successful aspect, with many candidates demonstrating a sound understanding of composing coverlines around a central image and masthead. Covers lacking direct address seemed less common this year. Once again, double-page spreads were often less successful. This was partly because of often less planned photography but – like previous years – not adhering to media form conventions around column use, font size (especially for copy, which was often too large) and consideration of the fold was the most common flaw. Put simply, many double-page spreads did not look enough like the real thing to achieve high marks. The letter from the editor page, set for the first time this year, was largely successful. Candidates who researched discovered there is a very broad range of formats these take and took inspiration to construct a suitable editor's letter page. It was a little more common to see brief elements, such as the 'call to action' to visit the magazine's digital content, omitted on this page.

The website of Task 2(a) was the most common choice for the second task. These varied hugely in quality, with the best submissions using white space, grid layouts for contents pages and careful attention to smaller elements like footers to create realistic websites. Less successful websites tended to not look like magazine websites at all, often featuring minimal articles on the contents page. Some candidates submitted too many pages for the websites (sometimes because they had been pushed in this direction by ill-advised use of a blog element in the website design software). Candidates should only produce two pages for

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websites. If they make more, only the best two pages that fulfil the criteria should be assessed. The embedded audio/audio-visual content, a 'day in the life' sequence, was largely done well, with most candidates recognising the convention of using several shots even in quite a short piece. Some candidates focused on the day in the life of the magazine editor, rather than a person featured in the magazine. There were a number of candidates who showcased days in the life of students, which would be unlikely to feature in a real magazine.

Where Task 2(b) was chosen, podcasts tended to be more popular than YouTube channel videos. Many were successful, often basing the sequence around an interview with a person featured in the magazine. The majority included two locations, with better work often using settings such as a workplace to give insights into the life of the person featured.

Brief 3: Film Marketing

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

*You should create a cross-media production for an **independent film producer** (such as A24 or Annapurna Pictures). Your cross-media production should target **a 'Generation Z' audience**.*

Film marketing appears to have lost its longstanding silver medal for being the second most popular brief and slipped behind music marketing. Nevertheless, this was still a very frequently submitted brief that many candidates achieved highly on. Consideration of the industry context was often impressive this year. Many candidates had researched A24, one of the suggested film production companies, and applied its distinctive approach to filmmaking (and popularity with Generation Z) when producing their own film. A wide range of genres were seen, with horror and coming-of-age genres being particularly popular, probably due to their association with both A24 and Generation Z. Pleasingly, those undertaking the horror genre often worked in a subgenre, as recommended in previous reports, which allowed for more purposeful representations than monster-filled films. Candidates who conveyed the narratives of their films tended to perform more strongly.

The print work of Task 1 was largely successful. The theatrical release poster was frequently the strongest aspect of these submissions, usually because of a focus on a strong central image and adherence to film poster conventions. Although never set before, candidates took to the one-page article from a film magazine very well. Many sensibly kept this short article in a limited scope, such as focusing on one actor from the film and this was frequently successful. Less successful responses tended not to reflect the article form. Centres and candidates clearly considered the Notes for Guidance as very few reviews were submitted. The Blu-ray sleeve was more variable. While many successful examples used the conventions of the media form excellently, others used repetitive photographs or did not conform to requirements such as the inclusion of a billing block, technical information and age rating details. A very small minority of candidates submitted billing blocks or technical information scanned from an existing Blu-ray sleeve; this content should be created by the candidate themselves. Very few candidates utilised the Blu-ray release being a 'special edition', which is a shame as it was a valuable opportunity to address the audience and demonstrate an understanding of the industry context.

Film marketing websites, Task 2(a), seem to be becoming less common each year. Where submitted, better work used the website as part of a coherent marketing campaign. Characters pages were nearly always chosen over location pages. Well-chosen headshots and consideration of how the text can further the representation of the character were hallmarks of success here. Audio/audio-visual interviews with the writer generally focused on

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the plot, in line with the brief, and those that offered a justification of script decisions often demonstrated more control over the meanings communicated.

Where Task 2(b) was selected, candidates mostly opted for podcasts, rather than YouTube videos. Many of these were successful, with interviews being the primary focus. As stated in last year's report, the scripting of interviews has a huge influence on their success. Those that did this well remembered that a film podcast or YouTube would be consumed by a film enthusiast and offered valuable insights into the production process.

Brief 4: Music Marketing

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

*You should create a cross-media production for a **record label that is a division of one of the 'Big Three' record labels** (such as Sony Music Entertainment's Epic Records, Universal Music Group's Republic Records or Warner Music Group's Fueled by Ramen). Your cross-media production should target **a 'Generation Z' audience**.*

Music marketing is now the second most popular brief. The requirement for candidates to create their own artist/band, despite 'borrowing' an existing artist/band's song, seems well embedded in centres. Ensuring the artist/band has a strong persona remains key to success and many candidates took advantage of the form, such as the artist/band playing a role in the music video and then showing more of their 'real' personality in Task 2. As in previous years, a wide range of genres were undertaken, though pop remains the most popular.

Many music videos submitted for Task 1 were very strong indeed. The most successful music videos included a clear narrative, carefully shot performance footage, interpretation of the lyrics (either literally or metaphorically) and inclusion of requirements such as onscreen graphics. Thoughtful planning before shooting (such as use of costumes and well-chosen camera shots) and careful post-production (such as precise editing) were other hallmarks of success. Less successful music videos tended to omit the artist/band, repeat footage or not have a strong sense of narrative.

Task 2(a) was the less commonly chosen second task. Here, many websites took advantage of the form to further the representation of their artist/band. The second page submitted was nearly always the 'my hometown' option, with better candidates deepening representations by exploring how the hometown shaped the artist/band. The embedded audio/audio-visual content varied from successful clips of places of importance to the artist/band and a passionate explanation of why they are important to simple shots of the hometown's streets, sometimes without even the required dialogue or narration.

The print work of Task 2(b) was by far the more popular choice. Album advertisements were often successful, with many candidates using photography well to establish the representation of the artist/band. There were some examples of obscured faces, which limited the purposefulness of the representations. The double-page feature articles from a bi-monthly music magazine were more variable in quality. The best work married photography with the interview to create insightful representations. Where less successful work was seen, the issues were often related to the media form similar to those discussed in Task 1 of the magazines brief.

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Task marking
Comments on approaches to internal marking

Though some broad trends on assessment will be discussed below, centres are advised to read their personalised moderator's report, available to download from the Internal Assessment Mark Input System on the WJEC Portal until Christmas, for precise feedback on their own work. Having said that, there are many commonalities in centres' assessment worth highlighting.

The majority of centres' marking was in line with the nationally agreed standard. It was clear that many centres have engaged with exemplar material on the WJEC Portal and CPD events, including the free online assessment review events in the autumn term.

The Statement of Aims and Intentions remains the most accurately assessed part of the component. Most candidates were accurately rewarded for the level of detail in their plans. Overmarking tended to occur when candidates set out (often impressive) broad plans but did not include the precise detail (such as exact uses of media language) necessary for a high mark. On the other hand, some detailed descriptive work that did not justify choices was also generously assessed. Conversely, some candidates at the bottom of the mark range were treated severely with basic knowledge and understanding (Band 2) sometimes only being credited as minimal (Band 1). Assessors should always consider how well the candidate is demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework when marking the Statement of Aims and Intentions.

Marking of candidates' response to the brief (the second column of the mark scheme) was largely accurate, though there were frequent issues with generosity here. Assessment of audience positioning, mode of address, genre conventions and industry context was mostly accurate. However, there is a stubborn issue with overmarking candidates' use of conventions relevant to the chosen media forms. Work that is not in line with the conventions of the media form was frequently awarded more marks than can be justified. This is most common in print work that does not look conventional (particularly magazine double-page spreads and Blu-ray sleeves) but was also seen in online work (such as websites that do not follow a standardised layout) and audio-visual work (unconventional camera shots or editing often being an issue). Sometimes work that bore only a passing resemblance to the media form it was trying to be was awarded Band 4 or even Band 5, when it should have been awarded Band 3 or even Band 2. Centres are strongly encouraged to explore the exemplar work on the WJEC Portal to see the standards expected for this column of the mark scheme. As this is an A Level, the expectations are rightly high.

Assessment of candidates' use of media language to communicate meanings and construct representations (the third column of the mark scheme) was also accurate for most centres, with candidates being correctly rewarded for the complexity of their media language use and control of connotations. Centres who marked accurately carefully considered the wording of the bands, rather than just rewarding the overall quality of the work. Generosity occurred when media language use was less controlled than the marks awarded by the centre suggested. This was often because representations were less appropriate, purposeful or insightful than the marks given by the centre suggested. Extremes of overmarking tended to be seen where faces were absent from production work, an oversight which should heavily affect the mark for this column of the mark scheme. Slightly more subtle overmarking could occur when centres did not utilise the full range of marks. Work that just meets the criteria of a band should be given a mark near the bottom of the band; where it adequately meets the criteria, the mark should be in the middle of the band. If it fully meets the criteria a mark at the top of the band should be awarded. Some centres consistently award marks either only at the top or bottom of a band or only in the middle. In this column of the mark scheme,

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where there are the most marks available, this can lead to marks quickly drifting away from the agreed standard.

Candidates generally submitted tasks of equal quality. Some overmarking occurred where centres did not consider the preamble to the mark scheme which sets out how to deal with work of uneven quality. Candidates in a few centres, nearly always new to the specification, completed both Task 2s, rather than Task 2(a) or Task 2(b). When this occurs, only the better Task 2 can be considered.

Most assessors justified the marks awarded on the coversheet helpfully, with the most useful comments usually involving a combination of phrases from the mark scheme and, vitally, specific examples from the candidate's work. Other good practice included evidence of internal moderation and explanations of how rubric infringements have been dealt with, such as confirmation of when marking of overlength work ceased. Some assessors wrote very long comments. Filling the default size of the relevant box on the coversheet is sufficient and should reduce the burden on teachers' and lecturers' time.

The completion of Section A of the coversheet by candidates continues to be very variable. Many complete it in sufficient detail, though others provide minimal or no detail, making it hard to judge whether procedures have been followed.

Missing signatures were fortunately rare, though some centres did still need to be contacted to obtain these.

Many candidates and their unassessed participants gave GDPR consent to allow Eduqas to use their work in professional learning events or as exemplars. While this is optional, it is appreciated when candidates can give consent, as it allows Eduqas to offer higher quality support for teachers and lecturers.

For the second year, work was uploaded by centres directly to the WJEC Portal. This went smoothly and some upgrades to the website made the process even more straightforward this year. Nevertheless, it is appreciated if centres check work has uploaded correctly as some centres had to be contacted to reupload corrupted files despite tell-tale signs such as very small file sizes. While it is possible to upload zip files to the WJEC Portal, separate files are preferred as moderators can view the filenames of each candidate's work without downloading a file.

The vast majority of centres met the deadline of 15th May, with many helpfully submitting work well before then and switching their focus to the written examinations. In line with all JCQ-regulated general qualifications, the standard sample size increased from 10 to 15 candidates this year.

Clerical errors were rare, but incorrect addition or mismatches between the coversheet and the mark entered on the WJEC Portal did occur. Some centres even had to be contacted to submit additional samples purely so the accuracy of the marks submitted could be checked. The need to double-check marks (often with a second pair of eyes) cannot be overstated.

Most uploads were well organised and used sensible filenames, with most centres following the guidance on the Eduqas website. Where files were named in a consistent manner across candidates, moderators found it particularly easy to navigate the sample.

Almost all centres adhered to the expectation that all work is directly uploaded, rather than being hosted elsewhere. This remains true for print work produced in Canva, which should be exported. Videos should also be directly uploaded, rather than hosted on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram or any other site. The exception to this is websites, where a link is

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required. Most centres provided this on the coversheet. Some also uploaded separate documents containing links, which was often helpful. A small number of centres had to be contacted because they provided an editing or preview link to the website rather than the published link. This was particularly the case with websites built in Canva; here, candidates should publish their websites and submit that link, rather than choose Canva's option of a public link, which does not produce an interactive website.

Eduqas does not specify or prefer that any particular software is used to produce work, though it is worth noting that support for Microsoft Publisher, which was used by some centres, ceases this autumn. Whichever program the work is created in, it should be exported in a widely supported file format, such as PDF, JPEG or MP4. Some centres that submitted non-permitted file types such as Photoshop (.psd), Microsoft Publisher (.pub) and Apple Pages (.pages) files had to be contacted to submit work in a format all moderators can access.

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

Some centres submitted very large files, often videos or Photoshop exports. These can cause issues both for centres uploading work and moderators downloading work in areas with slower broadband speeds. It is perfectly acceptable for teachers and lecturers to assist, or even take the lead, in the exporting of work to ensure the file size is reasonable. The free HandBrake software is very useful for compressing video files.

At the end of the moderation window, though, the overriding memory is not of large video files or filenames – it is of the high quality of the work submitted and the commitment and dedication of candidates and their teachers and lecturers that this reflects. They should be congratulated on their efforts in making Component 3 such a success.

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