GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

GCSE (NEW)
MEDIA STUDIES

SUMMER 2019

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MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 1: EXPLORING THE MEDIA

General Comments

As this was the first Component 1 examination since the introduction of the reformed GCSE Media Studies qualification, it was encouraging to see how positively centres and candidates had responded to the demands of the new specification and how well candidates had been guided by centres. The candidates generally demonstrated a good level of familiarity both with the set products and with relevant aspects of the theoretical framework. They 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.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1

Explore how this front cover of GQ *magazine uses media language to communicate meanings:*

(a)	*images*	*[5]*
(b)	*text/written language*	*[5]*
(c)	*layout and design*	*[5]*

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

It was encouraging to see that many candidates across the mark range were able to analyse the set product in detail, employing varying degrees of relevant media terminology. The more successful responses clearly addressed the meanings created by the features they identified. Explanations of the messages this front cover portrays in relation to masculinity were particularly strong and audience appeal was dealt with fairly successfully.

Candidates performed best on part (a) images where elements such as direct mode of address, the Rock's body image and pose, 'spornosexuality', and the star's ethnicity all proved fruitful areas of analysis.

Part (c), layout and design was reasonably well handled. Candidates were able to talk confidently about the framing of the image on the page and its use of a conventionally masculine colour palette. Some identified elements such as 'Z-line' and 'rule of thirds' but many were unable to move beyond simply stating these features were present to exploring how and why they were used.

The weakest section on this question was part (b) which many candidates mistakenly used as an opportunity to explore design elements such as fonts (size, typography, colour) rather than analyse the actual written language used and its meanings. There's an opportunity here for cross-curricular teaching as analysis of the language of non-fiction texts features heavily in GCSE English Language.

Surprisingly, many candidates wrote their answers to the three parts in wrong sections of their answer booklets, leading to much crossing out and many arrows drawn on the pages swapping sections around. As always, candidates are advised to read the whole question carefully before they start writing their answer so that their presentation is neat, legible and logical.

Question 2 (a)

Explain how historical context influences print advertisements. Refer to the print advertisement for Quality Street (1956) *from the set products to support your points.*   [5]

Assessment Objectives:

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

The *Quality Street* print advertisement has been influenced by several different contextual issues and candidates were rewarded for focusing on the 1950s, the Regency Era and/or combining both of these.

There was some misidentification of time periods (ranging from the Industrial Revolution to the 1980s) but most candidates were able to discuss relevant aspects of the advertisement's context. The patriarchal society of the 1950s and how it influenced the advert's representation of gender was a popular approach to this question and acted as a springboard for many candidates' answers to question 2b.

The most successful candidates avoided simply 'downloading' the historical facts they had learnt about the set product and instead zoomed in on how the context had *influenced* the advert. The Regency Era references in relation to representations of class and ideologies of nostalgia, the post-WWII rationing context in relation to the advert's focus on the variety of chocolate available, and the technological context's influence on the 'illustrated' design of the text were all handled with confidence. A large number of candidates achieved the full 5 marks on this question, though some spent far too long answering it. Candidates should be reminded that the size of the boxes on their answer booklet correspond roughly to the amount they should be writing for each question based on the number of marks it is worth.

Question 2 (b)

Compare the representations of gender in the Quality Street *and* Axe Peace *print advertisements.*   [25]

In your answer, you must consider:

- *how representations of gender are constructed*
- *how far the representations of gender are similar in the two advertisements*
- *how far the representations of gender are different in the two print advertisements*

Assessment Objectives:

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

The unseen product set for this question was a print advertisement for *Axe Peace* (2014). This proved to be a rich product that was very accessible for some candidates who had been well prepared for this question through their study of the print advertisement set products. Its popularity as an unseen product choice was further demonstrated through the number of memes students created on social media following the exam; these were most entertaining.

However, it was of some concern that 2b was completed less well than others on the paper, particularly in terms of the amount some candidates had written in response to a question that was worth 25 marks. To prepare for the unseen product it is essential that candidates are given practice of essay writing under timed conditions as many offered almost 'bullet point'-style textual analyses without a sense of developing an argument or coming to a logical conclusion that clearly addressed the question.

Some candidates relied too heavily on theoretical frameworks such as Mulvey's 'Male Gaze' without demonstrating a secure understanding of the foundation of any analysis of representations: stereotypes. Focusing on the first bullet point in the question, how representations are *constructed*, should have given candidates an opportunity to draw together elements of visual codes, technical codes, setting and iconography, and the codes and conventions of the print advertisement form.

Most candidates could identify similarities and differences between the two print advertisements and successful answers were produced that argued the adverts were very different as well as answers that argued they were very similar. For the latter approach, many candidates focused on how surprising this was given the large gap between the two time periods in which the adverts were produced.

Responses in the higher bands were confident in discussing representations of both men and women in the two advertisements and were particularly strong when zooming in on specific details that supported concepts such as phallic imagery, heteronormativity and gender power balances. The unseen product allowed candidates to approach their response from a range of different starting points and there were very few purely descriptive answers.

There was some excellent, detailed analysis demonstrating understanding of the theoretical framework and applying relevant theory. Propp's character theory proved to be much more successfully applied than something less relevant to the question such as Uses and Gratifications. Candidates who produced more sophisticated responses also used the language of semiotics to develop their analysis further, which is to be encouraged.

Candidates in the middle of the mark range often recognised the connotations of the visual elements, but failed to then explore them in any detail, particularly in terms of how these visual elements construct stereotypical representations of gender. They produced a reasonable and straightforward analysis of the print advertisements but tended not to cover a broad range of points. Several candidates failed to discuss the fact that the products were print advertisements and missed the opportunity to explore how the gender representations constructed in the two products had been used to help sell the brands themselves.

As the unseen resource is always taken from one of the forms studied for Section A, the expectation is that candidates will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework in relation to the selected form. Candidates awarded marks in the lower bands tended to produce a more descriptive response, sometimes 'soapboxing' with their personal opinions of how gender should/should not be constructed rather than analysing the products. These responses showed limited understanding of the theoretical framework and limited use of subject-specific terminology.

Question 3

Assessment Objectives:

Q3 (a): AO1 1a
- **Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media.**

Q3 (b) and (c): AO1 1a and b
- **Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media.**

(a)   Name the organisation that regulates radio in the UK.   [1]

It was surprising that many candidates did not know the answer to this knowledge-based question and responses were very diverse. Ofcom or the Office of Communications were both acceptable.

(b)   Briefly explain the difference between how public service radio and commercial radio are funded.   [4]

To gain four marks, candidates needed to fully explain the difference between how these two types of radio are funded. Many candidates were able to get at least two marks here by referring to broadly to 'a tax' and 'adverts', while those gaining full marks were able to demonstrate a more detailed knowledge of the Licence Fee (some even stating precisely how much it costs) and giving examples of commercial radio stations' sponsorship deals (the Sky / Virgin Radio breakfast show deal was used quite often).

(c)   Explain how radio programmes use technologies to reach audiences. Refer to The Archers *to support your points.*   [12]

Despite it perhaps not being a popular choice among their own audience demographic, it was pleasing to see how well many candidates knew *The Archers* and were therefore able to engage with this question.

Most candidates were able to identify different technologies that the text uses to reach audiences, such as DAB, podcasts, its website, social media, BBC iPlayer or the BBC Sounds app. Some candidates explained how these technologies help to 'reach' audiences through their convenience, flexibility and by being free to access. Other candidates explained how the technologies allowed the text's producers to reach broader or new audiences: the website having a global reach or the app appealing to a younger demographic for example. The only issue with the latter point was the stereotyping by some candidates that 'old' people are incapable of, or not interested in, using new technologies.

Some candidates even brought in brief elements of context to explain how *The Archers* has maintained its popularity by evolving from a solely radio-based drama to a text that its audience can now engage with on multiple platforms.

Those candidates accessing the higher bands of the marking criteria moved beyond just listing technologies and linking these to general audiences to focusing more specifically on *The Archers*, its target audience and examples of particular narratives that have used technologies to engage them. Here, the 'Helen and Rob' and 'sepsis' storylines were popular and were used successfully by many candidates to demonstrate how technologies, such as Twitter and the website, have been used by *The Archers* to reach audiences.

Question 4

Assessment Objectives:

Q4 (a) and (b): AO1 1a
- **Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical framework of media.**

Q4 (c) and (d): AO1 1a and b
- **Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media.**

(a)   What type of newspaper is The Sun*?*   [1]

Most candidates were able to answer this question. Responses included 'tabloid', 'red top', 'right wing' and 'Conservative-supporting'. Some candidates lost a mark here for misidentifying the political leaning of *The Sun* or for claiming it is a broadsheet.

*(b)   Identify **one** audience for* The Sun *website.*   [1]

It was surprising that many candidates could not identify a single, specific audience for *The Sun*. The mark scheme allowed for a pretty broad range of audience categories but too many candidates offered vague responses such as 'middle aged', 'active' or 'poor'.

(c)   Briefly explain how the content of The Sun *website appeals to **this** audience.*   [4]

Questions 4b and c were linked together so failing to identify a specific audience for part (b) meant some candidates automatically scored zero for part (c). Additionally, some candidates relied on their knowledge of the Section A set product front page, ignoring the instruction in this question to refer to the newspaper's **website**.

The most successful candidates had clearly explored *The Sun's* website in detail and were able to confidently link elements such as its conventions, 'tabbed' sections, use of images / video content, and advertisements to how this content appeals to the audience they had identified in part (c).

*(d)   Explain why audiences may interpret the same media product in different ways.
         Refer to* The Sun *to support your points.*   [12]

In this question, candidates were rewarded for drawing together knowledge and understanding from across the full course of study, including different areas of the theoretical framework and media contexts.

Several candidates struggled with this question, largely because they were using the edition of *The Sun* set for Section A, where the focus is textual analysis, as their reference point. The focus of this question was **audiences** and the expectation was that candidates would refer to the pages of the newspaper that had been chosen by the centre for study with regard to industry and audience (see page 13 of the Specification). Some did manage to link the Section A front cover to audiences but most who used the set product produced a textual analysis that did not help them focus on the question.

There was no expectation that candidates applied theories to *The Sun,* such as Stuart Hall's 'responses' or Uses and Gratifications; the theory would be named in the question if this was part of the assessment criteria. Weaker responses tended to 'download' theorists without using them to further their analysis of how different audiences might interpret *The Sun* in different ways. It was disappointing to see some candidates still referring to 'Hypodermic Syringe Theory' when this has been widely undermined by much more accurate, useful and flexible theoretical approaches to understanding how audiences make meanings from media texts.

More effective responses were able to demonstrate a good knowledge of demographics and how the ideologies formed through audiences' backgrounds influenced how they interpreted texts. Age, gender, hobbies and interests, and levels of education all proved interesting demographic elements that candidates were able to use to compare audience responses to the same media product. While some candidates wasted time comparing *The Sun* to *The Guardian,* several candidates were particularly confident at exploring political perspectives, influence and bias, challenging concepts at GCSE level.

Finally, only 86% of candidates attempted this question, indicating a surprisingly high number ran out of time at the end of the exam. This cost some candidates 12 marks.

Summary of key points

- Timing: The exam is worth 80 marks and lasts for 90 minutes. Candidates need to remember to spend roughly 10 minutes annotating the unseen product and their copy of the set product for Section A. This essentially leaves them one minute per mark to complete the paper – sticking to this should mean they do not run out of time / leave entire questions blank.
- The specification gives clear information on how candidates should be prepared for Section B Industries and Audiences. Using the set products from Section A has proved extremely unhelpful for some candidates.
- Candidates need regular practice for writing extended responses, including how to structure a comparative essay.
- A secure understanding of how to analyse a text, using relevant media language, is more useful than being able to 'download' multiple theoretical perspectives.
- Use a text-out approach to context to ensure the focus is always on how the context has influenced aspects of the text's construction rather than a list of historical facts and dates.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 2: UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS AND PRODUCTS

General Comments

In this first year of examination for the reformed GCSE Media Studies qualification, it was very pleasing to see how well candidates have responded to the demands of Component 2 in the new specification. Candidates generally demonstrated a good level of familiarity with both the set products and the relevant aspects of the theoretical framework, which reflected how well candidates had been guided by centres. Overall, there was a clear understanding of what was required from the different elements of the paper, showing that candidates had been well prepared for this component.

The answer booklets were designed to assist candidates in organising their time effectively to meet the different requirements of each question. This proved helpful in guiding most candidates, although a significant number did not attempt Question 4, highlighting a need for more attention to time management.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Television – Crime Drama or Sitcom

Question 1 (a)

*Choose **two** camera shots used in this extract. Explore why they are used.* [8]

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

Candidates performed very well on this question which required detailed textual analysis of examples of camera shots from the set extract. A wide range of shots from both *Luther* and *The IT Crowd* were explored. Popular choices were close-up, wide shot and over-the-shoulder shot but the question also elicited many responses referring to angled shots, tracking shots and panning shots, as suggested in the indicative content. Some also explored shot duration and editing techniques such as cross-cutting, which they successfully linked to reasons why shots were used. Use of subject specific terminology to name and explore camera shots was generally very good.

In the higher bands, responses selected very specific examples from the extract and usually offered two or three reasons why the shot was used, often exploring narrative functions including character roles, establishment of setting and enigma codes. Many also successfully explored how specific shots position audiences to respond to them. Some responses referred to theorists, especially Propp, which was pleasing to see but not essential to achieve full marks on this question. Responses in the lowest band were more descriptive and generalised, some struggling to name shots types accurately and some not referring to the set extract at all.

Some candidates appeared to spend a disproportionate amount of time on Question 1a and it should be noted that these lengthy answers often lost focus, describing other aspects within the frame such as dress codes, which often lacked relevance to the function of the shot. In summary, candidates who performed well on Question 1a did so by offering focused and concise analysis of why two specific examples of shots were used in the extract.

Question 1 (b)

How far are the settings in this extract typical of the genre? Explore examples from the extract to support your points. [12]

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

The focus of this question was analysis of the settings used in the set extract, but it also required candidates to make judgements and conclusions about the typicality of those settings in relation to their chosen genre. The most effective responses addressed both of these assessment objectives. Candidates attaining marks in the higher bands analysed detailed, specific examples from the set extract and applied their understanding of the theoretical framework, in particular, genre codes and conventions. Some demonstrated an effective application of Neale's genre theory which candidates used to explore typicality, including repetition and difference. Most argued that the settings in both set products *were* largely typical of the genre, although a few convincingly argued they were less typical, especially when exploring aspects of *Luther* suggesting elements of the horror/thriller genres.

Responses in the lower bands lacked the detailed analysis required for the higher bands, despite many still making judgements and conclusions about genre typicality. To support more detailed analysis, candidates should be reminded that during their two viewings of the extract, they should make detailed notes to prepare for 1b as well as 1a. Many responses in the lower bands also referred to 'genre stereotypes' rather than codes and conventions, suggesting that subject specific terminology associated with genre might be an area to focus on for future candidates.

As suggested in the indicative content, responses largely focused on the abandoned factory setting in *Luther*, with some exploring the house where the victim is discovered. In *The IT Crowd*, most explored the basement office, with some considering the significance of the corridor setting outside the meeting room. Some candidates also referred to settings in *Friends* or *The Sweeney* in comparison to the set products required by the question, which in most cases was useful in helping them make judgements and conclusions about typicality of the settings of the appropriate genre.

On the whole, candidates demonstrated more confidence in exploring the conventions of crime dramas than sitcoms. Many responses on the sitcom genre did not fully engage with the codes and conventions of the genre, instead discussing more generally how far the setting represented a typical office. There were, however, some excellent exceptions to the overall trend on *The IT Crowd*, where candidates explored how the settings in the extract were used to represent character types, develop story arcs, create situational comedy and invite audience familiarity. There were also some useful comparisons to *Friends* to support points about the different codes and conventions of British/US sitcoms.

Question 2

How does Uses and Gratifications theory explain why audiences watch crime dramas or sitcoms? Refer to Luther or The IT Crowd to support your response.   *[10]*

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

Question 2 required candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework, specifically audiences and Uses and Gratifications theory, in relation to their chosen television genre. Reference to specific aspects of the corresponding set product was also required, as a vehicle for candidates to demonstrate their understanding. It was very pleasing to see how well centres had prepared their candidates on this specific strand of the theoretical framework on audiences. The question was generally answered successfully, with most responses demonstrating at least a basic knowledge and understanding of Uses and Gratifications theory. The four strands listed in the Indicative Content (diversion, surveillance, personal relationships and personal identity) were widely referenced through a range of terminology, including escapism, entertainment, information, community and many other acceptable variations.

A key determiner in distinguishing responses in the higher bands was their ability to refer to specific aspects of the set product to illustrate and exemplify their understanding of audiences and Uses and Gratifications theory. In the higher bands, references were made to particular characters with whom audiences might identify such as Zoe in *Luther* or Roy from *The IT Crowd*. Aspects of the set products' marketing and production were also used to exemplify understanding of Uses and Gratifications theory, including references to associated Twitter accounts inviting social interaction between fans of *The IT Crowd* and *Luther* fulfilling the BBC's remit. Responses in the lower bands tended to describe one or more strands of the Uses and Gratifications theory but with more generalised reference to crime dramas or sitcoms, struggling to make links to any aspects of the chosen set product.

On this audience question, candidates were also rewarded for knowledge and understanding of a wider range of audience pleasures and appeals, from the star appeal provided by Idris Elba in *Luther* to the pleasures derived from the intertextual references in *The IT Crowd's The Final Countdown*. Some candidates referred to *The Sweeney* or *Friends* in addition to the set products, which, though not specifically required by this question, was generally valid if used to exemplify knowledge and understanding of Uses and Gratifications theory. However, candidates should be reminded to refer in main part to the set products listed in the particular question, since to achieve at least the middle band, links between specific aspects of set product and theory were specifically required.

Section B: Music - Music Video and Online Media

Question 3

How far do the representations in music websites reinforce particular messages and values?
                                                                                                    [20]
In your response, you must:
* *explore examples from the two websites you have studied*
* *refer to relevant media contexts*
* *make judgements and draw conclusions.*

AO2 1a and 1b: Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media, including in relation to their contexts, to make judgements and draw conclusions

Question 3 elicited a wide variety of responses on all combinations of the chosen websites and also proved to be the most challenging question on the paper. This question assessed both analysis of the representations in two set products and the ability to make judgements and draw conclusions, with the additional requirement to link the set products to relevant media contexts. This is an extended response question and in order to achieve the highest marks, candidates must construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning, which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured. The bullet points are included in this question in order to support candidates in structuring their answer and guide them in what to include.

Overall, engagement with the aspects of representation set out in the theoretical framework indicated that candidates had been well prepared to engage with this concept. Most responses focused on obvious aspects of representation, as suggested in the Indicative Content, such as gender, ethnicity and accessibility. It was very encouraging to see, across the bands, a good grasp of the selected, constructed and mediated nature of representations in music websites, as set out in the theoretical framework grids in the specification. Where some candidates were much less prepared, however, was in their ability to analyse the set websites in detail and offer specific examples to support their judgements and conclusions.

In the highest bands, there was some excellent analysis of the representations constructed in music websites and engagement with more complex aspects of representation, which led to highly appropriate judgements and conclusions about messages and values relating to consumerism, altruism and most frequently, the polysemic messages conveyed through female objectification. The vast majority agreed that music websites reinforce messages and values, though some believed messages and values were reinforced to a lesser extent, arguing the case that the commercial imperative of music promotion prevents any personal values being reinforced. The unconventionality of aspects of Pharrell Williams's website proved useful for many as a way in to discussing messages and values, and some candidates also made useful comparisons between *pharrellwilliams.com* with the more commercially driven sites of Taylor Swift or Katy Perry. The strongest answers also demonstrated detailed analysis of aspects of media language such as mode of address. A range of theoretical perspectives were referenced in responses in the highest band, including Mulvey, Van Zoonen, bell hooks and Alvarado as well as Dyer's star theory, and these were most highly rewarded when the theory was clearly applied to specific examples from the set products.

In the middle band, most responses were still able to explore securely aspects of representation associated with messages and values such as fame, wealth, kindness, equality and diversity, as well as ideas of community and accessibility for fans. There was some satisfactory analysis of specific examples from the two set websites in the middle band, focussing on aspects such as colour palette and dress codes. In the lowest bands, responses tended to describe the set products or offered basic analysis of conventional aspects of music websites such as merchandise and social media links. These responses often lacked any understanding of the theoretical framework (representation) and lacked evidence of any close study of the set products.

Responses in the higher bands made some excellent links to relevant media contexts which were well supported by specific examples from the set websites. As well as the more commonly referred to contexts associated with representation of ethnicity and gender, cultural contexts relating to technology, including user generated content, globality and the convergent nature of online media were successfully linked to aspects of websites such as social media links. In the middle band, there was more straightforward linking to social contexts, whereas responses in the lower bands largely failed to address the bullet point on contexts.

Surprisingly, a significant number of candidates did not answer this question at all, while others explored only music videos, which could not be credited as the question was clearly demanding analysis of the set websites. A few also chose Katy Perry and Taylor Swift which is not an accepted combination of the set text options. Therefore, again, these candidates could only receive credit for one set product.

Question 4

*Explain how contexts influence music videos. Refer to **either** Roar, Katy Perry (2013)*

__OR__ Bad Blood, Taylor Swift (2014) to support your response. [10]

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

The focus of this question was knowledge and understanding of relevant media contexts and their influences on the set product music videos. This question also required linking of specific aspects of the set products to relevant media contexts, and responses which made these links throughout their response to exemplify their understanding were the most successful. On the whole, responses to this question showed clear knowledge and understanding of contexts but the number of candidates who did not attempt this final question on the paper was a concern, pointing to a greater need for candidates to organise their time effectively.

Responses in the higher bands confidently demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of a range of relevant media contexts, often related to a post-feminist society where the conflicting messages of female empowerment and female objectification are seen to influence music videos. The rise of the metrosexual male in society and selfie culture featured frequently with reference to specific aspects of *Roar*, and an understanding of the influence of the historical context of colonialism was also sometimes demonstrated. Successful knowledge and understanding of contexts of *Bad Blood* included the influence of the cultural context of rap/pop culture through the inclusion of Kendrick Lamar and the power of celebrity culture through the inclusion of named celebrities in the video.

Responses in the middle of the mark range showed satisfactory knowledge of social and cultural contexts and usually made links to aspects of the set product including characters, song lyrics and dress codes. A range of intertextual references were also cited as cultural influences on the videos, including *Tarzan* for *Roar* and *Sin City* for *Bad Blood*. The influence of societal stereotypes associated with ethnicity and gender were securely understood, as was the historical context of the feminist movement. A minority of candidates referred to relevant economic contexts such as the influence of ownership on the production values of the set product, and this is an area centres may wish to develop when teaching contexts of set products for both sections of Component 2.

Candidates awarded marks in the lowest bands tended to list basic knowledge of biographical contexts such as Taylor Swift's feud with Katy Perry which influenced *Bad Blood* or Katy Perry's divorce from Russell Brand influencing *Roar*, and not go far beyond this. Some were more successful by linking this knowledge to specific aspects of the music videos to show a basic understanding of the influence of contexts.

Summary of key points

Centres are reminded to ensure candidates are well prepared to answer Question 3, the extended response question, by using sample assessment materials available on the Eduqas website. This will help familiarise them with the specific requirements of the question and help avoid rubric infringements. Candidates should also be encouraged to use the bullet points provided to plan and structure their responses.

Centres are also advised to refer to the GCSE specification published on the Eduqas website, which indicates exactly which aspects of the set music products need to be studied for Section B on Component 2. For the two contemporary artists chosen, the set products are the music video, the artist's website and the associated social/participatory media (at least *Facebook* and *Twitter*, but many others could be studied, including *Instagram* and *YouTube*). For the music videos from 1980s/90s, one set product video must be chosen.

An area which candidates could be encouraged to research in more detail might be how the set music products reflect their society and culture through aspects of production, distribution and consumption, for example, the influence of *YouTube* on the success of music videos or how potential regulation issues might affect the content of a music video. This wider approach to contexts is equally advisable when studying the contexts of the set television products.

Finally, centres are advised to adopt the answer booklet format for their internal assessments and mock examinations to support candidates in organising their time and producing concise, focused responses.

MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 3: CREATING MEDIA PRODUCTS

General Comments

A03 (30%): Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

A wide range of work was produced across centres in response to the set briefs and the majority of candidates had responded appropriately to their chosen brief. The focus of this component is the application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework and most candidates demonstrated their media knowledge, producing some excellent work across all briefs.

This component was approached in different ways by centres, some offering only one option, others giving candidates a choice of briefs, both of which are acceptable. The print options were popular, but centres are reminded that this is not a taught unit and candidates must be given the opportunity to engage in independent research and planning specific to the specified brief. Where a wide choice of options is offered it is important that all candidates fulfil the requirements of the set brief and that centres ensure that there is parity of assessment across the various briefs.

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

Comments on individual questions/sections

The majority of centres uploaded work to Surpass in advance of the deadline, using appropriate file formats. While PDF files are acceptable, they do not always show print production work to its best quality and it may be advisable to upload original files such as JPEGs in order that the work can be seen clearly. Where candidates had completed print production in Word or PowerPoint the results were less successful. The moderation process was greatly helped when each file was clearly labelled with the candidate's name and the description of the piece of work, e.g. 'double page spread', however, this was not always the case. Several centres failed to upload elements of candidates' work, for example cover sheets, or uploaded cover sheets that were incomplete, which delayed the process considerably. It is of paramount importance that all elements of this unit are uploaded by the deadline.

Most candidates' cover sheets were completed and submitted with the NEA work. However, several centres failed to use the new coversheet with the GDPR consent information. It is helpful for moderation if the cover sheet is clearly labelled and submitted as one complete document rather that three separate files. If candidates submit a website production, the URL should be included as a hyperlink, or clearly typewritten, in order that the moderator can easily access the site.

Some candidates completed Section A in detail, taking the opportunity to outline their research, planning and production process. This aids moderation and it is especially important for candidates who have taken photographs in unusual or distant locations to explain how they created their images to confirm that these are original. However, some candidates failed to complete Section A as required which made it very difficult to assess how their research and planning had impacted upon the production. Some centres had adopted a formulaic approach with all candidates giving the same information, for example describing the codes and conventions of the same spy film. This section must be completed individually by the candidate detailing their independent research. It is also important that this part of the cover sheet gives information about non-original material used and non-assessed participants; this was omitted on several occasions. Section A also includes evidence that candidates' work has been monitored at three key stages during the process; some centres appeared to have signed off these stages on the same date.

Most candidates completed the Statement of Aims and Intentions in Section B of the cover sheet as required. It is essential that candidates include a word count and adhere to the 250 word limit (+/- 10%). Many candidates exceeded the word limit, sometimes by a significant margin. In such cases, teachers should cease marking the statement once the upper threshold has been reached. It is perfectly acceptable for candidates to use bullet points in the statement to maximise the word count.

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

Many teachers included detailed comments in Section C, giving examples from candidates' work to support the assessment decisions. This is extremely important and helpful, especially as annotation is not a requirement on the work itself. Where phrases from the generic marking grid are used, it is important to ensure that these match the mark awarded, which was not always the case.

Meeting the requirements of the brief
Candidates must respond to the set brief for the year of assessment. A minority of candidates appeared to have responded to the incorrect brief which inevitably limited their ability to meet the requirements of Component 3.

Most candidates adhered to the requirements for length and quantity of work, although some produced more than the required number of, for example, magazine or web pages. In such instance, the guidelines on page 26 of the specification should be used when assessing the work.

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

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

- The content and style of the production must be suitable for the target audience range. Candidates should not amend the target audience in the brief in any way. Some candidates extended the range of the target audience, while others selected a narrower age band within the range, for example creating a teen drama specifically targeting 16-18 year olds which in its narrative, setting and choice of characters was not appropriate for the 16-34 year old audience stipulated in the brief.

- All productions must adhere to the codes and conventions of the chosen form, for example film marketing campaigns and magazines should have a clear 'house style' and reflect the conventions of layout that candidates identify in their research. Some candidates' film marketing products, for example, did not feature consistent use of fonts, layout and genre conventions to demonstrate the brand identity of the product. There was often an inconsistency between the branding on the DVD cover and posters.

- All of the minimum requirements listed in the brief must be included in the productions, for example the required number of original images, the stipulated number of characters and range of camera shots. Some music videos, for example, did not include any performance footage and some websites did not include the required audio or audio-visual content.

- Candidates need to ensure that they meet the requirements of Column 3 of the marking grid where they are required to use media language to communicate meanings and construct representations. Where candidates did not include any images of people, their ability to construct representations was limited.

Statement of Aims and Intentions

Most candidates adhered to the requirements of this element of the component and those in the higher bands demonstrated their ability to discuss how they intended to employ appropriate conventions and construct purposeful representations. Knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework was evident through references to media language and the use of subject-specific terminology. The most successful statements were supported by specific examples of how candidates intended to construct representations in response to the brief.

Where candidates made direct reference to their research, they were more successful in demonstrating their understanding of appropriate codes and conventions of the set form. Some candidates referred to theories and theoretical perspectives; however, these must be appropriate and applied correctly. Some candidates adopted a descriptive approach which made it difficult for them to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework.

Production
Print briefs had been followed by the majority of candidates and the film marketing and magazine briefs were by far the most popular options. However, a significant number of candidates produced music videos and teen dramas and there was evidence of some excellent work across the print and audio-visual options with candidates demonstrating, in some cases, a sophisticated awareness of their chosen form.

All images included in the production must be original and generated by the candidate. The inclusion of found images, even where they have been significantly manipulated, is not acceptable. Some teachers identified that candidates had used some 'found' images and had assessed the work accordingly. In some cases, however, it was difficult to determine whether candidates' images were original as this information was not available on the coversheet. There were some excellent examples of the use of original images and footage where candidates had paid detailed attention to the construction of appropriate representations through the use of clothing, expression, gesture and setting. The quality of some images was also an issue; it is important that the images have been taken specifically for the purpose of the product and not found incidentally on mobile phones or have been taken for another purpose, for example holiday or prom photos.

A wide range of work was produced in response to each of the set briefs and most productions had been assessed appropriately, applying the assessment criteria. However, a significant number of centres had assessed work generously. Some centres had over rewarded candidates for their technical and creative ability; candidates are assessed on their ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework and meet the requirements of the brief, not on their technical competence. Some candidates were generously assessed where the production work did not conform to the codes and conventions of the specified form or target the specified audience. In some cases, candidates had completed the list of minimum requirements in the brief, but the production did not construct an effective design or appropriate representations to merit the mark awarded. Conversely, some candidates effectively used media language to communicate meanings, but had been awarded highly where they had not met the requirements of the brief or had not engaged the stipulated target audience.

BRIEF 1: Television/Online
Either:

(a)   Audio-Visual: Create an opening sequence for a new television teen drama programme.

Or:

(b)   Online: Create a functioning website, including a working homepage and one other linked page, to promote a new television teen drama programme.

You may, if you wish, produce a sequence for a programme in a sub-genre of your choice, for example a school drama or a soap opera.
Your production should be aimed at an audience of 16-34 year old males and females.

There were some excellent examples of teen dramas which demonstrated the influence of detailed research into similar existing products and an adherence to the requirements of the set brief including the establishment of clear character types and incorporating an effective range of shots. Crime was a popular sub-genre chosen and many candidates demonstrated a well-developed awareness of the codes and conventions of the genre.

The most successful products worked creatively with a largely young cast to construct representations appropriate to the sub-genre through choice of clothing, props and locations. Where candidates used school locations and characters in school uniform with a narrative clearly aimed at a teen audience it was difficult for them to engage the target audience through an appropriate mode of address and to construct representations.

It was of some concern that several candidates did not adhere to the requirements of the brief, such as where candidates had filmed in only one location and failed to incorporate three distinctive characters. These candidates had often been awarded too highly. A pre-title and title sequence were not specific requirements for this brief, although many candidates included them, and this, at times, detracted from their fulfilment of other requirements as stipulated in the set brief.

A small number of candidates completed the online option and some appropriate websites were constructed as promotional vehicles for the programme. Appropriate audio-visual content included trailers and interviews with the director. Some of these were over the 30 seconds required; as only the first 30 seconds can be assessed, this must be taken into account when assessing the work.

BRIEF 2: Magazines/Online
Either:

(a) **Print: Create a front cover and a double page feature article for a new monthly general lifestyle magazine, for example in the style of _GQ_ or _Glamour._**
Or:

(b) **Create a functioning website, including a working homepage and one other linked page, for a new monthly general lifestyle magazine, for example in the style of _GQ_ or _Glamour_.**

The production should be aimed at an audience of 18-34 year old men or women

Most candidates adhered to the requirements of the brief and produced a general lifestyle magazine. The most successful candidates had researched existing products similar to those indicated as examples in the brief, _GQ_ and _Glamour._ Some extremely successful print productions were seen that fully conformed to codes and conventions of the lifestyle genre, demonstrated a highly appropriate mode of address, used media language and constructed appropriate representations. There were some impressive productions where real thought had gone into constructing representations through the main image, the cover lines and the clearly linked double page spread article.

However, there were a worrying number of candidates who produced more niche magazines, for example for specific sports, music sub-genres and hair fashion. This did not adhere to the requirements of the brief and could not be given a high mark in column two of the assessment grid. It was of some concern that in some centres certain candidates had adhered to the brief and produced the correct magazine and others had not, yet the assessment was the same.

Whilst Section A of the cover sheet indicated that candidates had researched front covers of magazines, there was a distinct lack of analysis into double page spreads and this was reflected in the quality of this element of the brief where there were issues with layout and design, choices of fonts and appropriate use of images. Some productions featured very similar images across all pages which is not conventional and did not allow candidates to demonstrate a purposeful use of media language and construction of representations. This was also the case where double page spreads did not include images of people but instead, for example, hairstyles, food, and objects. Again, where images featured candidates in school uniform it was difficult to construct representations appropriate to the genre. Some candidates failed to produce a feature article but instead included two separate pages, often including a contents page, which did not fulfil the requirements of the brief.

Some appropriate online magazines were produced which effectively established a brand identity and made good use of images to construct appropriate representations. This was, however, a less popular option.

BRIEF 3: Film Marketing
Print: Create a DVD or Blu-ray front and back cover (including spine) and a poster for the theatrical release of a new film in either the romantic comedy or the spy genre.
The production should be aimed at an audience of 16-34 year olds who have an interest in your chosen film genre. The film should be a 15 certificate or below.

This was a very popular option. The most successful candidates developed a coherent campaign, demonstrating a brand identity for the film across the DVD cover and poster. However, some struggled to develop a clear 'house style' that linked the poster and DVD cover together, for example they included very different images and font styles across the campaign. Once again, research into film marketing campaigns is essential to inform candidates' production work.

The romantic comedy genre proved problematic for some candidates who had instead produced examples from the romantic drama genre. More extensive research into existing examples would have helped these candidates to be more aware of appropriate codes and conventions. Candidates who had undertaken the spy genre had largely engaged in appropriate research which had clearly impacted upon their own productions and there was some excellent work in evidence showing a real awareness of codes and conventions and the ability to construct valid representations.

However, some candidates did not conform to recognised conventions and did not include key elements of the brief. DVD back covers provided a challenge in many cases as some candidates did not conform to conventions of layout, thumbnails did not always depict key scenes from the film and 'blurbs' were often extremely brief. There was also often replication of images across the poster and DVD and some candidates failed to include the required number of images or to construct an appropriate billing block that was not a found image.

Some candidates included found images in thumbnails, as backgrounds and as part of special effects; all images must be original and generated by the candidate. Some posters were very minimalist and had several elements of the brief missing. More thorough research into posters and DVDs as part of the same marketing campaign would have helped to reinforce the branding techniques used in this form. Some candidates had obviously researched teaser rather than theatrical film posters.

Some productions, particularly in the romantic comedy genre, failed to engage the target audience range and were instead aimed at a much younger, narrower audience.

BRIEF 4: Music Marketing/ Online
Either:

(a)   Audio-visual: Create an original music video to promote a new artist or band in the R&B or hip hop genre.
Or:

(b)   Online: Create a functioning website, including a working homepage and one other linked page, to promote a new artist or band in the R&B or hip hop genre.

You may, if you wish, produce a music video in a sub-genre of R&B or hip hop.
Your production should be aimed at an audience of 16-34 year olds who have an interest in the R&B or hip hop genre.

This option was chosen by a significant minority of candidates.
Some excellent videos were seen that fully adhered to the codes and conventions of the specified sub-genres, for example by constructing representations relevant to the genre, featuring performance and narrative footage, and interpreting the lyrics effectively. A small number of candidates did not include any performance footage to establish the identity of the artist/ band (such as lip synching in rehearsal or live). In such cases, candidates had often been over-rewarded. Conversely, some candidates' videos only included performance and did not include any narrative at all, even though an element of narrative was a requirement of the brief.

There were some issues with the choice of music track where candidates chose one that was not an example of the R&B or hip-hop sub-genre, or that already had an existing music video, which is not permitted. Some tracks included lyrics that were inappropriate for the lower end of the age range stipulated; candidates must bear in mind that their production must engage the full age range set out in the brief.

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

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

Summary of key points

- All candidates must adhere to the requirements of the chosen brief in all aspects. These requirements should be used as a checklist to guide candidates during the production process. Where significant elements of the brief are missing, the work must be assessed accordingly using the criteria in Column 2 of the marking grid.

- The focus of this unit is not technical and creative competence but the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework to communicate meaning. To this end, candidates must demonstrate their ability to use media language and to construct representations appropriate to the chosen form.

- Whilst research is not directly assessed, it must be undertaken by candidates. Only through targeted and appropriate analysis of existing products can candidates understand the codes and conventions of their chosen genre. Section A of the coversheet must be completed in some detail outlining the research undertaken. It is important that all elements of the brief are researched, for example double page spreads as well as front covers of magazines and the back and front covers of DVDs.

- Candidates must consider the ways in which they can construct appropriate representations even when using their peers as their characters. Careful consideration of costume and locations can ensure that appropriate representations are constructed.