Mark scheme
January 2004

GCE

Media Studies

Unit MED1

AS MEDIA STUDIES

READING THE MEDIA (MED1)

MARKING SCHEME – JANUARY 2004

This paper asks candidates to employ their knowledge and application of the Key Concepts – most particularly Media Language, Representation and Media Audiences – when analysing a media text. It also suggests that reference could be made to the remaining Key Concepts – Values and Ideology and Media Institutions – whilst also anticipating that an element of evaluation should take place, in terms of the appropriateness, success and effectiveness of the extract.

There is a great deal for candidates to do in the one and a quarter hours of the examination and it is highly unlikely for a candidate to manage every possible aspect of the analysis and evaluation suggested by the list of Key Concepts. Examiners should be aware of this when marking papers and reward candidates for what they have achieved, **not** penalise candidates for what they may have omitted.

It is also important to allow the candidates as much critical autonomy as possible. The point of this examination is to give candidates a springboard for the analysis and evaluation of a media text. While the Key Concepts give the candidates a scaffold upon which to formulate a response, it is also to be hoped that some candidates will have the confidence, and the understanding of the media text being examined, to perhaps explore areas that are both **unpredictable and unexpected**.

It is also important to note that an holistic approach is often utilised by candidates in the higher levels and the scaffolding can on occasions be ignored entirely.

The areas below represent a general guide to the areas suggested in the list of sub-topics, and as such cannot hope to be definitive.

****Please note that the notion of a 'balanced' response to the text – utilising all the Key Concepts – has been replaced. Whilst some candidates will tackle all Key Concepts, the likelihood of this happening in a 'balanced' fashion in what amounts to 60 minutes writing is unlikely. It is far more likely that candidates will tackle aspects of the text which seem most appropriate and in some cases this may well mean that other Key Concepts seem less well handled.

Please note the instruction above – *examiners should reward candidates for what they have achieved, **not** penalise candidates for what they may have omitted.*

GENERAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Level 6   51 – 60 marks

At Level 6 candidates will have an obvious confidence in their approach to the text. The response will be well structured and contain an organised understanding of the Key Concepts, which will be used in the analysis and evaluation of the text. They may well ignore the scaffolding in the question paper but take their own path towards revealing a clear understanding of the concerns of the question – but they may also engage in a debate, challenging commonly held viewpoints on occasion, using the text as a starting point. There will be a sense of the ambitious and engaged.

The response will be detailed yet avoid the descriptive at the top of the band. Reference to ideas or theories will be made where relevant and useful to the argument being proposed. Level 6 candidates will show clear evidence of critical autonomy.

Level 5   41- 50 marks

Level 5 candidates will show a clear ability to analyse and evaluate the text in question. They will reveal a good understanding of the media Key Concepts, which they will handle well in their reading of the text. Their response will be thorough and detailed but without the confident grasp of Level 6. Their manipulation of the Key Concepts will not be total and in places may well be a little simplistic. However, the textual analysis will be good. Ideas will be experimented with and a sense of the candidate's true voice will be evident. There will be a sense of debate and some reference to media theory where relevant.

Level 4   31 – 40 marks

Candidates at Level 4 will generally speaking show a solid/sound understanding of the media Key Concepts, although some concepts may be treated rather better than others. There will be a sense that the typical Level 4 candidate understands the Key Concepts but not in their entirety and in a rather simplistic way at times.

Analysis and evaluation will be sound but there will be some irrelevant description and repetition of school based learning rather than an individual grasp of the text. Media terminology will exist but will not always be utilised properly and may sometimes be misplaced. Candidates at this level will tend to look at the text concept by concept.

Level 3   21 – 30 marks

Candidates at this level will display a competent understanding of the media Key Concepts and will probably be better at dealing with Language, Representation and Audience than the other Key Concepts available to them. They will make attempts to analyse and evaluate though this may be rather limited and answers will tend to appear rather broad and unfocused. There will be points of merit made which will need to be rewarded.

Candidates at this level will frequently work there way through the text from start to finish and will also use phrases taken directly from the question paper. At this level it is often the case that candidates confuse description with analysis.

Level 2   11 – 20 marks

Candidates at this level will have a rudimentary understanding of the media Key Concepts and may be limited to an answer which really only looks at one or two of them. Analysis and evaluation (if it exists) will be limited and often seem to repeat what has been learnt in the classroom without any real sense of understanding taking place. There may be a lack of relevance and answers may lapse into the very generalised response. There is likely to be a large amount of description with the occasional critique attached.

Level 1   0 – 10 marks

Very limited responses to the question. Candidates may really only understand one (maybe two) media Key Concepts and very superficially at that. Answers will tend to be brief and quite generalised – displaying little engagement with the media or indeed the text. There may well be moments of isolated merit which must be rewarded.

QUESTION SPECIFIC MARKING DESCRIPTORS

Attempting to second-guess the ways that candidates will respond to the text in question is an almost impossible task. What follows are some suggested areas that candidates **might** explore. Experience of past examinations would suggest that generally speaking most/many candidates will stick to predictable areas, but there will also be a number of candidates who produce the unexpected and the unpredictable.

Thus the descriptors below are really only a guide, examiners will have to remember at all times to mark as positively as possible and bear in mind that if the unexpected is backed up with specific reference to the text then it must be accorded positive treatment. It is impossible to second-guess every candidate. The list below simply represents some suggested paths and is meant to be helpful when marking. The General Assessment Criteria are your final recourse, and please **do not** think in grades, candidates must be placed in the appropriate level.

What also needs to be remembered this session is that the format of the question has been altered quite considerably. The bulk of the scaffolding has been removed and candidates are now simply required to "*focus their attention on the Key Concepts of Media Language, Representation and Media Audiences*" whilst also being told that they "*may wish to comment upon Values and Ideology and Media Institutions*". It is hoped that this may free up the majority of candidates and encourage a more individual response.

Because the format of the question has changed, it seems less necessary to try and second-guess what candidates might come up with in such detail. To repeat what is said above, what follows are suggested areas that candidates **might** explore, it is **not** an all-inclusive list.

MEDIA LANGUAGE

The front page follows a typical magazine layout, the title runs across the top, although at an angle, and the main story is featured dominantly in the centre of the page. A list of sub-headings runs down the left hand side, there is a bar code in the bottom right hand corner and the price etc. at the top, above the title. The title 'Computer Active' is in two fonts and is in contrasting black and white. Note the exclamation mark, which replaces the 'i' in active. The whole page is predominantly in black and red, which more than likely fits in with the red/black = danger symbolism of the main story. Later editions of the magazines do tend to follow the 2-colour template on the front page.

This is interspersed with yellow, very plain and striking overview, which will of course stand out in a newsagent but is also fairly simple, no complicated or subtle graphic design here. This could suggest that the magazine is rather down-market, possibly emphasised by the fact that the only photos are those of a piece of hardware and a software box. Other illustrations are rather cheap and tacky cartoons, note the rather obvious cartoon of David Dickinson. (But see notes on Audience below.)

The main image is connected with the main story, note the cartoon eyes, possible intertextual link with Daffy Duck (or some recognisable cartoon character), though quite why when the story is actually quite a serious one is an area of debate. There is rather a shock/horror approach, 'media filth' which is always an interesting area since it often means that perfectly innocent websites can also not be viewed. We can anticipate several differing interpretations of the image used for the story on Internet filth, which is also referred to on the other two pages.

Some candidates may spend much more time describing the front page in terms of colour, font and layout with little analysis. Please be aware of this and make sure it is really only analysis and evaluation that gets rewarded. Many candidates spend a long time assessing the name of the font and the pt, size; only if a valid point is made need that be assessed and rewarded.

Pages 4 and 5 represent a double page spread. Some candidates may miss that. Note the continuation of the black and red theme, some yellow, but also a great deal of white space. All very clearly set out, few photos, the bulk of the illustration is no better than a cheap set of ClipArt illustrations, with some repeats from the front cover. The contents are set out clearly in sections, which is quite simplistic really. Again this tells us something about the audience, this is not really a magazine for computer experts, quite the opposite. Note too the claim "The Only Plain English Computer Magazine" which is displayed on the front cover and on Page 4 as well. With reference to Plain English there will be candidates who spend considerable time analysing the language used in the headings etc. for example, the heading 'Bag A Bargain' which has slangy connotations and the phrase 'Your computer doesn't leave you in the lurch', not only Plain English but very colloquial.

Reference may also be made to the frequent use of icons in the Contents page and indeed the wealth of different areas of computer life that the magazine covers. Some candidates who are better acquainted with the genre may well be able to compare this magazine with some of the other computing magazines. There is no doubt that there are cheap, regularly published magazines (*tabloidish)* and then there are the rather more upmarket glossy (*broadsheetish*) types of magazines available. Links with audience should be made here. Obviously the majority of candidates will probably not be aficionados of the genre so will not be able to make such distinctions but may be able to note the fact that the magazine in question is perhaps aimed at a particular section of the market, cheaper and mainstream and not really for computer experts.

REPRESENTATION

One would imagine that most candidates will use the opportunity here to discuss the representation of the world of computers in a general sense. This can be looked at through two main areas: gender and technology.

It is interesting to note that the illustrations and photographs (not that there are many photographs) are all of men, machines or wizards and the like. And as noted above the wizards etc. are all quite cheap looking icons from ClipArt or similar DTP software. The suggestion therefore will probably be that this is a man's world.

Interesting to note the complete absence of women in all three pages. No models draped over hardware. Not even a women hard at work in front of a computer screen. Reference is made to the family and children however, both the main story, 'From The Editor', and 'Net Active' concern children and family values.

The three pages are liberally sprinkled with pictures of hardware and software, all quite small pictures, and nothing terribly sophisticated by the look of them, all very basic home computing stuff. Clearly the magazine is about being computer-friendly and making an audience feel at ease. 'We can help you' would seem to be the implicit tagline of the magazine.

MEDIA AUDIENCE

Always a tricky area this because so many candidates lapse into assessing likely audiences either by class (often inaccurately) or in terms of aspirers, mainstreamers etc. There are often assumptions made about age too, and it is quite likely that some candidates will assume that since anyone over 25 does not understand technology then the magazine is for the under 25 market.

What is being sought here is an attempt by candidates to assess the likely audience for the text based on an analysis and evaluation of the text itself.

Candidates will make reference to the general tone of the magazine and the nature of the layout and the language used to suggest that this is a family magazine, aimed at home users of computers.

VALUES AND IDEOLOGY

Any reference to Values and Ideology will of course be linked to all of the Key Concepts mentioned above and will probably deal with the nature of the lead article in the magazine, namely the Internet, porn, safety of children, and the proliferation of spam. So in a sense the magazine is promulgating family vales, and the notion of the Home Computer as 'your friend'.

Reference might be made to the fact that much of the magazine seems to be orientated towards a male audience, despite the high readership by women, which may come as quite a surprise to many candidates.

MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

This will be quite a difficult area for candidates to write about since there is very little information given in the text about any Institution and the question paper simply has a copyright reference to VDU Business Publications. Presumably candidates may well make reference to the burgeoning world of computer magazines, the influence of technology on our homes and workplaces and perhaps some reference to the fact that this is not is a Utopian vision.

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