



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Media Studies

MEST2

(Specification 2570)

Unit 2: Creating Media

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2011 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

Introduction

Over 10,000 candidates from 567 centres submitted work for moderation this year.

As MEST2 is becoming more familiar it is clear that many centres are feeling more comfortable with its requirements and some highly creative, technically advanced and confident work was submitted this year. There have been some excellent examples of work in all three platforms including post production experimentation going on in moving image, creative still image manipulation and layout design in print and adventurous web design with lots of audience interaction and multi-media in e-media work. Centres are to be commended in the freedom they are giving candidates to select from the briefs and the platforms as this often generates excellent work which indicates a genuine engagement on the topics and tasks selected.

Some centres are, however, still taking a prescriptive approach and are clearly directing candidates to work on one brief and some are restricting the task options, even going so far as to select the publications for the print task. There may be resource issues that lead to decisions regarding platforms (and these should be explained to the moderator) but invariably the work completed in these circumstances is repetitive and candidates are less likely to approach the tasks creatively. Centres are encouraged to allow candidates as full a range of choice as possible.

Administration

Moderators are reporting fewer technical issues in terms of accessing candidates' work for moderation. Centres do sometimes experience issues that are out of their control. Including information to explain to the moderator means that these issues can be taken into account whilst assessing the application of the mark scheme. Moving image and print are less problematic although occasionally moving image is still submitted as data files which can lead to incompatibility issues with moderators' computers. The best approach is to follow the instructions in the specification and submission guidelines and submit work in DVD format. Best practice is when individual discs are provided for each candidate. Where one disc is provided per group or containing a collection of groups' work, please assist the moderator by making it clear which candidates worked together and identifying them with candidate names **and** numbers. It can sometimes be difficult for moderators to work out who worked together and even to locate individual candidates' work for the moderation. If only one disc is provided per group please do not include this within one candidate's folder without making it clear in other team members' folders where the work can be found. Moderators look at a sample of work and it can delay the process trying to locate the discs that need to be viewed when there is a lack of information provided.

The vast majority of centres complete all the paperwork requirements efficiently and accurately and provide candidates' work in a way that is easy for the moderators to access and view. This is much appreciated. Some centres give detailed information on each candidate's cover sheet whilst others offer very little. The more information received by the moderator helps with the efficiency of the process and offers moderators more opportunities to support the marks awarded by the centre. On several occasions group work was submitted with very little indication of the individual's role within the group. It would be useful to have annotations that identify the role the candidate had within the group and their own

contributions, both technically and creatively. Candidate record forms are ideal locations to add details about groups.

Very few candidate record forms have the front sections completed in full. Please ensure that all sections are completed including identifying the software and resources used for the production of both tasks.

Web work is largely submitted as a working product either on disc/pen drive or on-line and it seems that the problems this caused in the first instances of this assessment have largely been solved. Some centres are still allowing work to be submitted as printouts or as data files (e.g. Publisher/Dreamweaver files). Neither is appropriate and guidance is available on the AQA web-site regarding submission formats.

Group Work

A significant numbers of centres seem to have misunderstood the recommendations for managing group work. It is acceptable for candidates to work in groups for **one** of the tasks but the second task should then be undertaken individually. Candidates should submit evidence of their own individual research and the evaluation should be their own work. If both tasks are undertaken as group productions, then the volume of work provided should reflect this based on the number of candidates working in a group or the mark awarded to the candidates should reflect the smaller amount of work completed. In several cases candidates worked on both tasks in groups and the group only produced 3 pages of print/emedia work. Where candidates work in groups, details of each candidate's individual contribution should be provided.

Research and Planning

It is still common for centres to submit far too much research and planning documentation. At times, submission of coursework must be costing centres enormous amounts of money as massive folders containing dozens of sheets of paper are often sent. This does indicate that an enormous amount of research and planning is being done which is commendable but submission of the complete folders is not required. The specification asks that a sample of planning and pre-production work is sent - no more than 5-6 pages. Sometimes excessive submission of research identifies that research has been unfocussed or directed extensively by the teacher. This does not support the candidates' work or, at times, the marks awarded. Research and planning should be selected from the work that is directly relevant to the production work. For example a detailed analysis of a feature film is not appropriate whereas an analysis of the trailer form and/or the genre being worked in for brief 1 is.

The Briefs/Tasks

Brief 2 was the least popular brief this year with most candidates completing brief 1 (broadcast fiction). A good number of candidates opted for the new brief 3 (music) and some excellent work was evidenced in this area demonstrating that genuine interest often results in an original and creative approach. Candidates who had a good understanding of the way music markets an image and a brand did particularly well as did those that took a creative approach to the freedom offered in the print option. Many candidates who completed this brief showed creativity and technical skills in their approach to photography and created some striking images – showing an awareness of the impact of image manipulation to create a coherent visual image for the artist they were promoting. It was also nice to see that some

candidates went over and above the remit for the e-media tasks by creating short videos within the web-sites they were creating (not as part of the broadcast task). Weaker candidates created print adverts that were simple snapshots with overlaid text for print or single-shot 'talking heads' video interviews with little consideration for location, costume etc. There was evidence of some well conceived campaigns from stronger students where CD covers, posters, flyers and adverts were visually coherent and created a strong band/artist image. Moving image for brief 3 was also approached creatively with a range of different approaches being taken including well constructed interviews, live footage, a band led guided tour and others.

Centres seem very familiar with brief 1 and the confidence showed in some very creative productions in all three platforms. Some candidates do still seem to have a limited understanding of the codes of the trailer and weaker candidates tended to rely on a montage of moving images, with inter-titles clarifying what is going on. Horror and teen soap are still the most popular genres with inspiration coming from *Skins* and *The Blair Witch Project/Cloverfield* still being much in evidence. Candidates who used tripods and considered the framing of shots rather than relying on hand held techniques and 'naturalistic' recording of scenes and events tend to produce tighter more professional looking products. In-camera sound can sometimes be an issue but some of the stronger candidates use visuals for story-telling and rely on dialogue less. Voiceovers can also be used effectively. Print work is most effective when candidates create their own images for the publications and there was evidence from stronger candidates of some well planned and executed photo shoots.

Weaker candidates tend to rely on snap shots and show less consideration of location, costume etc. Some camera phones have poor quality lenses and, even when the pixel count is high, this leads to poor quality photographs. Candidates should be encouraged to use cameras where possible unless they wish to use blurred/pixelated images for a specific purpose. Screen grabs of moving image work are often used to illustrate print and e-media work and these also tend to be of a poor quality and lead to a repetitive look across the productions. Carefully constructed photography and the use of post-production image manipulation can demonstrate the candidates' creative and technical abilities and should not be overlooked. Some candidates who create print and emedia tasks use the same images for both publications – they should be encouraged to use a variety of images selecting specific photographs for the print and e-media products.

Some candidates completing the print task for brief 1 limit themselves by choosing publications that have similar target audiences/functions (*Empire* and *Total Film* for example) and this limits the opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of the way different audiences are addressed. Similarly some publications do not give as much scope as others in terms of layout and design; *Sight and Sound*, for example. Film and TV are common topics in a range of publications and stronger candidates demonstrate a range of technical skills by producing features for quite different publications. There are still some centres that allow candidates to create front pages instead of or in addition to feature articles and there were some examples of a review being created instead of a feature. A review as part of a 2-3 page feature is fine but on its own does not allow candidates much scope in terms of page layout and design and so limits the marks that can be awarded.

Centres are reminded that part of the assessment of the print task is the successful replication of house style and layout conventions so, for upper level marks, work should be recognisable as the publication being emulated. Weaker candidates often miss out on

replicating the way professional publications use columns and often opt for inappropriate font sizes. The proportions of a page have a large impact on the success of creative a visually accurate feature. Many magazines are assumed to be A4 or A5 and subsequently the design of the page does not quite work as most magazines are a slightly different size.

E-media is still not quite as popular as the other two platforms although a significant number of candidates are working in this form. When it is done well, candidates are aware of the importance of visual interest and cohesion and some very appealing and attractive sights have been submitted using original photography and a creative flair in terms of design. The use of template based web design tools is quite common. Stronger candidates can overcome the restrictive nature of these tools and create excellent web sites. More commonly the sites follow the templates provided and lack flair and creativity. These tools also limit the candidate's ability to demonstrate their technical ability and so should be used with caution.

Stronger candidates should be encouraged to create their own designs rather than follow the prepared ones and not rely on the elements provided by the programmes/sites alone. In an extreme case all candidates created web sites in this way and all work followed the same template – the only 'design' difference in submissions being the images that were uploaded to the gallery and the fonts and backgrounds selected. Candidates do not necessarily need to master complicated web design software and excellent work has been created on MS Publisher and Serif Pageplus etc. These programmes allow students to design their pages from scratch and have plenty of scope for including interactive and multi-media elements whilst being relatively 'user friendly'. It should be noted that neither MS Word or PowerPoint are appropriate software packages for web design.

Evaluations

Some candidates struggle with the evaluation and miss out on marks that can make a difference to their final grades. Centres are reminded that the word count for evaluations is 1500 words and the candidates should evaluate both productions and consider the third platform within this word count. Weaker candidates use the evaluation to discuss the process of research and production and/or to describe the productions themselves. This limits the amount of marks that can be awarded. Strong candidates reflect on the requirements of the brief and tasks and evaluate the way their products meet those requirements. Candidates should be encouraged to use the media concepts and their research findings to inform their evaluation and to avoid personal assessments. It is not uncommon for audience knowledge to be based on the candidates' personal experiences, likes and dislikes. Platform choices are often stated to be based on personal preference or perceived technical weaknesses and weaker students use this to frame their discussion on the 3rd platform.

Media concept theory, where used, should be applied and used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the productions and not included for its own sake. More important than the ability to name theories is the candidate's understanding of the concepts in the way they have informed the practical choices made and in the assessment of the success of these choices in fulfilling the productions' functions and the remits provided. Sometimes evaluations give the game away. For example, if the candidate is the star of their own video or their own model in photographs, some explanation should be given how the work was created.

Conclusion

This summer has seen a lot of very creative and ambitious work being submitted and it has been a pleasure to see evidence of candidate engagement on projects they have clearly enjoyed creating. There is still some evidence of misunderstanding in terms of the requirements of the practical tasks and centres are reminded that a coursework advisor is allocated each September. They are available on email to discuss any issues or concerns encountered during the coursework production process.

Samples of candidates' work are available on e-AQA with marks and commentaries provided to help support the interpretation of the mark scheme. In addition, a range of training sessions, feedback and standardising meetings will be available throughout the academic year including some new courses dealing with all aspects of coursework support including practical skills. Details of training sessions will be posted on the AQA website.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion