MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/01
Foundation Portfolio

Key Messages

For success in this coursework paper, candidates need to:
 complete one of the two set tasks (video or print), keep a detailed blog of the process of the project, and reflect upon their work in the creative critical reflection;
 demonstrate knowledge and understanding, research and planning and appropriate skilled use of media tools.
Coursework coversheets need to be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective.

General Comments

Some excellent work was submitted for this component, demonstrating detailed research into existing magazines and film openings, which fed into the planning and construction of candidates' own media products. There was a high level of skill shown in the use of media tools, in both the products and in the creative critical reflections. In the best work, knowledge and understanding of conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with comprehensive evidence of the process.

Comments on Specific Tasks

Blogs

Centres which set up blog hubs made the process of moderation much smoother, so that each candidate's work could be clicked on without the need to type in long URLs with the risk of errors. Links need to be checked by Centres in advance to ensure that they are working and the finished product should be placed at the top of the blog so that it is clear which the final version is. The best work was comprehensive, with blogposts which followed the whole process of the project and showed clear evidence of research into all aspects which then feed into the finished work. Very short blogs did not evidence enough of the process to justify more than Level 2 marks on the whole. All elements of the project should be online, either on or linked to the blog; there is no need to send any disks or printouts of items.

Creative critical reflections

Candidates who fully addressed the four questions using varied digital formats performed best in this area. There are a number of social tools which enabled really interesting and reflective work, appropriate to the task. There were some excellent voiceover videos with extracts from the finished product and from the process and some really imaginative approaches to which adequate time had been allocated. Weaker work tended to be text-heavy and just used PowerPoint or Prezi, often in very abrupt slides with little illustration. Such work could only meet the criteria for minimal marks.

Products

Magazines

The syllabus requires candidates to produce the front cover, contents page and a double page spread of a new magazine, including a minimum of four images and made up of entirely original material. On the whole, candidates fulfilled the brief, with understanding of features of design, layout, font choice and size in evidence, as well as lots of well-shot photographs. Some candidates would have benefited from more support in building their skills with the software- a DTP package such as InDesign is really needed for this task- and particularly with their understanding of conventions. Opportunities for interim feedback need to be

built in to the task so that candidates can benefit from the critical eye of peers and teachers, particularly in relation to how far they have carried through their research into their own products.

Film Openings

This task involves the production of the first two minutes of an imaginary feature film, including the titles, adhering to commercial cinema conventions. This worked best when candidates had researched film openings relevant to their own genre choice and had developed a systematic understanding of the institutional conventions of opening titles. The best work showed that Candidates had considered carefully what purpose an opening must serve in establishing an enigma for the rest of the film to solve. In some less successful cases, candidates produced film openings which were effectively entire short films rather than the required 'opening', or which gave away too much of the story. A key feature of the task is how far the finished text is 'readable' as a film opening. Work which reached Level 4 and 5 showed a high level of skill with relevant techniques - camerawork, sound, use of mise-en-scene and editing.

MEDIA STUDIES

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Successful answers analyse the extract from TV drama in terms of how it constructs meaning through camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound.
Candidates do well when they are able to adapt their learning about the media industry they have studied to one of two optional questions.
For the textual analysis question, an understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to be able to attempt the question.

General Comments

Many candidates showed evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with appropriate examples.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

There were many good responses on how meaning was set up through camerawork and mise-en-scene in particular. Candidates were less confident on the use of sound and editing. Stronger answers tended to deal with each technical area in turn, whilst weaker answers tended to work through the sequence chronologically, listing features rather than analysing their effect. Some terminology, such as that to do with the camera, was handled confidently, but many candidates answered less well on editing, referring to 'jump cuts' when they meant a cut to a new location. Candidates who concentrated on analysing a single area of representation, such as gender or age, found it difficult to make an argument in their responses. Those who looked at 'meaning' in its broadest sense tended to be more successful.

Section B

Question 2

The question on marketing was by far the more popular of the two. Most candidates answered on the film industry, with *The Dark Knight Rises*, *Frozen* and *The Kings Speech* being the most popular case studies. Stronger responses tended to recognise the importance of multi-platform approaches to marketing, enabling producers to reach their target audiences. The best had individual case studies with an independent approach which allowed them to adapt to the question set. Some showed encyclopaedic knowledge of the topic. Weaker responses tended to be limited to factual recall without reference to the question set.

There were some good responses on music, print, radio and videogames, but there were also a number of answers which appeared to be completely unprepared, with candidates apparently picking topics at random and attempting to answer from everyday knowledge rather than showing any evidence of having studied the topic.

Question 3

The question on ownership was attempted by a minority of candidates. The strongest had clear case studies from their chosen industry which they were able to mobilise to address the question. The weakest showed no evidence of having studied the topic at all.

MEDIA STUDIES

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 complete one of the four optional tasks, keep a detailed blog of the process of the project, and reflect upon their work in the creative critical reflection
 demonstrate knowledge and understanding, research and planning and appropriate skilled use of media tools.
Coursework coversheets need to be completed with clear comments for each candidate to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective.

This component needs to be seen as completely separate from the AS level coursework. Tasks may not be double entered from the Foundation Portfolio or 'continued' as part of the Advanced Portfolio, but must be completely new tasks. Likewise, a new blog should be set up for each candidate at A2.

General Comments

Some excellent work was submitted for this component, demonstrating detailed research into existing products, which fed into the planning and construction of candidates' own media products. There was some high level of skill shown in the use of media tools, in both the products and in the creative critical reflections. In the best work, knowledge and understanding of conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with comprehensive evidence of the process. In some cases, candidates did not complete all three elements of the set brief; it is important that both major and minor tasks are completed.

Comments on Specific Tasks

Blogs

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Creative critical reflections

Candidates who fully addressed the four questions using varied digital formats performed best in this area. There are a number of social tools which enabled really interesting and reflective work, appropriate to the task. There were some excellent voiceover videos with extracts from the finished product and from the process and some really imaginative approaches to which adequate time had been allocated. Weaker work tended to be text-heavy and just used PowerPoint or Prezi, often in very abrupt slides with little illustration. Such work could only meet the criteria for minimal marks.

Set Briefs

Music Promotion Package

This was the most popular task and was often done very well. Candidates who demonstrated an understanding of the codes and conventions of music video through detailed research into relevant examples were able to translate this into their own work. The best music videos showed good pace and the ability to lipsync and edit to the rhythm. Digipacks were generally formatted appropriately, with the best being evidently the result of development over a period of time, rather than an afterthought. Websites for artists often used templates such as Wix to good effect.

Film Promotion Package

The best examples of work here featured pacey trailers which showed a clear grasp of the conventions of the form. Posters and a website which captured the sense of branding were most effective. This task requires candidates to develop a real sense of what the whole film would be like in a simulation of the film industry's marketing practice, so needs to be based upon quite a lot of research into existing examples. The best work showed this and also showed strong skills with photography, editing and image manipulation programs.

Documentary Package

There were a few examples submitted for this option, the best of which showed a strong engagement with the subject matter coupled with excellent research into the form and the demonstration of strong skills in the making of the texts. Once again, minor tasks were best when they had been done in parallel with the major task.

Short Film Package

This was almost as popular a task as the music promotion package. At their best, some of the short films came close to professional standard, with excellent use of actors, locations and narrative. Weaker examples tended to lack structure and showed limited skills with camera and editing. The postcard task needed to draw upon research into similar examples; websites at their best were done well with a clear sense of audience.

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Success in this paper requires:
considered reflection on the coursework undertaken and the skills developed,
analysis of one piece of coursework using a theoretical framework, and an extended response on one
contemporary media theme.

General Comments

The best answers showed evidence of high level analytical skill and the ability to consider different aspects
of the task in limited time. At the bottom end, there were a number of candidates who did not seem to be
aware of the content required or of the nature of the assessment, writing very brief responses which gained
barely any credit.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

(a)   Most candidates were able to identify some features of the conventions of real media and how
these influenced their work. Some did not address both coursework units, but stuck to discussing
just one of their projects, which limited the marks available to them. The best responses contained
lots of detail and related it closely to the question set, ranging across their projects and reflecting
upon the skills developed.

(b)   Where candidates had been taught the concept of representation, and had some relevant theory to
use, this question was well answered. Where they had not addressed the concept or prepared for
the exam, they quickly ran out of ideas. Strong responses made detailed reference to their own
production and applied theory effectively.

Section B

Questions 2 and 3: Regulation

Amongst those who had studied regulation, these two questions each received a similar number of
responses. Most examples came from the UK, though there was some good material on local contexts. Film
and the press featured strongly, with some responses also looking at the Internet and videogames. In some
cases, candidates appeared to have written a response without having studied the topic and these were very
weak and opinionated. In the stronger answers, examples were mobilised effectively.

Questions 4 and 5: Global media

There were surprisingly few answers on this topic, but those that attempted it often had very interesting and
detailed case studies which looked at both notions of cultural imperialism and local resistance.

Questions 6 and 7: Media and collective identity

There were a range of collective identities used as examples in responding to these questions. LGBT identity and the family were particularly prominent, with some effective use of examples from US television in particular. The application of theory tended to be more limited in relation to this topic.

Questions 8 and 9: Media in the online age

This was the most popular topic and featured some strong responses making reference to contemporary theory and arguments about distribution and audiences as appropriate. There were also many weak 'common-sense' responses which were often quite short and appeared not to be the result of any sustained teaching or learning. In order to do well on this topic, candidates need to have a framework for understanding the online age, which includes reference to theory and detailed case studies.

Questions 10 and 11: Post-modern media

This topic resulted in some very strong responses with a range of good examples used to explain postmodernism and some intelligent reference to theory.