GCE

# Media Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7860**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3860**

# Report on the Units

# June 2007

**3860/7860/MS/R/07**

# CONTENTS

**Advanced GCE Media Studies (7860)**

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Media Studies (3860)**

## REPORTS ON THE UNITS

**Media Studies GCE Summer 2007 report**

There was once again a small increase in the overall number of candidates at both AS and A2. Centres had prepared candidates well for all units, usually taking account of the changes made to the specification for first assessment this year.

In the coursework units, moderators reported that standards had generally held up well or even improved on most tasks and for the examined units there was evidence of lots of hard work and focussed teaching producing a good standard overall.

In the detailed reports of individual units which follow, attention is drawn to a number of areas which need some consideration by centres. These include

The need to ensure health and safety procedures, the issue of appropriateness of material produced by candidates, found images and the importance of candidate websites having a live URL are all raised in relation to coursework.

The importance of addressing the question set, use of up to date case studies, encouraging independence in research and supporting points through reference to examples are all raised in relation to the exams.

Please read the advice carefully and contact the Subject Officer if you are unclear about any particular points.

The next cohort to start Media Studies in September 2007 will be the last to undertake the specification in its six unit form; from September 2008 the new four unit specification commences, which can be downloaded from the OCR website. Advice on the existing specification and the new one will be available in INSET days throughout the coming year, which teachers are urged to attend. There will also be guidance materials made available to support planning and delivery of the new specification.

We look forward to centres developing their practice still further when the new specification commences, building on the very strong work which currently exists, as illustrated in this assessment session.

## 2730 Foundation Production

**General Comments**

There were over 18000 entries this session.  Overall the standard was very similar to last year, although there were a number of issues that will be developed further in this report. The most popular briefs were the film thriller and the print magazine work.

The majority of centres included the Coursework Authentication sheet (CCS160), which as a requirement, should accompany either the work or the MS1 sheets, which are sent to moderators for the selection of the moderated sample.

Centres are reminded of the need to keep to the regulations on original images as often print work in particular featured a lot of found material. Moderators were sometimes unable to support centre marks as a consequence.

The administration of this unit was reasonably well executed. There are still centres that do not meet the required coursework deadline; this must be adhered as this could delay results to centres. It will be of particular importance in 2008 when the Easter vacation falls two weeks earlier than usual, requiring centres to adjust internal deadline dates to include this fact.

Where work was annotated with attention to the criteria in the specification, it is easier for moderators to support the centre's marking.

**The Set Briefs**

The film thriller needs to clearly indicate how it is targeting a 15 or 18 audience, but care should be taken to ensure that candidates do not assume that an opening sequence has to contain graphic material only suitable for an adult audience!

General levels of technical competence were good and most Candidates seemed to understand and enjoy the brief. As has been the case for a number of sessions, the main technical problems were lighting and sound quality. There are some centres that use the music track as the main sound element. Care needs to be taken with this, as stated in the June 2006 report, as moderators again saw a small number of examples where the end production could be taken for a music video.

Centres must ensure that Health and Safety issues and the use of inappropriate language are addressed. It is still the case with car chases and with the use of knives and toy guns that concerns for both the safety of the candidates and the implications of police intervention exist. Well considered, detailed planning and the monitoring of candidates' work can but only support good and effective practice and outcomes. The most effective thrillers do not need to include the 'horror' conventions or violent scenes.

There were a few examples of the television brief. In the majority of cases the work addressed the target audience (5 to 12 year olds). However, a few centres seemed to encourage candidates to use this brief as a way of creating 'alternative' programmes, without any thought for the target audience.

The teenage magazine brief was again very popular. A number of moderators did indicate that some centres are not teaching the basic elements of layout, design and

picture editing (cropping) leaving candidates to 'pick up' these techniques from the research they have been asked to do in preparation for this task. As a fundamental principle, whichever brief a centre is asking its candidates to work to, the centre MUST teach the basic principles (and more advanced skills, if possible) in order for their learners to achieve at an appropriate level.

There was occasional evidence of inappropriate imagery used in this task, taking the 'lads mag' as a model. **Centres are reminded that teachers are in loco parentis and should err on the side of caution in terms of photographs.**

Centres are also reminded that those working as part of a group each have to create the equivalent to that of an individual (see page 62 of the 3rd edition of the specification.) There were examples this session, where candidates had not done this and marks where therefore adjusted.

The advertising campaign brief was generally well-executed and made good use of original images manipulated for context. In general, candidates use existing charities and attempted to re-brand them. It is worth considering, as stated before, the option of inventing an entirely fictitious charity, or using a little known medical condition, as this could lead to more attention to form rather than an emphasis on content. Centres are also encouraged to engage candidates' thoughts about where campaigns could or should be placed or shown. Every media text has a context.

There was little evidence this session of the video games package nor of the radio brief, though where the latter was used, the work was often of a high standard.

**For centres that created the web site brief, the issue of the lack of an URL address was again evident. If centres cannot provide an URL address (the school / college web site would be adequate) then centres are asked NOT to attempt this set brief.**

**Assessment Criteria**

Overall the majority of centres did apply the assessment criteria well. As with previous sessions there were a small number of centres whose marks were adjusted. This is done to bring a centre's marks in line with the agreed base line standard within the moderation process of quality assurance. Centres are reminded that the application of marks must reflect the level criteria as stated in the specification. During this session a number of moderators have pointed to the fact that some centres will make cursory links to Level criteria. When this occurs moderators may find it more difficult to support a centre's assessment, because little evidence is provided by the centre is support of its initial award of a level and a mark within that level.

This session did witness a larger number of centres where rank order (order of merit) was questioned and this led to a number of moderators asking centres to remark according to the Level criteria as illustrated in the specification. One major reason for the rank order issue is the lack of detail in the internal standardisation process in which centres should undertake. It is also the case that some centres do not recognise the need to ensure parity between the set briefs in the assessment process, which itself can lead moderators to question the rank order, when a centre encourages its candidates to either self-choose or provide a range of set briefs. The moderating team have begun to see a pattern emerge where centres which encourage candidates to do more than two

set briefs, can create a rank order issue, because the assessment criteria is unevenly applied across the briefs.

The most common issue that arises from the application of the assessment criteria to a candidate's work is the level of comment provided by the centre. If comments on the Coursework Cover sheet are detailed then the moderator can see how marks have been arrived at. If centres do not provide detailed comments, it is much harder for moderators to support assessments made by centres.

Construction is the category which still tends to be over-rewarded, though on occasion, inflated marks for planning and the production reports are in evidence.

**Administration**

The best practice witnessed by moderators is where the moderator can easily access the text outcomes (especially print) from the written work and any appendices. As has been stated previously, centres and candidates support the moderation process, when all administration and 'tips' in coursework presentation are made a priority. This clearly supports the moderation process. Deadlines always seem to be an issue; unfortunately for the moderating team, their time is not endless!

A number of moderators have commented upon the way in which some centres fail to provide DVDs with menus and or appropriate labelling of DVD covers in order to access the correct piece of work for the correct candidate(s). Centres are encouraged to ensure that ALL DVDs are in a format that can be viewed on domestic players and preferably have menus from which to choose the appropriate work. One DVD with a menu also saves on postal charges.

**Advice**

- All print work should use original images
- Common tasks for ALL candidates within a centre seem to work best and provide the centre with less difficulty in arriving at a rank order.
- Expertise and the development of skills in one medium / task can be achieved by focusing upon ONE set brief, which could be expanded year on year across two or three set briefs.
- A clear policy on Health and Safety is in place.
- The content of productions, along with clear and detailed planning should be in place and discussed before productions are started.
- DVD material  should be accessible via domestic machines and have a menu
- Access to appropriate equipment, resources and training (for candidates and staff).
- The close study of real media texts related to the candidates' choice of brief encourages more detailed understanding of that task with the potential of more appropriate outcomes (and marks).
- Deadlines (internal for candidates and external for the centre) should be met.
- Clear labelling and administration paper work and
- Detailed comments from the centre on candidates' work / centre assessment sheets -  in order to support the moderating process

## Unit 2731 - Textual Analysis

**General Comments**

There were approximately 14000 candidates entered for this session.  The majority fully understood the requirements of this unit.  There was plenty of evidence which indicated that the candidates were fully engaged by the extract used in Question 1, which resulted in some very full and detailed analytical responses.  On the whole question 2 has been answered well.

There were fewer examples of candidates who had run out of time than in previous sessions and the majority of candidates answered both questions.   All questions were considered appropriate in their level of demand, allowing for good differentiation between all candidates, especially in Section B.  There were no significant issues raised by centres regarding the choice of extract or wording of questions.

Where they continue to apply, some observations have been repeated from previous reports to help centres in their preparation of candidates for this unit.

**Comments on Individual Questions**

Section A: Textual Analysis - Unseen Moving Image Extract

1 The extract chosen, 'The Chessyard': Hero, Dir.  Zhang Yimou, 2006, provided ample opportunity for candidates to discuss the five technical aspects of moving image language for discussion.

**Screening Conditions**

Centres appear to have adapted well to the change to screening the extract on DVD.  It may be preferable for centres to use a large space, such as the Hall, Games Hall or Drama Studio with a video/data projector and a large screen, so that all candidates experience the same conditions.  Some measure of blackout will improve picture quality and care should be taken to test sound and picture quality in advance.  Most data/video projectors have limited sound projection, so it is advisable to add a booster speaker(s).

It is the responsibility of centres to check that every candidate can see and hear clearly, especially if they have specific difficulties with either sense.

**Previewing the Extract**

The DVD extract is sent in advance with precise instructions to centres regarding when they should preview the DVD in order to check that it functions and whether any adjustments need to be made to sound and picture quality. It is very important that centres check the contents of the DVD prior to the exam.

It is the responsibility of the centre to preview the DVD extract when advised, as OCR cannot rectify any problems on the day of the examination.  If the DVD has not arrived when expected, centers are advised to contact OCR at once, rather than wait until the day of the examination.

The opportunity to preview the extract is for technical reasons only.  Any centre suspected of leaking information about the choice of extract to candidates, or using this knowledge to gain an

unfair advantage will be referred as a potential malpractice case and candidates will be at risk of being withdrawn from the examination or having their marks disqualified.

**Note-making**

As far as note making on the extract is concerned, centres should address helpful strategies directly with their candidates in advance (for example, dividing notes into five sections for quick reference) and give them ample opportunities for practice. The notes are not marked. They are simply to aid the candidate in recording details from the moving image extract and should be as brief and clear as possible.

**Approaches to answering the question**

**Question 1**

It is well worth considering a recommendation to candidates that they approach writing about each of the technical aspects in turn, or in pairs, instead of in a chronological way. Whilst it must be stated that these technical aspects of moving image language have a combined effect, this might encourage the chronological approach, which often results in candidates leaving significant gaps. It is this factor in particular, which often leads to few top-level answers, as the mark scheme requires a near comprehensive response, without significant gaps, at the top level.

Centres are reminded to emphasise to their candidates that their answers are required to be in continuous prose. They should not use sub-headings, note form or bullet points.

Examiners are looking for as balanced an analysis as possible (in proportion to the extract chosen) of all five technical areas. Candidates' answers are uneven when two or three of the technical aspects are dealt with by only a brief sentence or two. The strongest candidates were able to deconstruct the sequence skilfully, using the technical areas as the starting point for an analysis of how meaning was created in the sequence. There were fewer very weak responses and fewer candidates producing purely descriptive answers than in previous sessions.

Candidates found much to write about and did appear to enjoy the extract and certainly involved themselves in an often very perceptive and creative interpretation of meaning. The extract provided plenty of opportunities for the candidate to engage with textual analysis of the five technical aspects:

Mise-en-scene was well addressed and candidates readily made comment on the setting, locations, costumes and props of the film sequence. The sequence was fruitful for candidates, providing a wide range of possible readings. Centres have made good use of the advice given in previous PE reports on the unit, by starting the answer with a detailed analysis of the extract's mise- en-scene. Candidates really engaged with the mise en scene of the extract and the most able candidates could offer very insightful readings of the extract, for example, analyzing the symmetry of the setting or they could capitalized upon the intellectual connotations of chess or the extract's confrontational attributes. The most able candidates could offer detailed and thorough exemplification in the answers provided.

Candidates were not penalized for any errors in the use of antagonist and protagonist in their responses and some candidates offered the argument that the director has deliberately challenged the function of the two characters, from what is typically expected of the action-adventure genre.

The candidate's responses to special effects varied from identification of the effect to indicating the function of the effect in relation to how meaning is constructed. The majority of the candidates could identify the flying sequence in the middle of the combat as a special effect and

identified this as wire technology and the possibility of using CGI.  The candidates who fully developed their response could identify the use of models in the extract, the use of pro-filmic stunts and suggest how these stunts contributed to the hyperbolic performance of the combat scene.

The extract provided candidates with many opportunities to examine camera shot type angle and movement.  Most candidates were able to select examples from the extract and in detail discuss the variety of shots used and link these to the other technical aspects of the sequence.  Stronger candidates would also identify the significance of camera movement in the extract as well the significance of the movement of the camera in relation to the action that unfolded as a martial arts fight.   The candidates could write about the camera shots in a chronological way, choosing appropriate examples to illustrate the points they wanted to make, for example the use of close up on characters eyes signify an intensity in the concentration and thoughtfulness of the characters in combat.  It is pleasing to see that the candidates were clearly engaged with the pacing of shots to match the action and many would comment of the gracefulness of the combat itself.

There was an improvement in the candidates' responses to editing.  Many centres appear to have heeded the advice given in previous PE reports that editing was under-represented in essay responses.  In this summer's session, candidates were engaging more with the function of editing in relation to shot sequences and the uses of sound, for example in the use of slow motion (which candidates could argue was used to convey the skill of the characters) and use of shot reverse shot in the principles of continuity editing.  Many candidates are showing an improved understanding of the use of matching shots and the need for continuity; they can demonstrate how meaning is constructed by the pacing of the extract and how important the use of the soundtrack is to the editing.

The analysis of sound in the extract continued to show improvement on previous sessions.  Many candidates veered away from simply identifying diegetic and non-diegetic sound in a descriptive a list like way to analyzing the significance of the sound in the extract in relation to the action that was taking place.  The candidates regularly referred to the diegetic sound of the rain as a calming and spiritual effect on the combat.  Also candidates considered the sound effect of swords clashing, the urges of the soldiers in combat which signified their efforts and strengths.  It is pleasing to note that sound is beginning to be integrated with wider aspects of technical analysis, for example, with the mise en scene and at times special effects.

Overall candidates were able to identify how the extract was different to more conventional 'Hollywood' action/ fight scenes and link this to close textual analysis; for example, through the analysis of the use of slow-motion, the raindrops and the sound.   Textual analysis is a core skill in media studies and candidates should be able to analyse any media text with confidence and accuracy.  Weaker candidates' answers were superficial, generic and stated the obvious with little evidence of media study skills.


**Advice for Candidates for Section A**

- Make useful detailed notes on the extract
- Identify moving image language techniques accurately
- Select appropriate examples from the extract to discuss – you do not have to cover the whole extract or every example
- Analyse why / how these aspects are used to create meaning for the spectator deconstruct what you see and hear, explain function, purpose and effect
- Refer closely to the set extract – no generalised analysis of action adventure films nor reference to what you might know about the rest of the film

- Cover all five aspects – do not miss one out
- Avoid just describing what happens – do not just give a descriptive chronological commentary – analyse and interpret.

**Section B: Comparative Textual Analysis**

There was some evidence of strong teaching, with many candidates well prepared to address issues of representation using comparison of appropriate texts. There was less evidence of candidates answering a question that had been set in a previous examination session or failing to address the question in front of them. On the whole the questions set were addressed by the candidates.

Some candidates produced very general discursive responses (especially for the newspaper question and some responses on TV sitcoms, which were focused on characters types, rather than the use of stereotypes). Some candidates' analysis and comparison of two specific texts (with stated editions or episodes) was absent and at times comparison was an added paragraph at the end of the response. This limited their attainment as far as providing specific textual evidence is concerned.

There was much less use of inappropriate texts by candidates in this exam. It is crucial that candidates understand the processes involved in representation and are thoroughly prepared on the chosen topic using pairs of appropriate texts that offer ample opportunities for comparison.

Candidates should remember that they are required to identify their two chosen texts (and their episodes / editions) at the start of their answer to this section.

There were a few examples of Centers that offered pre-prepared answers to this section, with candidates using very similar introductions and essay structures. This degree of over-preparation restricted candidates and made them unable to adapt what they knew to the specific focus of the question set. They underperformed as a result.

**Comments on individual questions**

2a Consumerism and Lifestyle Magazines

There were some very good examples of carefully chosen magazines, good comparative textual evidence and an understanding of representation. Most candidates could engage with the question of values and possessions of an ideal lifestyle and were using good selected examples from the magazines they studied, including front covers, editorial pages, inside features. There were some good examples of texts used which clearly prepared the candidates well in answering the question, for example: Arena and More, Cosmo and The Big Issue, Cosmopolitan and More, Men's Health and Marie Claire.

In general, the issue of values and possession of an ideal lifestyle was addressed well, with candidates selecting appropriate examples from their chosen magazines to illustrate their analysis. There were some excellent examples of detailed textual analysis and comparison. Most candidates were able to respond to the issue of values and possessions. There are still occasional examples of candidates using niche publications such as ASDA magazine, car/ music/ hi-fi texts, which as explained in previous PE reports, are inappropriate texts for examination in this unit.

## 2b Celebrity and the Tabloid Press

This was the second most popular option.  This question was considered to provide excellent differentiation between candidates as its focus required candidates to show how the celebrity is represented in their private lives as opposed to their careers. The  candidates could clearly address the issue in relation to analysis and discussion of representation of celebrity.  Good examples included the use of Jade Goody and Shilpa Shetty in relation to the Big Brother story, the Beckhams, Kate Moss and Pete Docherty and Katie Price and Peter.

There were still occasional responses that relied on that week's news, which were no more than superficial general discussions of celebrity news. At the same time some centres are clearly working to detailed (and 'past') case studies which offer a rich source of material for the candidates, for taught and critical study.

Some candidates tried to cover too much of the news stories in an edition which meant they struggled for detail in their answers.  Centres need to provide a balanced approach to the number of pages they cover.  This may mean selecting appropriate stories from an edition, as there are many examples of candidates not answering the question or simply offering all they knew about a particular newspaper, whilst repeating the question.   Weaker candidates could not address the concept of public life /career in address of the question set.


## 2c Music Culture and Radio

There were few answers on this option. Candidates were prepared and had a firm grasp on how the playlist and/ or mode of address of the presenters represented the target audience and their music culture.   There was the occasional incidence of a candidate choosing to answer this question in preference to the topic for which they had been prepared.


## 2d Gender and Television Sitcom

As in previous sessions, there were some excellent answers to this topic.  This was the most popular option and most candidates were well prepared with good background knowledge of the genre, chosen texts and an understanding of the concept of representation.   Most popular combinations included Men Behaving Badly/Absolutely Fabulous, My Family/Only Fools and Horses, Men Behaving Badly/Fawlty Towers, Absolutely Fabulous /The Office,  My Family/The Royle Family. Also interesting was a comparison between Fresh Prince and The  Royle Family. Those texts which proved to less effective in combination were The Simpsons and Friends, and I Love Lucy/The Likely Lads when compared to Friends. The differences here were perhaps too great to allow for meaningful comparison.

There were some excellent answers which focussed on the understanding of gender representation and its construction, evident from the strongest candidates.  The majority of candidates clearly engaged with the concept of gender and stereotypes, using a discussion of examples of character/ actions/ behaviour/ relations and values and beliefs.   Whilst it was felt that candidates had a sound knowledge and understanding of stereotypes, there continue to be many rehearsed answers which do not fully address the question set. For example, there were a number of candidates who found themselves veering towards a discussion of the codes and conventions of the situation comedy with little consideration of the importance of stereotyping and gender.

At times candidates failed to offer comparative analysis and there is also a tendency in weaker candidates to ignore alternative stereotypes of gender and to make assumptions based upon an overly narrow range of representations.  A number of candidates were sidetracked by discussing issues of the representation of class and/or age and so neglect the focus on gender required.

2e Conflict/Competition and Video/Computer Games

A small number of centres chose this option.

There were excellent analyses of how conflict and competition is represented by the narratives and/or characters in video/ computer games. Some excellent analysis took place of combinations such as Canis Canem Edit/Terminator 3, GTA San Andreas/Metal Gear Solid, Resident Evil /Tomb Raider, and Mario /Burnout.

These answers used detailed codes and convention of the game to discuss the nature of conflict and or competition.  Better candidates' answers had a real grasp as to how the medium of video gaming has its own significant messages and values.  Weaker responses relied on description of a game's narrative and outcomes with little attempt to provide any detailed textual analysis of game elements.

**Advice for Teachers for Section B**

- Choose a topic that plays to your strengths and resources
- Select texts that engage and interest candidates, appropriate to their ability
- Teach the basics of textual analysis and the concept of representation
- Give concise and helpful, rather than exhaustive, definitions and contextual information on a topic
- Ensure that the question paper rubric is adhered to in all respects, especially in the requirement to compare texts
- Give plenty of examination practice and prepare candidates in examination technique and how to answer unseen questions.

**Unit 2732 - Case Study: Audience and Institutions June 07**

**General Comments**

There were around 18000 candidates for this paper, of which the vast majority answered on Section A. There were very few rubric errors, usually involving candidates answering both sections, in which case the higher mark counted.

The best papers were those where the students' time allocation was appropriate. They had been advised as to how long to spend on each of the questions and the content was comprehensive, relevant and detailed.

**Question specific comments.**

**Section A**

**New Media Technologies**

Generally the comprehension questions were answered well and candidates engaged with the passage to answer the questions.

**1a** Nearly all candidates gained full marks

**1bi** many candidates used a point relevant to bii and missed the idea of 'alternative' to mainstream

**1bii** few candidates identified timeshifting but most recognised the idea that mainstream media are using podcasting as part of their wider web services.

**1(Ci)** Several candidates misinterpreted this question as 'on demand' meaning 'in demand' and proceeded to explain this as a much sought after device. Candidates are advised to read the passage closely and use it to assist their responses. Most simply identified iPod or MP3 player. 1cii Many mistook this as referring to the quality of sound rather than content

**(2a)-** Again some students failed to use the passage to answer this question and as such missed many easy marks as they focused too much on general common sense responses rather than using the passage. Many saw podcasting as destroying radio rather than as a development from it.

**2b)** Students that answered this well were those that engaged with the idea of 'creativity' and offered a range of examples from outside the passage that well illustrated their points. Good examples used were-You Tube, MTV Flux, Adobe Photoshop, Stop Animation, I movie, digital film making, blogs etc. Few candidates however managed to address the 'to what extent' part of this debate and argue that NMTs may not make the audience more creative. Those that received full marks were the few that took a confident critical viewpoint and also put forward some clear reasons why they do not always result in more creative audiences.

Unfortunately too many candidates gave weak responses that did not engage with the question set and gave responses that were discussing interactivity and/or socialisation. Centres and candidates are advised that they should be prepared with a range of examples that they should tailor to address the question set.

**3)** This was a popular question that was answered well by many students, especially when they engaged with their own media tastes and experiences. It enabled a wide scope of responses and a variety of different examples could be used to address the question set.

The vast majority of students were able to offer and explain a range of reasons exploring the advantages of NMTS for audiences. Most explored issues such as convergence, interactivity and portability. However weak responses failed to fully engage in the debate posed by this question and many failed to discuss the disadvantages of NMTs for their audience. Too many students also seemed to cite cost as the only disadvantage for audiences which meant their responses were simplistic. Weaker candidates also offered limited examples and evidence to support their points.

There was some evidence of centres where all candidates used the same case study material, often badly revised. However, stronger responses explored and debated both advantages and disadvantages for the audience and discussed issues such as deregulation, fraud, piracy, illusion of choice, social interaction and leisure patterns. They also used a range of contemporary examples to illustrate their points. Good examples used were: Second Life, 4 on Demand, Facebook, Apple IPhone, Bebo, MTV Flux, Moblogging, Citizen Journalism, Blogger.com, HDTV, Blue Ray,Nintendo Wii etc.

There were still some centres which seemed to have taught the unit via complex theoretical frameworks with which the candidates had problems engaging. Centres are reminded that NMT requires the candidates to engage with contemporary debates and examples and not rely on the same outdated examples or marginally relevant theory every year.

**4)** This was not as popular as Q3 but was well answered by many students. Strong responses considered competition from other industries, audience demand, cross media promotion, brand loyalty, in built obsolesce etc as the reasons for the need to invest in new technologies. Popular examples used were the gaming industry (Sony Vs Nintendo) and Apple in particular their range of ipods. Stronger candidates were able to use a variety of examples and explore a range of issues in the question. Weak responses were those which lacked examples and many seemed to focus far too much on audiences whose examples would have been better suited to responding to Q3.

**Media Ownership**

**1a** generally full marks

**1b** A few candidates failed to provide the full information as they just offered statistics without explaining the context eg. Down to 11%. These responses did not show the required understanding therefore could not be credited.

**1ci** candidates usually got one or two points, but few had a clear enough sense to pick up full marks

**1cii** relatively few candidates understood the idea of a portfolio or of assets, often assuming an asset was an achievement

**2a)** Was answered well by many candidates as most paid close attention to the passage to assist.

**2b)** This question was generally well answered with a variety of responses which including marketing and branding/re-branding, investing in new technologies, convergence and cross media promotion. Weaker responses offered few examples and demonstrated limited wider knowledge with an over reliance on the passage.

**3)** This question was not answered by many candidates but those who did generally responded well. Rupert Murdoch and Disney were popular examples and most responses linked into ideas of synergy, cross media promotion etc. Some examples were inappropriate, such as case studies of Man Utd and Tom Toms, but fortunately these were rare! The use of Murdoch and NewsCorp has improved though there were still some centres which seemed to be rooted in teaching about mid-90s election influence which felt very dated.

**4)** This question proved problematic at times as it had too much cross over with the 20 marks question offered in 2b) and it at times candidates were repeating entirely the responses and examples they had used for the previous question. Strong responses tried hard to avoid repetition and discussed issues of competition with other companies, in built obsolescence and considered the 'to what extent debate' and put forward examples of companies that had invested in NMTs and had been unsuccessful in attracting an audience. Popular contemporary examples that worked well were Virgin Vs BskyB and Sony Vs Nintendo.

**General Points**

New Media Technologies was by far the most popular section with far fewer centres preparing candidates for Media Ownership.

Candidates that attempted to answer the essay questions before the comprehension were often unsuccessful and often lost out on the 'easy mark' first questions. On the other hand there were examples of centres which had successfully tutored their candidates in re-organising the order of the paper to suit their timings.

Several candidates still attempted to answer all questions in the booklet or chose to answer questions on the section that they clearly have not been prepared for in class. Students are advised to sit a 'mock exam' before the examination to iron out any of these misconceptions.

## <u>Unit 2733  Principal Moderator's report  June 2007</u>

This was the eighth session for this unit and the second session for the Revised edition of the Specification. There were nearly 11,000 candidates, the large majority of whom produced work which was appropriate to the requirements and demands of this level of assessment. Moderators commented on the clear sense of candidates being effectively prepared for production work; indeed, the performance of candidates in the construction element was generally stronger than ever and there was a very substantial body of effective and creative work produced by candidates.

As always, moving image work was by far the most popular option, especially music videos, which were often of a very high standard, but there also continued to be increased numbers of short films, film trailers and TV documentaries.  As with the previous session, there was slightly more print-based work but fewer cross media packages.  Moderators saw a similar number of web sites but, yet again, there was very little radio production.

It was noted that centres have clearly responded to previous comments on moderators' and principal moderators' reports and these were remarked on as having better administration, more detailed comments, clearly identified productions/group membership etc. However, a few centres seem not to have noted comments made in their individual Moderator's reports sent in previous sessions and have continued in their problematic practice.  The diagnostic reports written by moderators are carefully considered in order to help centres improve their submissions and it is recommended that these comments are taken on board by centres.


**Assignments**

Nearly all Centres presented appropriate tasks, built on their strengths in terms of skills and resources.  Close supervision throughout the planning stage, the production process and the writing of the Evaluation led to the strongest work.  Those centres that set a series of intermediate deadlines ensured candidates were fully supported in producing their best work comfortably by their final deadline.  One idea for centres to consider is to encourage candidates to construct blogs with URLs as they go along;  centres can use this as part of their planning evidence and, although this is not specified as an vital approach, it can be useful additional evidence for the assessor (and moderator) - and some candidates find this a manageable and engaging way of progressing, keeping evidence of their research phase, their planning stage and of their construction processes and helping them in structuring their final evaluation.  (Blogs might include storyboards, location shots, working links to other videos by the same artist etc – and, as they will be dated, they can provide clear indication of time management.)

Disappointingly there were still some Centres that created work which virtually replicated the set AS briefs; therefore it must be repeated that **no AS briefs or variations of AS briefs may be used at A2** - even if a centres' candidates have not presented that particular brief themselves at AS.  By their very nature, the Foundation Production set briefs are designed to be of appropriate demand and difficulty for the AS level of assessment and are, therefore, of insufficient demand for Advanced Production's higher level of assessment.  Furthermore, if the same brief has been used at AS the candidate runs the risk of the work contravening the malpractice regulations.

<span style="color:red">**There was a problem with some inappropriate material this session.  In particular one candidate embarked on a brief which relied heavily on sexually provocative imagery. The centre should not have allowed this candidate to pursue the production.  While it may be acceptable in the 'real world' of media industries and products we must not lose sight of the fact this is a public examination and we have a duty of care as teachers.**</span>

This session it was disappointing to see the number of candidates' submissions where no real thought was given to the target audience. Many candidates embarked on a production they wanted to do without considering, or researching, who it was for.

### Video

As with all previous sessions, video was clearly the most popular medium and was dominated by the production of music videos. The standard was generally high and some of the most creative work seen was in response to this brief. Lip synching and the pace of editing seemed better than in previous sessions. The more successful pieces featured performance-based approaches, with effective use of close up on both lead singer and instrumentalists and used a range of other shots as necessary, with accurate lip-synching and editing of instrumentals; there were a number of videos using sophisticated digital effects judiciously and several took an animated approach, using a variety of techniques from Flash to stop-motion. Moderators noted that a significant number reached new heights of ambition and achievement. Those videos which were carefully storyboarded, with a clearly planned vision, stood out. They were more creative in their use of mise-en-scene and camerawork with much more variety of shot types than the 'standard'. They were also edited better. The best videos used very little editing 'effects' at all with the strength of narrative and camerawork etc carrying the meaning. As ever, the weakest music videos had similar shot sizes throughout, were not edited to the beat or used too many effects gratuitously; too many of these videos were wholly narrative based and looked like short silent films set to a song. Candidates are also advised to avoid producing videos for tracks which already have a famous video, therefore Madonna's early music and Michael Jackson tracks are best avoided and contemporary music or music from unsigned bands can often be a better choice. Indeed, centres allowing their candidates to choose their own favourite songs and bands often worked against the candidates' best interests – as one moderator put it ' it's as if the familiarity dulls their creativity'. There were good examples where candidates were clearly working to a shortlist of available examples offered by the centre. A number of candidates produced videos for their own bands, which could be effective but equally often led to weak productions, perhaps because of the lack of critical distance.

### Film

As with last session, there were increased numbers of film trailers and short films, but Centres still need to ensure that the work does not encroach on the Foundation Production brief – a significant number of horror or gangster submissions were seemingly too close to the AS film brief and therefore were in danger of being considered as Malpractice cases. Some short films were actually rather long and therefore over ambitious and a little shapeless. Some centres need to revisit the trailer brief; trailers are never four minutes long! As repeated every session, Centres also need to remember their role *in loco parentis* in the representation of drug taking, filming of car chases, use of dummy weapons etc. The best work made excellent use of location and demonstrated a clear sense of genre.

### Television

As in previous sessions, the majority of Television submissions were documentaries and these brought out the strengths of many and, in fact, some work was outstanding - but only when the subject matter was based on a real event or issue and when interviews were genuine (and **not** scripted and spoken by 'actors' as this approach invariably gave rise to the unintentional 'spoof' effect). However the best documentaries clearly showed excellent planning and used a variety of material. Most productions, though, would have benefited from greater use of cutaways. Success was also far more likely to be achieved when the camera had an external mic attached, allowing candidates to film audible interviews and vox pops and therefore to have more controllable sound levels when mixed with other sound sources in editing. Candidates need to be supported carefully in this area, especially in studying the conventions and understanding the relevant ethical discussions of documentary production. Prior research of the topic is obviously essential.

As noted in previous reports, there was a little TV news produced – but this remained fairly weak. There was also some TV drama (but centres need to beware that TV crime drama does not slip into resembling the film thriller brief – this can happen very easily with weaker candidates) and one moderator noted that 'British comedy avoided all the pitfalls and served one centre very well'.   There were some TV advertisements but several of these were rather weak and did not reflect the A2 standard.

### Print

Print work was of variable standard.  There was some outstanding level 4 work and overall there was an indication that the standards of this work had improved but a significant proportion of print work had issues: there remained issues over the lack of original images created by many candidates in the print brief and there is still a lack of evidence being provided of pre-cropped or pre-manipulated original images. Newspapers were still being produced using inappropriate software such as Word and the layouts and integration of text and image suffered greatly as a result. Candidates needed to pay particular attention to font sizes for this brief.  As with documentary, invented stories rarely worked – candidates also get a far greater sense of satisfaction if they produce work they have had to research as a real journalist; in many cases very little consideration is given to the content of the articles which are used, as the focus is clearly on images.  This is also true of magazines. Magazines often remained too close to the AS magazine set brief and sometimes face the danger of being considered as Malpractice cases.  Centres are recommended either to make sure the target audience is a distinctly older one or that the subject matter is something in which a teen audience is unlikely to be interested (a) in order to prevent the possible overlap with the AS brief and (b) to keep the sort of distance from the audience that allows for truly Advanced level work.  There were a few candidates who produced print-based film or music promotional packages, but these need to be substantial enough at this level – a poster and some film stills can never be enough for an A2 submission.

### ICT/New Media

This consisted almost wholly of websites and, disappointingly, very few of these worked as intended and far too many were submitted on disc.  This is not allowed: the Specification makes it clear that it is compulsory that sites have a working URL for moderation (p60) - if this is not possible, then this is not the brief to choose.  Many moderators noted that *none* of the sites seen had URLs; centres should be clear that such work may not be moderated in the future as it is against the clear instructions of the Specification. Web sites were generally very poor: as noted in previous sessions, sites that are text heavy or with poorly integrated image and text will not gain the higher marks; stronger sites also included sound and video. One centre submitted some interesting and well-constructed sites for new British films.

### Radio

Once again there was very little radio work this session.  This medium has so much to offer - and can be equipped for inexpensively - yet there are few responses.  There was a little exceptionally strong drama (with sophisticated use of music and FX) but there was also a breakfast show which lasted seven minutes and played whole records interrupted by a solo voice (as the moderator noted, 'not a good example of what could be achieved within this brief').

### Cross Media

There was slightly less Cross Media production this session, with several centres having candidates working in three of the following: radio, print, video, web.  Moderators noted that performance across the range of media was uneven, with candidates presenting one much stronger piece and, for example, two much weaker pieces in another medium.

**Critical Evaluations**

Moderators saw some very good written work but some Critical Evaluations do not seem to have reflected the general pattern of improvement: in some cases centres allowed candidates to follow a structure similar to that of the Production Report of the AS unit, rather than the structure suggested for the Advanced Unit; in such cases there needed to be greater evidence of research into existing media, a stronger sense of evaluating success in terms of target audience and meaning created, a discussion of institutional context and increased reference to relevant theory and concepts. It is not easy to apply theory generically across all productions in a cohort and centres should work closer with individual candidates advising on theoretical areas which may be relevant to their production; for example news values, gatekeeping and agenda setting for print productions. Too many Evaluations were also rather narrative based.

**Assessment**

Most Centres' marks were quite accurate although, where there were discrepancies, these were generally seen in the Construction marks. There are still centres who do not comment on individual contributions to a group production and this is a real problem where there are differences in the marks awarded. Sometimes the Planning marks did not seem to include the vital teacher observation component, concentrating solely on what was to be seen in the portfolio. Critical evaluations are also consistently being overmarked by some centres, with undue weight apparently being given to section 1, and little attention being paid to the quality of candidates' analysis and application of theory in section 2 and in particular the wider consideration of institutions and audiences, which continues to be the weakest element overall.

Centres using the wording of the assessment criteria when writing their cover sheets and those that annotated the Evaluation were usually far more accurate in their marking; those centres writing little on the cover sheet were often quite inaccurate in their assessment of the work.

**Administration and presentation of work for moderation**

Centres were far more efficient in sending the mandatory Authentication Forms this session but some centres were still late in sending MS1s or samples and more centres seemed to have lost coursework before it could be moderated. A number of centres failed to include vital details on their candidate cover sheets.

A lack of supporting material was a real problem from a number of centres. No storyboards at all were submitted by some centres and again the lack of evidence of original images continues.

Surprisingly a large number of centres failed to present work in the appropriate format, the main issues being submitting moving image work on CD-R instead of DVD or VHS and centres not putting work online for the duration of the moderation period and providing the moderator with a URL. The only acceptable formats are outlined in the Specification (Revised Edition p60); as has been repeated on a number of occasions, it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that they have set their internal deadlines early enough to be able to solve any potential technical problems and create the work for submission in the required format. Several moderators noted that particular brands of disc did not seem compatible with their domestic player, playing only on a PC.

Most Centres were efficient in sending work for moderation, but a significant few missed the deadline for sending mark sheets or waited too long before responding to sample requests. Work should be ready by the *same deadline as the MS1*; centres should not wait for the sample request before saving the work onto disc or to print out etc. The only acceptable formats are outlined on p60 of the Specification:

- audio work may be submitted on either CD or cassette (**not** mini disc etc)
- video may be presented on either DVD or VHS (**not** CD Rom, VCD, mini DV etc)
- web work **must** be accompanied by a live URL as well as printouts or on disc
- print work may be **no larger** than A3.

No other formats can be accepted; centres need to ensure early on in their planning process for this unit that they are equipped to present their chosen medium in the required format.

Very few centres indicated names of candidates who worked together on a group production. This should be written on each cover sheet and on the artefacts.  All artefacts need to be labelled with the centre number and candidate's name; DVDs need to be chaptered and the on-screen menu on DVDs must be in a legible font size.  Print outs of print work should be placed immediately after the cover sheet at the front of the candidate's portfolio, not dispersed throughout the file.

Centres are also reminded that, where there are 10 or fewer candidates, they should send all work with the MS1 (and the centre authentication form) before the deadline.  If candidates have been withdrawn or are absent then the MS1 should also be completed accordingly and the appropriate copies sent to the Board and Moderator.

Yet again, several centres sent work or mark sheets with no postage or insufficient postage; the Royal Mail tariff changed some time ago but several centres still did not take this into account.  Other centres over packed sacks containing their samples, making them very difficult for moderators – and postal operatives – to manage; some sacks weighed over 12kg. Work for Foundation Production and Advanced Production should be sent in separate parcels.

Centre Authentication Forms were sent out efficiently by nearly all centres this session Centres are reminded once again of the importance of making and retaining copies of all work submitted for moderation. OCR is required to keep samples of candidates' coursework for awarding, archiving and training purposes and so cannot guarantee that all work submitted will be returned following moderation.

Although clearly there were some issues this summer, on balance this was yet another session in which moderators saw much exciting, creative, technically highly controlled and informed work, with candidates continuing to push forward production work at this level.  It remains a privilege to view such work.

**Advice to teachers**
- Centres should create tasks that make optimum use of their skills and resources.
- No AS briefs or variations of AS briefs may be used at A2
- Ensure risk assessments are carried out in order to encourage safe working practices; work closely with candidates to ensure no inappropriate material is filmed, photographed, written or recorded.
- Critical Evaluations should include:
    - a systematic account of the stages of planning and production
    - detailed reference to relevant real generic examples, indicating evidence of independent research
    - detailed reference to the relevant areas of institutional context and clear understanding of where the candidate's own production would sit within this
    - detailed reference to audience feedback and use of theoretical framework in which to place the production.

- Use the wording of the assessment criteria when writing cover sheets as this keeps the assessment within the appropriate level.

- When giving differing marks to group members make clear the reasons for the differentiation

- Keep to the deadline for sending mark sheets and, where there are 10 or fewer candidates, send all work with the MS1 by the deadline, including the Centre Authentication Form.

- Websites must have a working URL – a disc is not an acceptable alternative.
- Moving image work may only be submitted on DVD or VHS – not CD-R, mini DV etc
- Keep files slim and manageable and don't include print outs of all the secondary research or all finished questionnaires.  Put the cover sheets on top, followed by the artefact, then the evaluation.  Put all appendices and drafts at the back of the file.
- All work should be ready to send when the sample request arrives from the moderator so that the centre can respond promptly.

**Principal Examiner's Report**

**January 2007**

**<u>2734 – Critical Research Study</u>**

It is recommended that all Centres familiarise themselves with this and previous Principal Examiner's Reports. The content of the reports should be passed on to all future candidates.

**Administration Issues**

There is still a significant minority of centres not fulfilling the requirements for the cover sheets and presentation of the notes. Cover sheets must be signed both by the candidate and a supervising teacher. Without these signatures the candidate's entry risks being rejected.

The topic being undertaken must be recorded on the cover sheet together with the specific area of study.

On the reverse of the cover sheet details of media texts used, such as specific television programmes or films should be recorded and below this a list of sources for research.

In this session there was a significant increase in the use of inappropriate notes (and in some cases inappropriate topics) where they clearly comprised complete answers that were then copied. In these cases the scripts are always forwarded to the appropriate authority as examples of malpractice and candidates risk being awarded a mark of zero. This has unfortunately happened to some candidates. There were also many more instances than in recent sessions of notes being on the borderline of malpractice. Centres need to ensure that notes act as a brief 'aide-memoir', rather than constituting a point-by-point essay plan. One candidate actually wrote a comment on her notes: 'this is not continuous prose, it is a set of bullet points', clearly suspecting that they could be problematic.

**Overall Performance of Candidates**

The vast majority of candidates attained a minimum of level 2, most level 3 and above.

**General Issues**

A worrying minority of centres seem to be adopting a taught approach which goes against not only the spirit of this unit but its specific requirements. All candidates from one centre attempted Women & Film and all began by discussing three films viewed/ discussed in class and most candidates used the same two quotes from theorists as 'evidence'. In another all candidates had used the same secondary sources and had adopted a similar process for researching their topic. All candidates from another attempted Women & Film and all had researched a Hollywood star (independently) and applied the same elements of Richard Dyer's star theory to their study. One candidate from this centre actually stated 'one of the best sources was the resource booklet on stars given by our teacher. This was useful because the information was in bullet points and the key facts were underlined for us'. It was, however, clear in all of the above cases that candidates had undertaken independent research within the parameters established by the centre.

A taught approach does not advantage candidates, especially those who are more able – these candidates often seem to be limited by an imposed set of criteria.

Of concern is the number of candidates who are presenting very short responses, sometimes of barely two sides for each question. It would be very difficult for even the most able candidate to form fully developed responses in such a short space.

The Critical Research Study is intended to provide candidates at A2 level with a unique opportunity to engage in active independent investigation into a media related topic, enabling them to study the topic, learn about it and develop an individual critical response to the media issue/area researched. In addition, the unit allows candidates to develop research skills which will be useful to them in higher education or in the workplace.

**Question 1**

Most candidates are utilising appropriate methods, however a range of secondary sources is not always evident. Candidates often discuss a single book and website – this does not suggest that a range of research has been undertaken or that a number of differing perspectives have been considered. There has been less reliance on Wikipedia than in January and most candidates are treating the site with caution/ cross referencing information which is pleasing. Many candidates are still relying purely on text books (or, occasionally, class notes) as their sole academic source.

Primary research is still dominated by the ubiquitous questionnaire, often with little sense of purpose or explanation of logistics. Similarly, focus groups and interviews are popular, the best responses detail the questions asked and the demographic of the audience group and some utilise appropriate film clips/ newspaper articles etc. to elicit a response. Some candidates however seem to rely on focus groups or interviews with their peers to 'teach' them about the subject. Social networking sites and internet forums have become popular places on which to place survey questions with varying degrees of appropriateness and success. Many candidates are taking advantage of YouTube as a source of film clips/ interviews with industry personnel/ archive news footage etc. that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. One candidate set up an online questionnaire with direct links to clips on YouTube for his audience to respond to.

Some candidates write in the present/ future tense in question one – this essay should discuss and reflect upon research that has been carried out, so the past tense is appropriate.

Research should be appropriate. One Centre's candidates, in determining how popular Soap Operas are nationally, used a questionnaire given to 20 people as evidence. Access to BARB would clearly have been much more appropriate.

**Question 2**

Candidates are advised to focus on the topic content detailed in the specification. Many candidates are still failing to develop a clear, appropriate hypothesis. A 'scatter-gun' approach is often evident, where a candidate has attempted to consider their topic across a very wide range of media (e.g. effects of violence in TV, film and video games upon children). Centres should advise their candidates to focus on a manageable micro topic that allows them to explore issues in some depth, while also establishing a sense of the relationship between the focus topic and the broader context. One candidate tried to fuse World Cinema with Children & the Media by considering the impact of Japanese anime on the west and the response of a young audience to the texts. While this was quite successfully manipulated, centres should encourage candidates to formulate a hypothesis relating clearly to one of the topic areas. The effects debate is often the focus not only for Children & the Media, where it is appropriate, but for Crime and the Media (the focus should be on the representation of crime in the media), TV Drama and Advertising.

Some centres appear to teach a particular theory or concept and encourage all candidates to shoe-horn it into their response. Candidates do not always understand these theories or use them appropriately. For example candidates from one centre all discussed audience theories in a rather simplistic (and sometimes incorrect) manner: 'the hypodermic people in the audience passively accept the messages in the text'.

## Topic 1 Advertising

This is an increasingly popular topic with candidates achieving varying degrees of success. Some candidates simply described the history of the advertising of a particular product e.g. Coca Cola. The best examples focussed on a clear hypothesis – one candidate explored the advertising (and subsequent ban) of cigarettes in the past and contrasted this with the anti-smoking advertising campaigns of recent years, considering which were more successful and why. Another candidate considered the representation of gender within advertising and audience perceptions of stereotyping. Some candidates used this topic title but researched magazines in general rather than focussing on their advertising content (one candidate considered the representation of females and the size zero debate, focussing solely on the front covers of magazines). Another candidate researched Kate Moss with only minimal focus on the adverts she has appeared in. Many candidates explored the effects debate e.g. the negative impact of junk food advertising, with little sense of the purpose of advertising.

## Topic 2 Children & the Media

This is still a very popular topic with a very wide range of responses, many focussing on topics such as: the effects of violence in the media (particularly video games) on children, the educational purpose of TV, the representation of gender / stereotyping and the junk food advertising ban. Some interesting responses considered the increasing political correctness of children's TV programming citing appropriate examples and academic studies. There was, unfortunately an increasing reliance [and acceptance] of the Bobo Doll experiment as 'proof' that TV adversely affects children's behaviour although many candidates simply presented findings from various psychological studies with limited discussion – where these studies were used in conjunction with primary findings to develop a complex argument candidates were able to achieve a high degree of success.

## Topic 3 Community Radio

Hardly any candidates at all offered responses to this topic. The very few responses that were undertaken tended to be very descriptive and had less than a secure grasp of what was "community radio". The best responses still consider a station's appeal to its niche audiences.

## Topic 4 Crime & the Media

This is one of the most popular topics. Many candidates considered the effects of representations of crime in the media (in film, TV, video games and music) upon audience attitudes and behaviour. The very best responses focussed fully on the representation of crime in context. One candidate discussed audience reaction to violent crime in film and argued that the murder of Lester in American Beauty was more shocking and deeply affecting than other, more graphic, murders as we don't see the actual crime, we are emotionally connected to the character and the moment is juxtaposed with 'happy' images. A very sophisticated response explored and compared the representation of prostitutes as victims of crime in both the press and in TV drama, considering the codes and conventions of these different media forms and their impact on the representation.

## Topic 5 Politics & the Media

There were relatively few responses to this topic and they were of very varied standard. There were several that dealt with the press coverage of elections and the influence of the media as a whole on political agendas. A few considered the relationship between Tony Blair and the press. Many of the weakest came from candidates who held very strong political opinions and used their responses to air them.

## Topic 6 Sport & the Media

This a popular topic presenting a full range of marks. Where candidates really did explore the relationship between sport & the media some interesting discussions emerged. New technology and the impact of digital TV on sport, particularly football, was a popular focus. Advertising featured prominently and, where linked to the creation of aspiration/ lifestyle/ pride etc. produced some strong responses. Many candidates had interviewed sports editors from their local newspaper, local semi-professional sportspeople or coaches etc. which added a great deal to their discussion.

## Topic 7 Television Drama

This topic has increased in popularity this session. A few candidates researched sitcom as either part or all of their study, often repeating content from the AS course - this is not an appropriate focus. Comedy drama, is of course acceptable but the clear distinction must be made. Realism featured in many responses with varying degrees of success – candidates who defined and discussed different types of realism scored highly.

Other successful topics were *the representation of teenagers in soaps* and *teen dramas* and *the popularity and development of costume dramas on British TV*.  There were also a number of generally well answered responses that focused on *women and soaps*. American and British crime and hospital dramas were popular topics and the best responses considered a particular angle rather than simply describing or comparing texts. In particular comparisons between *ER*, *Greys Anatomy*, *Holby City* and *Casualty* or *CSI* and *The Bill* produced some good responses. One strong response compared the representation of crime in *The Bill* with *CSI Miami*, considering the national and institutional contexts of the programmes. He also interviewed police officers and victims of crime to gain appropriate audience response to the texts.

## Topic 8 Women & Film

This is still a popular topic, producing a very wide range of responses. The representation of women in action/ Bond films was still a popular option, as was the representation of women in romantic comedy. Relatively few candidates researched a female director – of those that did Gurinder Chadha and Sofia Coppola featured prominently and one interesting response explored Sally Potter as a feminist filmmaker. Some candidates considered feminist theory, citing Laura Mulvey and Claire Johnston, although this was not always linked directly or appropriately to their area of study. Many candidates attempted to contextualise history of women's relationship with the industry, for example by detailing the success of Alice Guy and Mary Pickford prior to the advent of the 'patriarchal' star system. In many cases this was seemingly arbitrary and not linked in any way to their micro topic. While it is advantageous to demonstrate an understanding of the wider topic, a 'bolt-on' piece of history is not going to benefit the candidate. There were also some disappointingly descriptive star studies.

**Topic 9 World Cinema**

The numbers of candidates attempting this topic are increasing in number. The Japanese cinema, particularly anime and horror, was a popular focus. A number of candidates researched Bollywood although many of these responses were quite descriptive. Candidates are encouraged to formulate a specific question or hypothesis to explore. There were also some good responses on *East Asian New Wave* (although these were at times repetitive of the WJEC FS5 exam) and of *the influence of Chinese action films in Hollywood.* There were also two very good and interesting responses on *New Russian Cinema*.

**Advice to Teachers**

The report as a whole is essential reading. However key elements are bullet pointed below:

The cover sheets <u>must</u> be signed by both the candidate and the supervising teacher.

Should a candidate have no notes a note of explanation from the centre must be forwarded with the cover sheet and script to the examiner

Do not leave candidates to their own devices when developing their original ideas.

Give substantial assistance to candidates in choosing specific areas of study and formulating a problematic or hypothesis.

Where possible avoid candidates addressing identical specific areas of study and choosing exactly the same texts as case studies.

Teach the methodologies of research and the basics of research,

Support candidates to ensure that they present a balance between academic theory, serious and popular criticism, textual analysis, institutional and contextual analysis and audience studies.

Make clear the necessity to evaluate sources and methods. It is not sufficient to merely suggest that "they were useful".

Make sure that candidates choose people for their questionnaires and/or interviews/focus groups on the basis of their appropriateness and not simply from their own media studies class.

At the outset encourage candidates to establish that "this is what I want to find out" rather than "this is what I think" and then insist on proving it regardless of appropriate research.

Any Centre that wishes to ensure that its hypothesis are appropriate can e mail the Subject Officer at OCR with these titles. These will then be forwarded to the Principal Examiner who will then comment on these before being sent back to the Centre.

From September more extensive exemplar material will be available for this Unit on the OCR Website along with a document to help Centres distinguish more effectively between Question 1 and 2 in this Unit.

## 2735 Media Issues and Debates

**Principal Examiner's Report      January 2007**

**General**

This is the first <u>summer</u> session for the new format of this unit. Candidates are required to answer two questions in two hours – one question fewer than in previous years. This enabled candidates to tackle questions in greater depth, and the experience of most examiners suggests that most candidates, particularly the more able, took advantage of this opportunity and used their time well. Weaker candidates inevitably found the hour-per-question a little overtaxing; hence the view of many examiners that this format differentiates better across the academic range.

One examiner, reflecting the general view, wrote: *"The change to 'two questions in two hours' seems to have benefited the vast majority of candidates, who were able to choose questions which allowed them to showcase their knowledge effectively."*

Concern had been expressed by a couple of centres that the rubric lacked clarity, and that many candidates would not realize that they had to answer only two questions. The evidence from the examiners does not tend to bear this out. A small number of candidates answered three, a few answered four questions; but on the whole, they read the rubric clearly, and responded appropriately.

Some topics have changed since the 2006 session; notably, in the Broadcast section, the soaps topic has been replaced by music programmes on television, and the other significant change was to widen the scope of the magazines and gender topic to 'The Magazine Industry'. The broadcast news topic now includes current affairs programmes, and the references in previous examinations to the 90's have now been replaced by the word 'contemporary.'

The other major change is the choice of two questions per topic. Candidates therefore have to answer two from eighteen questions, as opposed to the three from the nine of 2006 and before.

All of the above changes seem to have been welcomed, and handled well by most centres and their candidates. The disappearance of soaps does not appear to have had the catastrophic effect that some foretold. Some went for the music on television topic, others went for the broadcast news topic- which seems to have had an increased take-up this year, while others chose to answer questions from Section B (film) and C(print). Section B was the most popular section.

Many examiners expressed concern at the number of candidates who had made little attempt to answer the specific question, choosing instead to present information that they had learnt about the topic in a generalized fashion.

**Individual Questions**

**SECTION A BROADCASTING**

**Music Progammes on television**

One question asked candidates to discuss factors that might contribute to a successful programme, the second invited discussion of the importance of image and musical talent. This was not as popular as the topic it replaced (soaps); some candidates did well in this area, and had clearly enjoyed the topic. A number used Top of The Pops as a case study, though very few were able to comment on the decision to take it off the air and a disappointing number of candidates seemed oblivious to the decision. Other case studies included analyses of the development of music-genre channels, increased interactivity, coverage of live music via programmes such as Later..with Jools Holland, or outside broadcasts from festivals. Some candidates compared current music programmes with those of bygone days, citing programmes such as Juke Box Jury

One examiner commented: *"in Question 2, most accepted too many performers did rely on their looks, but the best answers argued that the music industry has always promoted acts on their looks, in concerts, films, magazines, record sleeves etc. even before tv. There was surprisingly little discussion of promo clips (videos), except for gangsta rap."*

Generally, examiners noted that responses to the first question were better than responses to the second, which often developed into a complaint about programmes like X factor, Pop Idol et al., without much development. Candidates are advised not to rely solely on textual analysis. Knowledge of the institutional context should inform candidates in this, and in other topics.

**Broadcast News and Current Affairs**

Candidates were asked to discuss factors that caused events to be selected for news and/or current affairs programmes; the second question invited discussion regarding the perception that news/current affairs struggles to be a ratings success.

This is an increasingly popular topic, perhaps populated by some refugees from soap territory. Many outlined the inevitable Galtung and Ruge news values as an explanation of what makes television news; better informed candidates were able to develop this further. Others referred to the work of Golding and Elliott, Many candidates seemed to believe that producers and editors sit at their desks with a list of Galtung and Ruge's news values, ticking them off on a checklist as each news item comes in. Their faith in the power of theorists over industry practitioners is touching, but naïve. The news values theories are merely sociologists' explanations of why certain incidents are reported. They are not guidelines as to whether or not they should be reported.

Far too many candidates were content to recite the news values with limited understanding of their meaning or relevance. Thus negativity is an important determinant of news selection 'because humans like to hear about tragedies.'

There is a widespread and worrying misconception that the BBC is 'run by the government' and therefore has to watch its step regarding its choice of news items.

There is plenty of recent evidence that indicates that major crises, the start of the Iraq war, hostage taking, changes of prime ministers, etc., cause an increase in audiences for news programmes. None of this research was referred to. There is a need in media studies to keep updating schemes of work to ensure that recent case studies, as well as established and

landmark cases are used. This applies also to media research. Much good and important work on news values was undertaken in the 60s, 70s and 80s, before phenomena such as citizen journalism mushroomed. The most successful candidates take account of established and current research, and case studies.


## Contemporary British Broadcasting

The questions asked candidates to consider recent developments in broadcasting, or to discuss the impact of new technology and/or legislation on the industry
Not a popular question, though often well answered. Some relied on potted histories of broadcasting over the past 50 years. More able candidates focussed on the content, implications and effects of recent Broadcast Acts, or of recent broadcast technological advances.


## SECTION B FILM

### Contemporary British Cinema

One question invited candidates to consider the issue of commercial success, the other to consider whether British film is dominated by an elite who represent British culture in a narrow way. The  phrase 'privileged elite' was not understood by many candidates. It was not as popular as the first question.

One examiner noted: *"A tiny minority of those who answered Q7 knew the British film industry had just had a commercially successful year. Otherwise the well-worn prepared answer of British social realist films and arts cinemas vs. Hollywood blockbusters and multiplexes prevailed. The same answers were used for Q8 although some did actually briefly consider who the wealthy and privileged elite were. Most saw it as the way to use their learning about 'Britishness'. "*

Another commented: *" The most able candidates discussed what success actually meant in the British film industry and used many different case studies to illustrate different areas in which British films have been successful. Interestingly only one candidate mentioned 'The Queen' as an example of a successful British film."*


### The Concept of Genre in Film

The first question invited candidates to consider the blurring of boundaries between genres; the second invited candidates to discuss why certain genres had thrived over the years. Language is inevitably a problem for some. Two examiners reported that the word 'blurred' was not understood by some candidates. Others commented on the difficulties and confusions presented by the word 'thrived'.

Nevertheless, this was a very popular section. Many candidates used case studies from the western genre, a resurgence in media studies that is only partly reflected in cinema. Brokeback Mountain provided fertile case-study territory for many. Candidates from one centre paired it with The Good, the Bad and the Ugly – with considerable success. Generally, responses were well informed and coherent; a few were excellent. There were some excellent analyses of the development of the horror genre, with texts ranging from early, silent cinema to very current releases. Night of the Living Dead, and its remake, were analysed by some candidates who used the texts to demonstrate how societal and production values change over time. 28 Days Later and Shaun of the Dead were both successfully used by a number of centres to illustrate the stretching and breaking of boundaries in genre films.  The question on hybrid genres was answered best by those candidates who had the opportunity to study contemporary cinema.

**Censorship and Film**

The first question invited candidates to discuss arguments for and against stricter censorship; the second, to consider why criteria for classification and censorship might change over time. This was a popular choice. Many centres had prepared their candidates well. Some candidates offered a fresh and intelligent personal interpretation of the issues and texts that they had studied in their centres.

One examiner noted: *Question 11 proved more popular, being so direct. Most of the arguments were well rehearsed, although discussion re effects theories was usually limited to passive ones, especially the hypodermic needle model, which is frequently used with little thought in answers on other topics such as magazines and news.*

*The historical approach of Q12 allowed candidates to rehash their 1970s case studies without guilt. Unfortunately they usually boiled down to claiming certain films were banned but, as the result of social change, have recently been given a certificate. Usually, in truth, they were passed uncut in the first place. The <u>BBFC</u> has an excellent site for Media Studies candidates called sbbfc.co.uk where they can find, for instance, that the BBFC didn't ban <u>Reservoir Dogs</u> or <u>Natural Born Killers</u> and that the FBI has discredited supposed copy-cat killings attributed to watching NBK. Some candidates revealed their centre is still using the 1995 <u>Panorama show The Killing Fields</u> as their main source, for the NBK debate in particular, censorship in general.*

*More than for any other topic, candidates used the OCR textbook as their source, but it should not be their only source."*

**SECTION C PRINT**

**The Magazine Industry**

Why the magazine industry has grown was the topic of the first question; how magazines target audiences the focus of the second. <u>Nuts, Zoo, Cosmopolitan</u>, and others were commonly used for textual analysis, <u>IPC and Emap</u> were the most frequently cited institutions. Weaker candidates confined themselves to textual analysis. Candidates from one centre relied entirely on the textual analysis of two publications. This is inadequate material for this area of study. The topic now expects candidates to provide an institutional context. Many centres have clearly prepared their candidates well for this.

'Freebies' attached to front covers were cited by some as a means of targeting readers. The term 'cover-mounting' might have served them better. It is an issue of some importance in sections of the magazine industry currently, and has implications for reader loyalty and production costs. Able and well informed candidates recognized this point and dealt with it well.

For the second question, only the most perceptive candidates felt able to discuss the paradox that magazine institutions target niche audiences in an effort to maximize sales. Some candidates are still using the cliche a 'fast-growing industry' – the internet opportunities have slowed down the print side of the industry and candidates ought to be aware of this.

**Local Newspapers**

Strategies to attract readership, and the advantages that newspapers have over other local media were the focuses of the two questions. There were some good responses for this topic, but they were rare. Many candidates are confining themselves to superficial and basic analysis based on minimal study. It seems that some weaker candidates have flicked through one edition

of their local newspaper as preparation for this topic. One centre had prepared its candidates well for this by providing them with local newspapers from opposite ends of the country. This seemed to have the effect of enabling the candidates to view the paper and its content from a more detached perspective.

A significant number of candidates used the <u>Galtung and Ruge</u> news values as evidence of relevant theory. This would have been an interesting and relevant exercise had they considered how news values for the local (weekly) press differ from those of the national (daily) press. Both geography and frequency are contributory factors in the targeting of audiences and in the consequent selection and shaping of news. As is the scope of the distribution. Regional, local, daily, weekly….examples of each of these should be considered by the serious candidate.

**Freedom, Regulation and Control in the British Press.**

How much freedom has the British Press and how responsibly it behaves were the regions into which these two questions delved. Many candidates tackled this topic well. In particular, there was plenty of evidence of an understanding of the <u>PCC</u>'s role, and of the legislation that affects journalists on a daily basis. There were also plenty of case studies, often very well described and analysed. Some examiners commented on the lack of very recent case studies, though a couple of centres were able to make use of the case of the News of the World royal editor Clive Goodman, and the phone tapping of the royal family voice mails.

This topic yields fresh examples on a weekly if not daily basis. During July 2007 the <u>DCMS Select Committee</u> has reported on the role of the PCC and the responsibility of the press. Its report (available from:
[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmcumeds/375/37502.htm](www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmcumeds/375/37502.htm)
 is lengthy. But the opening chapters provide an excellent summary of the power, responsibility and effectiveness of the PCC. It is a very useful text for those embarking on this topic in the near future.

The worthy quote from Stanley Baldwin from the 1930s seemed to put many candidates off the second question, though some answered it well. One excellent response countered the quote in his conclusion with the line from the <u>Spiderman</u> film: 'With great power comes great responsibility.' He noted, wryly, that Spidey's alter ego was a freelance press journalist.

**General Advice to teachers:**

- Make sure that candidates are familiar with the new examination format. Two questions must be answered in two hours. Candidates should spend an equal amount of time on each.

- There are two questions for each topic. Encourage candidates to apply their knowledge and case studies to the set question that they are addressing.

- There are some changes to topics (for example: 'TV soaps' has gone, magazine and gender has become 'the magazine industry'… check all of the topics).

- This is a synoptic paper that covers all media concepts covered during the AS/A2 course. Media texts are always a good starting point, but candidates ought to be encouraged to investigate the audiences who consume and the industries that create them.

- Candidates should be encouraged to explore their case studies in some depth. A few case studies done well is usually a better recipe than many case studies glanced at superficially.

- Encourage candidates to explore the concepts via their case studies; be aware that some candidates, during the examination, will offer a confused and unconvincing essay if they rely on half-understood theory. Conceptual understanding serves candidates well. Theory for the sake of it is unnecessary.

- Check that schemes of work are not out of date. The media changes fast. Every examination session, examiners report that some centres are giving their candidates outdated, often erroneous information.

**Advanced GCE (Media Studies) (3860/7860)
June 2007 Assessment Series**

**Unit Threshold Marks**

| Unit | | Maximum Mark | a | b | c | d | e | u |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2730** | Raw | 120 | 98 | 88 | 79 | 70 | 61 | 0 |
| | UMS | 120 | 96 | 84 | 72 | 60 | 48 | 0 |
| **2731** | Raw | 90 | 67 | 61 | 55 | 49 | 43 | 0 |
| | UMS | 90 | 72 | 63 | 54 | 45 | 36 | 0 |
| **2732** | Raw | 90 | 65 | 58 | 51 | 45 | 39 | 0 |
| | UMS | 90 | 72 | 63 | 54 | 45 | 36 | 0 |
| **2733** | Raw | 120 | 99 | 89 | 79 | 69 | 60 | 0 |
| | UMS | 120 | 96 | 84 | 72 | 60 | 48 | 0 |
| **2734** | Raw | 90 | 68 | 61 | 54 | 48 | 42 | 0 |
| | UMS | 90 | 72 | 63 | 54 | 45 | 36 | 0 |
| **2735** | Raw | 90 | 70 | 62 | 55 | 48 | 41 | 0 |
| | UMS | 90 | 72 | 63 | 54 | 45 | 36 | 0 |
| | | | | | | | | |

**Specification Aggregation Results**

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

| | Maximum Mark | A | B | C | D | E | U |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3860** | 300 | 240 | 210 | 180 | 150 | 120 | 0 |
| **7860** | 600 | 480 | 420 | 360 | 300 | 240 | 0 |

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

| | A | B | C | D | E | U | Total Number of Candidates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3860** | 13.0 | 38.4 | 67.8 | 87.3 | 96.2 | 100.0 | 16059 |
| **7860** | 12.4 | 43.5 | 77.2 | 94.7 | 99.5 | 100.0 | 12104 |

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**
**1 Hills Road**
**Cambridge**
**CB1 2EU**

**OCR Customer Contact Centre**

**(General Qualifications)**
Telephone: 01223 553998
Facsimile: 01223 552627
Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

**www.ocr.org.uk**

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored