GCE

Media Studies

OCR Report to Centres

January 2012

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Media Studies (H540)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Media Studies (H140)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

G321 Foundation Portfolio

Introduction

There were a large number of re-sit candidates this session and the majority of candidates and centres undertook the print brief. Most centres submitted work on time, but some were very late. Centres are reminded that if they are entering fewer than ten candidates, all work should be dispatched to the moderator; there is no need to wait for a sample request.

Most work was submitted in an organized way, which made the moderation process run smoothly. However, some centres that used blogs still did not have blog hubs, which creates unnecessary work typing in URLs and often leads to errors. In some cases, centres had not required candidates to make clear which was the final version of their work, so it was sometimes hard to find on their blogs. There were still some examples of wrong formats and some unnecessarily bulky paper folders. If passwords are used for blog access, centres need to ensure that these work before sending them to moderators.

Coversheets were often detailed and very helpful, but in some cases, copying and pasting statement banks from the specification tended to dominate. Teacher comments need to match the levels but also be personalized to the work.

Research and Planning

The best evidence of this component was undoubtedly that presented on blogs, which is the most suitable format for process-based evidence. However, blogs were occasionally used to post everything in one go at the end of the project, which rather defeats the object. In general, the best work showed clearly how research fed into planning and eventual products. In less successful work, research seemed more arbitrary and bore little relation to the final products. Evidence presented in this area needs to be analysed or reflected upon, to show its relevance. Audience and institutional research is expected in addition to forms of textual analysis.

The development of skills with software should be evidenced throughout and reflection upon peer feedback at all stages is encouraged. For the film opening task, once again the best work demonstrated active research into the conventions of titling, including the institutional demands. Weaker work often showed no evidence of having explored this area.

For the magazine task, accurate use of terminology is expected and research into all three elements is essential if candidates are to make the most of the task. Research on 'page furniture' (box out, straps, headers, captions, headers, footers) would go some way to enhancing the work of most candidates.

Construction

Film openings tended to be more accurately marked, with some good use of camerawork and editing. Sound and titles still tended to be the areas of greatest weakness, and there were many where a lot more practice and guidance needed to have taken place. Some were very short- less than one minute – which does not give candidates time to show what they can do.

Where magazines used appropriate software, had a clear sense of audience, were clear about their sub-genre and about conventions of layout, images and font, they tended to be successful. The best photoshoots used a variety of models in different outfits and then made use of these images in the magazine in a varied way, which recognized conventions. There should be an expectation that images are enhanced in a program like Photoshop, for best results.

Where centres did not give candidates access to both image manipulation and desktop publishing software, they tended to have problems with final products. Once again, some work did not show attention to important detail, such as spelling.

Evaluation

Generally this was marked appropriately by Centres, but often tended to be the weakest area, with a lack of time allocation, given the 20 marks available. In the best work, candidates showed a high level of understanding and imaginative use of the technology. There was a clear link between the research and planning and the evaluation – candidates who had done little research subsequently suffered in the evaluations. Although most candidates responded to all seven evaluation questions, too many did so simply through written answers, cut and pasted from a Word document onto a blog, PowerPoint or Prezi with little use of the potential of the medium. Centres are reminded that the evaluation should not be seen as an essay or series of mini-essays.

Examples which illustrate the variety of possible approaches for the evaluation are available on the blog at http://ocrmediastudies.weebly.com/

G322 Key Media Concepts (TV Drama) and G323 Key Media Concepts (Radio Drama)

There was plenty of evidence of excellent analysis and understanding of the questions set. There were many good responses, which showed consistent, and at times sustained analysis, a clear and sometimes sophisticated style and an ability to consider key concepts in media. The best answers integrated formal description of the TV extract, with convincing discussion of the context and the concepts.

The very best responses for question 2 were extremely well argued and logically organised. Candidates who had been well prepared with specific case study material and well rehearsed in the key conceptual areas of institution and audiences could offer sustained and excellent arguments. Centres had often prepared candidates well with case studies and enabled them to interpret and address the issues in the question.

Given the very small number of entries for Radio drama this report focuses on the unit G322 Television Drama, which shares the same question 2. In this report, there is reference to and repeated advice from the previous reports to centres.

Question 1 – Television drama

The question required candidates to move from description of key technical areas to analysis of how representations of sexuality are constructed. Some candidates began by addressing the concept of representation in the extract and a discussion of the representational differences between Maud (the aristocratic wealthy female), the male character Richard and Sue (the Fingersmith). Most Candidates were able to engage with analysis of sexuality and the relations between the three principal characters. Some candidates analysed their examples chronologically, integrating different technical aspects; most candidates addressed the technical areas one by one, with a small number of stronger candidates providing an integrated analysis of how the technical features could be applied in combination with each other.

Weaker candidates could list many technical aspects, with varying degrees of accuracy, but struggled to say anything meaningful about the representation of sexuality, at times focusing on gender and or class and status. Long introductions were unnecessary for this question; the best responses got straight on with analysis.

It is advisable that centres make the mark scheme available to candidates so that they are aware of how the work is assessed. This could also be used for the marking of timed assignments in the classroom. It is important that candidates balance their responses to include all the technical features used in the extract that construct meaning if they are to score highly.

Representation

Confident candidates were able to analyse the ways in which the extract attempted to position the audience in relation to Maud and Sue and the sexual/romantic relations between the two often embedded in a discussion of desire, passion and emotion. This relationship was often juxtaposed with Sue's relationship with Richard and how this was secretive in terms of her feelings of falling in love with Maud. The most able candidates showed maturity in terms of understanding the delicacy of homosexuality in a rather more sexually repressed era, alongside a good range of examples connecting the technical elements in a consistent and focused way.

Frequently, candidates were able to identify a 'love triangle', the power relationship of Richard as heterosexual with Sue's hidden love for Maud. As a result candidates were able to explore the nuances of the representation of sexuality, in relation to the micro technical aspects used. Stronger responses also showed a good grasp of the ambivalent nature of the representation of

sexuality in past Victorian times and contemporary society. There was plenty of evidence that candidates understood the representation of sexuality with a variety of interpretations, for example: homosexuality as taboo, as stereotypical/counter stereotypical and how the character Sue had desire for Maud as opposed to rejection of the heterosexual male Richard.

Those candidates that did less well with the analysis of representation focussed on a discussion of gender and power, rather than sexuality, or at times had basic or minimal understanding of the concept of sexuality, as if they were not fully prepared for the topic. Lesser achieving candidates used sweeping generalisations such as 'most lesbians are usually quite masculine, but this lesbian was feminine' or 'men are dominant over women' rather than entering into any deeper discussions about the representations presented to the audience.

Camera Shot, Angle and Composition

Most candidates used the correct terminology and could identify shot composition, movement, framing, and angles in relation to each of the characters and their situations and link these to the construction of sexuality. Better responses identified the use close up shots and framed composition of Sue's desire for Maud, taking place in the country home and on location with the held shots of Maud in an artistic pose. Candidates could also discuss the oppositions constructed between Sue and Richard; for example, in discussion of the shot composition of Richard's aggressive advances towards Sue, which strengthened their analysis. Common errors made by candidates with terminology included the use of the term 'twin shot' instead of two shot. Lesser able candidates were able to describe key shots used in exemplification, but they tended to lack explicit links to how these shots assisted in the construction of the representation of sexuality. These candidates would also tend to focus on just identifying the narrative flow of the extract through the naming of the shots. There was also a common tendency to discuss the camera zooming when in fact it is tracking or cutting closer to a particular action.

Mise en scene

The majority of candidates discussed this area with confidence. Location, character appearance and body language were all handled well. Some analysis of colour symbolism was less successful because it tended to be based on assumptions, which could not be substantiated from the sequence. There is still a tendency for candidates to treat colour palettes and lighting deterministically as if whites, reds, blacks and shadows always carry the same meanings irrespective of context. Stronger responses offered analysis in the context of the extract, for example, with the symbolism of the glove and the hovering of Sue's hand over Maud's body suggesting that the act itself was taboo or forbidden.

Sound

The analysis of sound is continuing to improve with candidates attempting to link music with the representation of the characters. Music was generally well recognised and analysed with better candidates linking the slow paced, stringed music to heighten the sense of desire that existed within the female character Sue, whilst painting the portrait of Maud. There seemed to be more confident use of terminology in relation to soundtrack this session. Many candidates were proficient in analysing diegetic/non diegetic sound (although at times there was a common error by candidates in getting this correct). The importance of the ambient sounds and soundbridges were analysed by candidates, in relation to how meaning is constructed, particularly in the use of change of tempo upon Richard's dramatic actions in the rural scene where he forces Sue into declaring her love for him. Candidates made frequent reference to the dialogue in the extract, especially the use of the voiceover at the beginning of the extract. Candidates understood the voiceover technique and it's dual function of illustrating the forbidden nature of sexuality and its use to position the audience sympathetically in relation to the protagonist defying social convention. Most candidates used this voiceover to establish the relations between the two women in the Victorian country house.

Editing

Editing remains the most challenging area for analysis, although there were some encouraging signs in that fewer candidates this session seemed to leave this area out altogether. There were some strong analyses of the ways in which the editing created perspective within the sequence, helping us to understand the privileging of the gay relationship or the contrast between the editing style depicting the softer, more romantic relationship between the women and the coercive nature of heterosexuality on show. Many candidates misnamed the dissolves used in the sequence as fades or wipes, but were able to discuss how they implied connections between the various scenes shown.

Candidates often engaged well with the nuances of editing and the ways in which the use of long and short takes represented power and how eye line matches were used to reinforce a sense of dominance, for example between Richard as dominant heterosexual male and Sue's rejection of him. There was consistent reference to the editing transitions and the use of ellipsis editing for the narrative sequence, which unravels, and links made to soundbridges and pacing in the extract.

General Comments on Question 2

The question provided suitable differentiation of candidate responses. The majority of candidates addressed the issue of digital distribution and marketing more than that of production or audience. The question provoked a range of responses from candidates, many of whom were able to discuss the relationship between production, distribution and marketing in ensuring the success of media products. The most able candidates were clear about the changes that digital distribution and consumption were having upon the products that were produced.

The best answers were able to create a debate around the relative strengths of distribution practices and marketing strategies by institutions in engaging appropriate audiences through online media and incorporated technologies. Frequently, strong candidates were also able to draw contrasts between mainstream and independent producers, and/or mass audience/niche audience targeting. More candidates are able to show awareness of the trends and strategies that categorise the contemporary media landscape, which included the use of online technologies and distribution platforms. In this session, very few candidates attempted to answer the question without any kind of institutional knowledge or focussing exclusively on texts produced.

Strongest responses came from those candidates who had a wide range of relevant and contemporary examples of marketing and distribution strategies in their chosen area and could discuss them with confidence. Those candidates that fared less well used a 'saturation approach', writing all they could remember, rather than addressing the set question.

On the whole the terminology used for question 2 was good, including candidates' discussion of convergence, synergy, horizontal and vertical integration as key media concepts. It is advised that centres ensure the appropriate preparation for this section by covering audience in the same depth as institutions.

Film Industry

The most common approach remains a comparison between major US studios with UK production companies, often focusing on digital distribution and marketing strategies. There was often an assumption that UK cinema is failing because of low cinema attendance, which obviously underestimates the importance of home exhibition windows in making UK film viable. There were some excellent answers that referred to the expansion of the Digital Screen Network and the issues posed and the opportunities it offers.

Working Title was the most frequently used case study, along with Warners, Fox and Paramount as American examples; Warp, Vertigo and Film Four were used a number of times as case studies. Newer UK productions such as *Shifty, Monsters, Four Lions* and *Attack The Block* were used by candidates as contemporary case studies to good effect, with some candidates attempting to address specifically the use of You Tube as a potential distribution platform for the future media in discussion of *Life In A Day*.

Excellent answers engaged thoroughly with new media forms such as social networking sites, You Tube and blogging and how these relate to their chosen case studies. Other strong areas for discussion were in the consideration of audience consumption and distribution through digital technology such as iPhones, BluRay, downloading, iPads, and Sony PSP's. Candidate discussion of this technology would be better supported with examples. Sometimes these technologies tend to be mentioned without reference to specific examples of products to exemplify how films are distributed and/or marketed using such technologies, which limits access to higher mark bands.

The advantages of digital distribution and exhibition were discussed, but with varying effectiveness at times, in part because candidates see film as being freely available as a digital format online, which is often not the case. Many candidates accurately argued that digital distribution, marketing and digital practices were important for the frontloading of film marketing campaigns, for example, *The Dark Knight, Avatar, Paul* and *The Kings Speech*. Most candidates are able to show awareness of the trends and strategies that categorise the contemporary media landscape.

There still remains a number of centres that are preparing candidates with inappropriate material. Potted histories of media companies or textual studies are unlikely to be useful for the kind of questions which this paper poses. Candidates should be encouraged to take a selective approach to their case study material, concentrating on what is most relevant to the question rather than trying to get their entire case studies down. Quite a few centres are relying on case study material which is rapidly dating and there needs to be more emphasis on contemporary examples. Far too many candidates using Working Title as a case study institution are still writing about films which are at least 15 years out of date.

Music Industry

There were some excellent responses on the music industry and it was clear that some centres had prepared their candidates with very detailed case studies of both major and independent companies. The best answers were able to contextualise factual knowledge by creating an argument in which early audience adoption of digital distribution practices was shown to drive the subsequent institutional strategies. There were fewer answers which saw digital music as simply a threat, perhaps reflecting the renewed optimism that music companies have begun to form workable digital business models.

Most of the answers seen looked at Sony music and offered contrast with a range of independent companies such as Rough Trade, Domino, Ghostbox, Finders Keepers or Linn Records. Discussion of digital distribution focused on the decline of traditional distribution of music sales and how music is purchased and consumed digitally, for example the decline of HMV and the rise of iTunes and music downloading. The question was designed to provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of digital distribution, marketing practices and audience consumption. Most candidates approached the area by contrasting one of the 'big 4' labels – (Sony, EMI and Universal were popular) with a smaller, independent label. There was plenty of evidence that candidates were informed of ongoing transformation of the music industry, for example the takeover of EMI and importantly the rise of subsidiaries such as Syco and the 'Cowell' factor in the music industry.

Candidates also discussed the role of technology in enabling artists to attain relatively high production values relatively cheaply and then distribute the music digitally via My Space and iTunes and how this practice is enabled with IPads, Smart phones and MP3 technologies. It was encouraging to see some candidates also discussing contemporary developments such as 'VEVO' and the recent changes to the business model of the streaming site Spotify.

A significant minority of candidates focussed on Apple and related technology for their responses. Although iTunes is an important element in contemporary music promotion and exchange, it is misleading to see Apple as a music company and led to some fundamental errors in claims about artist management and revenue.

Newspaper Industry

There were fewer responses to the newspaper industry than in previous sessions. Most able candidates explored the significance of newspapers as institutions and the practice of marketing and distribution. Responses compared News Corporation with the Guardian Media Group, including their respective online presence. Candidates demonstrated a good understanding in the shift from print based to digital formats and explored the impact of the online editions and the general shift from purely print based editions, predominantly with the use of e-readers and the iPad. Some good responses considered how newspapers are countering the decline of the print form by using websites in particular ways – user comments and feedback –often interpreted as citizen journalism.

These were popular options this session and the question allowed candidates plenty of opportunity to discuss changes in newspaper distribution in a digital media environment. Once again, candidates who had been prepared with detailed case studies of specific institutions and plenty of examples were best equipped to provide an argument, acknowledging that while digital media had contributed to the decline in print consumption, forward thinking media companies were looking at ways to take their brands online and distribute products digitally. Case studies of Guardian Newspapers and Bauer Media were both popular and successful, with an acknowledgement that digital products offer a different set of experiences for audiences and different opportunities for advertisers.

The best answers were able to make sense of the variety of strategies employed by publishers in building online audiences and a variety of different relationships between print products and their online equivalents.

Magazine Industry

Most candidates had a good understanding in the shift from print based to digital formats and explored the impact of the online editions and the general shift from purely print based editions. The best answers compared two magazines and how they each used digital distribution with varying degrees of success. Better answers also discussed the importance of synergy and convergence. By far the most popular choice of magazine publication was *Kerrang* , with other popular case studies including *Little White Lies, NME FHM, Grazia, Cosmo and Heat*. Weaker candidates' responses tended to opt for historical accounts of particular products. *Cosmopolitan* was used quite successfully to discuss online distribution and the use of interactivity for audiences, with Apps, iPads and smart phones used as examples to discuss the changing nature of magazine consumption. Some detailed examples of synergy with high street shops such as Boots in the marketing of the magazine were also noted.

Some candidates discussed the advertising inside the magazine rather than the marketing of the magazine itself or gave accounts of reception theory, which is not appropriate for this exam.

Radio Industry

There were a very small number of responses for this session. Answers on radio were confident and compared different areas of the industry including Commercial and Public Service Broadcasting. Candidates' responses clearly discussed the digital developments of the industry and case studies on both audiences and institutions. Candidates were informative on the marketing of radio shows and the role of digital initiatives, such as the iPad, DAB radio and the role of Twitter and Facebook.

Video Games Industry

The most convincing answers tended to come from candidates who had been well prepared with detailed, contemporary case studies and were able to select relevant material from these to respond to the question. The degree to which candidates in this area were successful depended on the extent to which they were able to answer the question. Some candidates struggled to write about the Wii because much of its marketing is conventional and it does not have the functionality of the XBOX/PS3 in terms of online capability. Candidates could have constructed an argument around the relative lack of importance of digital distribution to Nintendo given the demographic segmentation of the Wii audience but few did so. Wii Sports is also 5 years old now and in a media area with the rapidity of development of the video gaming sector a case study of this age is limiting.

Well-prepared and able candidates could address how digital distribution/marketing has transformed this industry and some of the issues related to the illegal downloading of games, and the future of the industry. Some candidates did very well in this area focussing on Rockstar Games (Grand Theft Auto 4), discussing distribution, marketing and exchange across platforms. Candidates were able to discuss the franchise and were able to discuss the importance of synergy and technological convergence with relevance to the question. There was some focus on games such as Angry Birds and Farmville with varying degrees of success.

Weaker candidates tended to give too much personal opinion/anecdotal evidence on the gaming case studies.

G324 Principal Moderator's Report

Administration

The administration of this component by most centres was excellent, with marks and work being submitted on time. More centres completed coursework cover sheets thoroughly, with detailed comments outlining how they arrived at the marks allocated and indicating individual contributions by candidates who worked together in groups. However, a few centres did not actually print out their coversheets – probably thinking this would save paper and be appropriately electronic – but in fact this made the moderation process more awkward and time-consuming. Several Centres did not put candidate numbers on the coversheets (and others did not put them on the work). There were also a significant number of clerical errors by centres in this session. While these were dealt with promptly by centres, more careful checking of cover sheets before submitting them would ensure errors are minimised in future and so avoid delays in the moderation process. There were also instances of incorrect blog addresses or of blog addresses that were still not being written clearly enough, or had crucial parts of the address missed off (eg – blogspot.com) Most Centres supplied some sort of blog hub which is good practice.

There were still some centres, however, whose comments on the coursework cover sheets could have been more supportive for the moderation process; subjective comments, which do not address the assessment criteria directly, or statements just copied and pasted straight from the assessment criteria are unhelpful to the process. Comments written should clearly explain how a candidate's work meets the assessment criteria. In doing so this makes it clear how the Centre has applied the criteria and consequently makes the moderation process much easier.

Some centres are still not outlining individual contributions by candidates to a group production. This is extremely important in terms of supporting marks allocated, particularly where there are differences in the marks allocated to candidates who have worked together; group comments are less than useful in supporting the marks given to individuals. This was a particular problem for the marking of ancillary texts and especially for the marking of research and planning and evaluations.

Most work submitted by centres was on blogs and, to a lesser extent, on discs. Generally, the best practice was by centres which had created a blog hub containing links to individual candidates blogs, each of which opened in a new window when clicked. Best practice had carefully tagged entries (vital on group blogs!) and had either put all the artefacts at the top of the blog, or had linked to the entries on the blog where the final constructions could be found. Poor practice was to continue using the AS blog into A2.

Some centres submitted numerous discs containing the different elements of candidates' work, which makes the moderation process more difficult as moderators are constantly changing between disc. Several centres sent work in incorrect formats; many more submitted pieces of work that either entailed downloading massive files from the web to look at them (777MB in one case) or copying large wmv files to moderators' hard drive, in order to get them running smoothly enough to moderate. Work in these formats is likely to be returned to centres.

Centres should also remember that they must leave work on the blogs for the entire examination session and throughout the Enquiries about results period. In a few instances where blogs were returned to near the end of the process had bits missing – seemingly moved or deleted.

Quality of marking

Application of the criteria was on the whole closer to the agreed standard, though marking was still largely over-generous – harsh marking was rare. In terms of construction most centres are assessing candidates generally in the right levels, although frequently this was generous within the level. However, there seemed to be more Centres this session who were over-marking research and planning. It seems that now Centres are more confident with blogging they are sometimes over-rewarding full blogs, even if the content isn't always relevant. Moderators saw quite a few 'history of the music video' blog posts, for example. The majority of candidates made no attempt to suggest why this was relevant to their projects.

Where video work was significantly over marked, several Centres rewarded careless framing of shots and a lack of effort with construction of mise-en-scene with a level 4 mark. Lip and instrument synchronisation was another area that was often not appropriately considered when assessing some music videos. Given how important performance is, and how easy digital editing makes frame-by-frame adjustments, an inability to sync these elements indicates a level 4 mark is over-generous.

Evaluations were a little more accurately assessed than in previous sessions, partly owing to an adjustment in the approach of Centres to this task: the required four questions are being addressed by the vast majority of candidates and candidates are much less likely to submit essays disguised as either blog posts or presentation slideshows, although the level of detail across all four responses by candidates is not always as strong as the Centre's marks suggest. Some centres appear to weight answers when marking, allocating high marks for candidates who provide detailed responses to questions 1 and 2 but weak answers to the other two questions. This is reflected in the centres' comments where only brief reference is made to questions 3 and 4.

Candidates' work

There was a slightly wider variety of briefs undertaken this session. Music video was still the most popular (with the digipak and magazine advertisement ancillaries) but the film promotion and documentary briefs were also popular. There were still a number of small centres who seemed to give their candidates free reign to choose whichever brief they liked. This generally produced less successful work with little understanding of the theory behind the work being produced and therefore less insightful research and planning, and evaluations.

Research and Planning

The best work demonstrated a real sense of engagement in the research and planning process, with some very good deconstruction of similar products using screen shots and video links, evidence of the experimentation that had taken place in order to create the final product, effective location research etc. Blogs worked best when seen as a frequent and regular way of demonstrating Research and Planning, although one centre did make good use of mini websites with separate pages for each bit of the planning and research. However, there were a number of Centres whose candidates had placed very little evidence of planning on their blogs (or related files) yet had been marked highly for this element. Likewise there were still a few examples of the 'essays' embedded as images that have been too popular in previous sessions.

Research into existing media texts by a large number of candidates focused solely on the main text with little or no research being conducted into appropriate texts relevant to the ancillary productions. Where detailed and appropriate research was conducted into the codes and conventions of the relevant genre it was clear that this informed the construction process and resulted, generally, in more appropriate, well constructed texts. For example, thorough research into music videos clearly influenced those candidates undertaking this brief in the number and variety of shots used for performance aspects of the video leading to a more tightly edited and well paced production.

Some candidates' research, though, appeared a little like a functional exercise carried out to meet the requirements of the component which was then ignored when it comes to the construction stage. For example a number of candidates producing TV advertisements detailed research into the ASA and its code of practice but then produced texts which were clearly in breach of the ASA guidelines.

Research into a potential target audience is important in ensuring the construction of texts is appropriate for the target audience in terms of, for example, generic expectations; yet this was lacking in the work submitted by a large number of centres and wasn't addressed in centres' comments or marks.

Planning was varied across the work submitted. The best was extremely thorough and clearly resulted in more effective productions. Detailed storyboards showed considered thinking about camera shots and angles and also how the text would be edited. A few candidates' storyboards were clearly produced after the construction process as they were made up of stills taken from the completed production which clearly defeats the object. There were a large number of storyboards submitted which consisted of 8 or fewer frames. It was noticeable in these cases that the finished production had a feel of 'making it up as they went along' and contained fewer shot types and distances than those which had been carefully structured.

In summary, in many Centres, greater consideration needs to be given to the research and planning undertaken and the use of technology in the presentation of their candidates' work.

Construction

As one moderator summed up the session: 'In terms of trend-spotting, torture seems to be out, horror in the woods is still in, the zombies have all disappeared but love remains difficult and ends either with a torn photograph or a text message'.

Production work was mostly moving image (as main task) and print work (as ancillary tasks). Greater efforts than ever seem to being made with mise-en-scene and with lighting and sound. Where candidates and Centres have approached the production tasks as three parts of one whole the outcomes are usually stronger.

As noted above, the music video continued to be the most popular brief undertaken. Most productions took the form of performance combined with narrative, though a number of productions were narrative based which consequently results in a text which reads as a short film rather than a music video. The best productions demonstrated careful construction of mise-en-scene for the performance element in particular, in terms of location for the performance, and used a wide variety of shot types. They also paid careful attention to the need to achieve synchronicity of sound and visuals.

Some excellent film trailers were produced which clearly demonstrated effective understanding of the way trailers work. These used a wide number of shots which resulted in a more tightly edited and well paced production. In particular they did not follow the narrative sequence of the film, resulting in some intriguing and attention grabbing texts.

There were some good documentaries – though these rely on the subject matter and interviewees being real and unscripted. They also need to avoid too much found and library footage.

A small number of candidates undertook the TV advertisement brief, and these were not largely successful. This was due purely to the lack of variety of shots used and the small number of shots which resulted in laboured productions.

There was strong evidence from one Centre that the local newspaper brief can also be completed to a very high standard, with real understanding of form, style and audience, with excellent use of typography, combined with real control over the appropriate software – needless to say they did *not* use Word or even Publisher for this task!

In terms of ancillary tasks, where detailed research had been conducted into the genre this resulted in excellent and appropriate productions. However in a large number of cases the quality of ancillary texts did not match the main task production, with some almost appearing as an after-thought.

Digipaks continued to be a problem in that a large number submitted were not actually digipaks, being either DVD or conventional CD/jewel case designs, and consequently this led to some significant over marking by Centres. As has been said in previous reports, there is an expectation that candidates produce a minimum of 4 panels, but this does not simply mean the front and back and inside covers of a conventional CD as digipaks are more sophisticated in their construction. Centres need to ensure candidates conduct appropriate research into the genre and there are numerous freely available templates which candidates can then use to plan and produce their texts.

There were some excellent film posters, magazine front covers and magazine advertisements produced which demonstrated effective understanding of generic codes and conventions and successfully integrated original images and texts. However, there were still a small number of candidates using found images which dominated their ancillary texts and where this was done centres did not reflect this appropriately in their comments or marks.

Most website productions were submitted as working urls, in line with the requirements of the specifications, and made use of freely available templates resulting in highly effective and easily navigable sites. A few Centres produced exceptionally good examples of this task using Wix. There was a smaller number of centres this session who submitted websites as jpeg files, which is inappropriate.

Evaluations

Evaluations generally made better use of the four set questions to structure responses. A small number of centres ask candidates to answer additional questions to those in the specifications, which does nothing to enhance their evaluations.

There were also more Centres encouraging candidates to use more than one format in answering the four set questions, which was generally best practice. The most successful evaluations were video commentaries with images cut over the top to illustrate the commentary.

Presentation of evaluations continues to be a weakness for some centres, as candidates submitted responses either on their blogs or PowerPoint presentations as essay prose, albeit illustrated with still images. These tended towards very text heavy evaluations either as a series of posts on the blogs, or as Powerpoints without much in the way of hyperlinks, or even screen shots. Prezi was popular, but going through them is often a laborious process; slideshows with lots of text are not good practice – but Prezis with lots of text are even more cumbersome.

Evaluations of the music videos in particular often demonstrated a lack of understanding of the role of the video in building the image of an artist and in selling their particular genre of music to an audience, and when this was explored it frequently wasn't in any depth.

Mobile phone footage was quite effective in 'snapshot' style interviews for audience feedback, although students need to be reminded to film with the phone held in landscape orientation (so it doesn't end up sideways on). Some centres ran out of time for the evaluations and these only received cursory consideration – it is important to make sure that this is given enough time to produce work that is worth 20% of the marks for the unit.

Finally, Centres are encouraged to take advantage of the resources offered by OCR. The site at http://ocrmediastudies.weebly.com provides links to resources and examples of work from all units and the community site at http://social.ocr.org.uk holds an archived forum for information and discussion.

G325 Principal Examiner Report

General Comments

This January saw a mixed entry for G325. Some candidates were well prepared and able to draw upon examples from a full range of coursework as well as responding to Section B with synoptic confidence. Others were attempting to stretch minimal preparation across the paper – in some cases using the same ONE theoretical reference point in all three answers – representational conventions in youth films, representation in their own youth film and the representation of youth and its relationship with collective identity. Overall, however, it is difficult to make a general comment on candidates' (and centres') performance in this session, since the entry was dominated by fairly large centres alongside single candidates. It is, therefore, most useful to simply restate that G325 examiners are assessing papers with the expectation that candidates have completed the full range of A2 content and thus are able to write about a broad range of media production, select one example from a choice – the example that offers the best fit to the concept that is asked for in question (1b) and demonstrate a deep understanding (equating to an academic year's worth of study on the specific topic, but two years' engagement with critical media literacy, in typical circumstances) of critical perspectives. In many cases in this, and previous January sessions, candidates appear to have a limited choice of material to adapt and this is most obvious in question 1(b) where a significant number of candidates merely answer the question in relation to another concept – genre or narrative, most frequently. To conclude, all three questions on this paper can well be described as demanding competence in connecting theory to practice and/or 'macro' theories and debates to 'micro' examples of the candidates' selection. One examiner expresses it thus: *Assimilated theory, properly applied is a joy, but rare.*

Section A

1   (a)   Following from the concluding remark above, the 'theory' required here is related to production (as opposed to critical or cultural theory), in this case the relationship between media conventions (a theoretical idea) and 'real-life' media practice (the candidates; creative decision making). Stronger answers were able to draw upon, and compare work from AS and A2, main and ancillary tasks. Weaker answers were dominated by one production or offered a general account of conventions without mentioning specific texts (and their influence on candidates' own material). Generally, answers were undermined by a lack of precision regarding research into real media texts and too often this was reduced to a description of technical skills. It is crucial that candidates do have A2 work to write about as well as AS. Centres entering candidates before the full range of coursework is completed are at risk of disadvantaging their candidates as this is a synoptic paper. The strongest responses were those that could compare a range of productions in relation to specific media texts and their conventions, write about decision making which complied with and challenged conventions and provide a reflective account of progress made or skills developed over the duration of their AS and A2 coursework projects.

1   (b)   Again, this was the weakest section of the paper for the majority of candidates and it does appear that centres need to spend more time preparing students to adapt their learning/experiences/examples to the specific concept that is on the paper. Examiners must adhere to the mark scheme and can only credit responses where they meet the criteria for this year's set question/concept and not the previous series set question/concept. Many candidates took representation to be a production/creative technique – how they represented the narrative or represented the genre or represented the characters. The strongest answers followed the

guidance provided in these reports and at INSET and began with a theoretical explanation of representation, supported by references to academic writing on the concept and then systematically applied the concept to one of their productions, understood for this question as a media text.

Section B

Collective Identity

There were some large centre responses on youth, with mixed quality – the best answers able to balance 'typical' negative representations in news and TV with a range of more complex representations in film/music and then some good examples of 'self-representation' in new media. The representation of immigrant populations yielded some interesting and well constructed answers, using examples of recent news stories (especially from the Daily Mail (alongside Nick Broomfield's *Ghosts* (2006) – contemporary at the time of study and Dizzee Rascal, Bubbles, *London River* by Rachid Bouchareb and a range of Youtube videos (eg *My Tram Experience*).

Postmodern Media

This continues to be, generally, a well handled topic. Accurate engagement with theorists such as Baudrillard, Lyotard, Jameson, Eco, Hebdige and Paglia was evident in most cases. An interesting range of texts were chosen, *including Madonna, Scream, Hatsume Miku, Gorillaz, Life in a Day, Lady Gaga, Scott Pilgrim* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops*. The best responses were balanced responses, offering a sophisticated 'weighing up' of the status and credibility of postmodern theory. In this area (and others) Centres need to ensure that they are covering more than one media area and that candidates can refer to contemporary media texts for the majority of their answer. For example, if an answer was sophisticated in its application of postmodern theories but dominated by analyses of *Blade Runner*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Pulp Fiction*, marks would not reach the higher bands as only one media area would have been covered (film) and not one of the examples offered would have been contemporary.

Regulation

It was pleasing to see the phone hacking scandal and its implications analysed with regard to the credibility of the PCC and in most cases this was contrasted well with the role of the BBFC. Other 'up to the minute' material came in the form of online piracy and the SOPA case – a clear overlap here with Online Age and We Media. The Byron review was often discussed and in most cases candidates understood the complexity of the recommendations and were able to compare these with the more one-dimensional effects model discourse. Videogames were often cited as being the most 'harmful' media and the internet is 'impossible to regulate' for many candidates, and centres should resist the temptation to set up an easy binary here between old media which can be controlled and new media which cannot. Related to this, one interesting observation is that (assuming the majority of candidates are teenagers) it might well be the case that the same students who are writing about the need for tighter regulation of videogames are the same people who are playing them or did play them 'underage' and that the same students might be restricted by the tighter regulation of downloading for which they call, so some critical reflection on just who is the 'other' who might be harmed/'reigned in' (if it isn't them) might be an interesting additional element for candidates to include?

Sadly, despite urging centres to avoid using the Jamie Bulger "case study" in every examiner's report since G325 was first assessed, this still appeared on a significant number of answers on regulation. In many cases, the 'facts' were also incorrect (Bulger being the murderer, linked to *Manhunt* in some answers and *GTA* in others) which is completely unacceptable at A2. If there is any mileage in this old example, it can only be as an example of how 'moral panics' simplify

and scapegoat and this would best be contextualised by Martin Barker's commentary/analysis. But, once again, centres are strongly advised to avoid using this example when the majority of a candidate's response should discuss examples from the last five years, of which there are plenty to choose.

Media in the Online Age

Answers to these questions were the least theoretical in scope, again. The vast majority of candidates achieved a higher mark for argument and examples than for terminology because of a failure to relate their arguments to academic/theoretical material – as in June's report, a 'starting point' list would include Gauntlett, Merrin, Leadbetter, Shirky, Jenkins, Hills, Curtis and others but this is just to name a few and certainly not a list of 'favourites'. As in the summer, there was a pleasing level of personal engagement but candidates need to weigh up the debate and only a small number of high scoring responses did this – the typical response was rather one sided and often generalising – making claims for 'worldwide' downloading when the reality is the majority of the world's citizens are NOT online.

Global Media

We Media and Democracy

As with all of the topics, the ability to evaluate contrasting arguments is the most valuable currency here and evidence of this is variable. Well utilized examples included a documentary on Burma, TV news reporting of events in Syria, Twitter and Wikileaks, the Wikipedia blackout, the Arab Spring, SOPA and PIPA. Passionate argument and clear engagement were in abundance but sometimes anger/fervour inhibited the development of balanced arguments.

General Advice to Centres

This advice is repeated from previous sessions.

Support candidates to prepare different approaches to 1(a) and 1(b) – process and decisions for 1(a), conceptual textual analysis from a critical distance for 1(b).

Ensure that candidates are able to make use of contemporary media examples for the majority of their answer in section B. Theory from any time is appropriate, but media examples and case studies should be mainly from the five years preceding the examination.

Enable candidates to engage with a range of theoretical, academic and research perspectives for whichever theme is addressed – there is an abundance of media theory applicable to ALL themes, including media in the online age and media regulation.

Develop time management skills for exam preparation, particularly for section 1.