
OCR AS GCE in Media Studies	(3860)
OCR Advanced GCE in Media Studies	(7860)

Teacher Support Booklet

Support and In-Service Training for Teachers

In addition to this Teacher Support Booklet, OCR makes the following materials and services available to teachers:

- a full programme of In-Service Training (INSET) meetings;
- specimen question papers and mark schemes;
- past question papers and mark schemes after each examination session;
- a report on the examination, compiled by senior examining personnel, after each examination session
- the Media Studies ecommunity

<http://community.ocr.org.uk/community/mediastudies-a/home>)

If you would like further information about any of these support services, please contact OCR.

Introduction

When OCR's AS/A level GCE Media Studies specification was introduced as part of Curriculum 2000, a set of guidance notes was produced to advise and support teachers. Four complete cohorts of students have gone through the full A level (around 40,000 in total) and there have been many changes both in the media and to media teaching since 2000. It seems appropriate, therefore, that some new notes should be produced.

The third edition of OCR's AS/A level specification for Media Studies was published in September 2005 and represents an evolution from the previous two editions. There are some changes in subject matter at A2 but most other changes are clarifications of past practice to make for greater consistency. The purpose of this booklet is to address teachers' questions arising from these changes and to advise teachers new to the subject and to the specification of how best to organise and run the course.

This booklet adopts a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) format. If some of the questions seem too obvious to ask, then apologies, but most have been asked at some time or another by teachers contributing to OCR's Media Studies ecommunity. Hopefully some of the questions will be those which you have wanted to ask!

Throughout the booklet, the term student has been used rather than candidate in order to distinguish the support and guidance function of this booklet as opposed to the more formal purpose of the specification for assessment.

The booklet is divided into sections. Sections 1, 2 and 3 comprise general questions about the specification, timing of courses and resources and the following six relate to the units of the specification in the order 2730, 2731, 2732, 2733, 2734 and 2735. If you are seeking guidance about a particular unit, you can go straight to the relevant section.

Possible routes for each unit are suggested in the relevant sections, but these should not be taken as absolute fixed ways of delivering the course. These are models which have worked successfully in particular Centres. Some overall course model structures are suggested in the appendix.

This booklet should be used in conjunction with the updated specification. Further resources are available via the OCR Media Studies ecommunity and at INSET days as advertised by OCR.

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No Bibliography or list of websites has been included here as so much material is out of date so quickly. A revised list of suitable resources will be posted on the OCR Media Studies ecommunity's website.

1 General Questions

1.1 Why has the specification been changed?

Specifications in all subjects need to be updated in order to keep them fresh and allow scope for new topics. The changes outlined in the third edition of the specification are designed both to enable Centres to cover topics which are of interest to students and teachers and to remove some of the more problematic areas for teaching and assessment. The removal of 'Youth Culture and Popular Music' as a topic area for research in 2734 is an example where experience has shown that, in practice, students have failed to engage with the slant on the topic needed for the unit. By including a unit on music programmes on TV, some of the topic has been retained but in a format which students will find more manageable. In addition, the topic of Soap Opera in unit 2735 (Media Issues and Debates) was seen by many examiners as becoming rather stale, so it seemed sensible to replace it. It now finds a place elsewhere in the specification (within the new TV drama topic in unit 2734). Some popular and accessible media topics, such as advertising, have been reintroduced in order to enable Centres to make good use of readily available resources.

The changes are such that no Centre should be put in a position of having to reinvent the wheel as none of the topics are either completely new or completely lost.

Other changes have been made in order to streamline the assessment process or to make the examinations a better experience for students. The switch to two questions in two hours for 2735 is an example of the latter, while the new mark allocations for 2730 (Foundation Production) and 2733 (Advanced Production) are designed to be more closely allied to experience of grade boundaries.

1.2 Will there be more help and training available?

Yes, as stated in the introduction, OCR's Media Studies ecommunity is a constant source of ongoing information and useful discussion, and the annual round of INSET (details on the OCR website) provides the opportunity for face to face contact with OCR's senior examiners.

1.3 Is it possible to take this subject alongside Film Studies?

Yes. Many Centres offer both Film and Media and have a number of students doing both.

1.4 Why is there no alternative to production work for ‘low tech’ Centres?

As the current marketplace contains three specifications known as A level Media Studies, there is opportunity for Centres to choose the specification which best suits their needs and resources. A strength and certainly a USP of the OCR specification has always been its emphasis upon production work (counting for 40% of the assessment at each year). The new specification stresses this still further with very clear guidelines on what is expected in terms of equipment to run the course.

2 Timing of the Course

2.1 Can all units be entered at the end of a course?

Yes. It is entirely up to Centres to decide when they wish to enter students for units. All units are available in both annual examination sessions so it is possible to enter for anything in either January or June. Most Centres, however, organise their courses so that students complete the AS level in the Summer of Year 12 and the A2 in the Summer of Y13, with perhaps one January unit plus re-sits.

2.2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of January entries?

In AS, January entries may prove too early and will restrict the order in which you teach the course units, since a whole topic would have to be covered in the first term, (often by students with no previous experience of the subject and key concepts). However, this does avoid the need to sit two consecutive examinations in a three hour stretch in the Summer, when with hotter weather, students may become too exhausted to perform at their best. There is evidence to suggest that around one third of the candidates nationally sit 2731 in January. For coursework and for 2732 the proportion is significantly smaller.

If students fail to reach their potential in January, there is always the possibility of Summer re-sits, though this could work out expensive for Centres to fund.

January entries at A2 may be used more cannily. The modular approach has advantages for motivation, in that students will get a sense of their achievement and get results under their belts so that they have a clear sense of targets for the final examination in the Summer. At present, around a third of Centres enter for the Critical Research Study examination in January of Y13, with the opportunity of Summer re-sits but also the advantage of getting an examination out of the way. Fewer students sit Media Issues and Debates in January though this is likely to increase as the January sitting of this unit has only recently been offered for the first time. Again, there is an advantage to knowing part of your 'score' and being able to set targets. The more independent learning approach of the Critical Research Study might mean that it suits some students better to leave this examination until the end of the course.

As far as coursework is concerned, January entry at AS would seem to be rather early, though not impossible. It is, however, a long trek from January to June at AS if only examination work is to be undertaken. At A2, it is possible to start with the coursework, particularly if the period after the June examinations is utilised to lead in to it, so that the A2 production could be undertaken in the Autumn term, allowing its submission in January. The advantage here is that it is unlikely to coincide with major coursework in other subjects, which many Centres tend to undertake in the Spring term.

2.3 In what order should units be taught?

This is entirely at your discretion and need not correspond to when students are entered for assessment in those units. You could cover an examination topic in the Autumn of Year 12 but not sit it until the Summer or conversely do the coursework first. It may depend upon when other subjects are completing coursework at your Centre or on whether your Centre allows January entries for assessment. The most important thing is to have a clear plan from the outset so that teachers and students know what they are doing and when they will be doing it.

2.4 When is it worth advising a re-sit?

The way the Media Studies A level works, like any other subject, is that overall the maximum score a student can obtain is 600. The score thresholds for each of the grades are given in the following table:

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

Since results slips give a breakdown of AS level by unit scores, it is possible to see where a student has done well and where they have done badly. Thus units to re-sit can be easily targeted. It is always worth keeping records of students' running scores so you can see at a glance what they might reasonably set themselves as their ultimate target and what would be useful to re-sit to give themselves a better shot at this target. It is therefore feasible that a student with a low grade A on a unit might re-sit that unit in order to get a high grade A. In practice this is very unlikely, but it does emphasise the idea that it is the cumulative numerical score that counts in adding up the full A level, rather than the grade for each unit.

2.5 Should one unit be taught at a time or is it possible to teach two in parallel?

Again this is up to you, depending upon your staffing, your students and your resources. It is possible for alternate lessons to be used for examination and production work, perhaps by two different teachers; however, students are often better focussing on one unit at a time. For example, when undertaking a video production for coursework, it is difficult for students to transfer their energies to examination-based work as they are always itching to get back on with the editing. There is also the disadvantage that units can outstay their welcome if they last for months. There is much to be said for short term bursts and goals so that students remain on task. There is lots of evidence too that it leads to better practical work, born out of a sense of urgency.

2.6 Can the whole A level be delivered in one year?

Only if you have plenty of contact time and incredibly committed and well-organised students!

2.7 What is the recommended weekly contact time for the subject?

The same as any other A level at your Centre. Most teachers have between four and five hours per week to deliver A levels. It is hard to see how it could be delivered in less time than this, unless with a small group of mature students.

2.8 What should the teacher-student ratio be?

No higher than any other subject at your Centre and given the practical nature of much of the course, ideally lower. As an example, in one large Sixth Form College, ICT has a maximum set size of 18; in Media at AS there is a ceiling of 22, but most subjects have to accept 24. Set sizes of more than 22 in Media are really not acceptable at AS level and would be very hard to teach effectively. At A2 the average set size should be smaller.

2.9 Should I take students who have not done GCSE Media?

You will probably have to! If the class is a mixture, it really does not hurt to start everyone from scratch on the key concepts and with skills for the equipment. They will have forgotten plenty since their GCSEs anyway.

The OCR GCSE Media Studies specification is designed to provide clear progression through to the OCR AS/A level. The conceptual framework which underpins the GCSE is essentially the same as the framework for AS/A level. The moving image examination option at GCSE for example offers excellent preparation for the AS Textual Analysis unit (2731).

2.10 What should be the minimum qualification to embark on this course?

It will depend upon your Centre's entry requirements, but in general 5 GCSEs at A-C is accepted as the minimum for doing AS levels. There will always be exceptions, however and it is important to remember that many Media students starting from a low general base on qualifications, perform exceptionally well on this course because it is able to capture their interest in totally new ways.

2.11 When should I start teaching the A2?

Ideally the period after AS examinations should be used to start the A2 course. There is little point in starting it before the AS ends as students are likely to become confused about what they have to do in the examinations. If you leave it to September, without any kind of A2 preparation, students may not be ready soon enough for the higher standard of work expected.

2.12 What are the coursework deadlines and examination dates and where do I find the various cover sheets?

These are available from the OCR website and should be obtainable from your Centre's Examinations Officer.

2.13 Should there be an induction course and if so, what should it comprise?

Even on a course as short as AS level (two and a half terms or about 32 weeks), it makes sense to have an induction course. If you have students who have done GCSE Media then revision of key concepts and skills will be necessary. If they have not done Media, they will need a crash course to familiarise them with the concepts, the vocabulary, the subject matter and the skills needed to use the equipment. If they have moved from school to a new environment or sixth form, they may well be working with entirely new people which will mean the need for settling in to working with one another.

What you do for induction may be related specifically to material from one of the AS units or it may be freestanding and more generalised. It should include activities which allow for group work, research, practical skills, equipment access, discussion and writing and analysis of media texts so that they can get the idea of the range of activities involved in Media Studies A level.

Some Centres spend the whole of the first half term on induction activities, building the skills needed in an atmosphere where getting things wrong doesn't matter so long as students learn from the experience for future practice. This should be seen as a positive use of time which will sow the seeds for the rest of the course, rather than as treading water before the real course starts. It does, however, need to be planned sequentially and move at a good pace so that students feel they are learning and can see the point of what they are doing.

Suggested models of course outlines are indicated in the Appendix.

3 Resources

3.1 What equipment is needed to run this course?

It depends upon which options you will offer at AS and A2 for production. Some Centres want to offer students the choice of different kinds of production, which will need more resourcing and training. Others specialise with one or two media and therefore fewer options from among the set briefs, which gives a greater degree of focus.

For video work, there is no need to invest in professional standard cameras and edit suites costing several thousands of pounds each. It is better to have more equipment to give greater access for all students than to have a few very costly setups with only limited access. Domestic camcorders can now be purchased for less than £300 and a computer with sufficient hard drive space and RAM including appropriate software for as little as £600. In the specification, a startup of four computers and camera for the first twenty students is recommended, but the ratio could be much larger once you have more students as you can spread its use across groups at different times. Final copies of work for moderation must be presented on VHS or DVD accessible on normal domestic players and checked as such before despatch from the Centre. It is worth noting that sound on the cheapest cameras does not tend to be very good and you need to invest in cameras which can take external microphones if you are planning on a lot of dialogue-based work. However, for Foundation Production (unit 2730) both the Set Brief 1 (opening of a thriller film) and Set Brief 2 (sequence of a childrens' TV programme) can be done without synchronised sound, so bottom of the range DV cameras are adequate for the task.

For audio work, computer based audio editing is now essential. Some Centres have persisted in using very limited and cheap tape recorders and microphones with their students but this really is wholly inadequate and unacceptable for A level work which is worth 40% of the marks. Minidisc or tape may be used for recording but editing must be done on a proper program to produce decent output. Final copies for moderation must be presented on audio CD.

For print work, programmes such as In Design and Photoshop need to be used in tandem. It is not possible to simulate professional layout with word processing software, so it is vital to invest in proper DTP software. Digital cameras are now so ubiquitous and so good that you should be able to shop around to get something which will suit your needs for a good price.

For web work, though it is possible to get good instant results with online resources such as blogger. In order to demonstrate the requisite technical expertise and to produce truly multimedia sites, it is important that Centres invest in programs such as Dreamweaver and Fireworks. Digital cameras and scanners will also be essential for such projects.

The principles outlined above hold true for all media. To offer this course and run it properly, money needs to be invested and both teachers and students need to learn how to use it, otherwise everyone is being sold short and some of the common prejudices about Media Studies are simply justified.

3.2 Mac or PC- which is best?

This debate is as old as the two systems and the range of opinions on the relative advantages and disadvantages of each one have been much rehearsed on the OCR e-community. (It is well worth trawling through the archives of community messages for advice from teachers at Centres who have actually addressed these questions in relation to their own students).

Some points worth considering when making your decision are:

- Many Centres use PCs and so the technical support is already on hand. However, technicians may not be familiar with the programmes which you'll be using and you'll be subject to the Centre's policy on computer support generally (which may be inadequate for your needs). You will need support from technicians who are familiar with and understand the software which you're running.
- The flexibility of PCs means that they are able to run a variety of software programmes and serve the needs of many departments. Such sharing has implications for availability of the machines for Media students.
- Macs do not usually need any configuration before you can start using them but you may need some time to train yourself on how to use the machine and the software.
- Editing software comes as standard on Macs (and its quite a sophisticated package in terms of what it can do) whereas PCs may need extras fitted before they are able to run editing software.
- Macs are not at risk from the range of viruses targeted at PCs.

Whether you go for Mac or PC, networking of video production is not recommended. For print and audio where the file sizes are relatively small, networks may be fine, but you are much better off storing video on portable hard drives or insisting that students always work on the same machine, as loading time can be lengthy and there is a real danger of clogging up or crashing school networks.

The most important thing is to plan ahead and test out every operation you are likely to need well ahead of giving students projects to do. In particular, ensure from the outset that you can get finished video off the machine onto DVD or VHS video as well as import footage in the first place. It is disheartening to hear of the number of Centres which allow their students to work through productions all year and then can't export the finished projects at the end because nobody thought ahead.

3.3 What about playback facilities?

As VHS becomes increasingly obsolete, there will come a time soon where perhaps all we will need is the DVD player, but for the moment everyone probably needs both. If you have a projector system in your classroom, one of the ways of avoiding constantly having to swap over leads is to buy a combination DVD/VHS player for about £80, which has just one lead and you switch between the two formats on the remote. Projectors are likely to need booster speakers and may not always give the best picture (dependent too upon the surface on which you are projecting).

Remember that you must have a DVD player in order to run the unseen film extract for the Textual Analysis (unit 2731) examination. Whiteboards are not that great for video projection, so buy a proper screen if you are using a projector.

3.4 How much of a budget do I need?

Depends on what you are going to offer for practical work and how many students you have. After start-up costs, an annual budget of £15 per student is not unreasonable, provided you are not buying sets of textbooks. Your main expenses are likely to be photocopying, software, including blank tapes and disks and equipment replacement over time, which would have to come from central funding.

3.5 Is internet access essential?

Yes and you should argue for the removal of 'net nanny' style software and offer a supervised environment instead, as access to so many relevant websites is denied by the heavy-handed nature of such software. Though many students will have access at home, it is an equal opportunities issue, as it is with production work. Centres should NEVER be relying solely upon students to have their own facilities for A level work.

For the A2 research unit, all students will have to use the web. For the other units, there are many useful sites which they could use for the analysis of material and to support their studies.

3.6 May 18 certificate films be shown to classes?

Yes, as schools or colleges are not subject to the same certification as a cinema. However, you should be sure of your own position within the institution. You may find it necessary to do a blanket letter home for permission or you may need to consult with senior staff. Sometimes, however, this may simply be opening an unnecessary can of worms. Most 18

films will not raise any eyebrows, but more controversial well known choices should be considered carefully. Common sense is the best option!

3.7 Can material recorded 'off air' be shown to classes?

Yes provided your institution holds the relevant licence.

3.8 Is there any way of getting hold of old TV programmes which are not commercially available?

Yes. Richmond College provides this service to Centres which hold an off-air licence.

3.9 What are the key books for this course?

The Hodder AS textbook by Jones and Bennett (2nd edition 2006) and the A2 textbook by Jones, Bennett and McDougall (2nd edition 2006) are the OCR endorsed textbooks. Other books which may be found useful are listed in the resources section of the e-community's website according to their relevance to particular units.

4 Unit 2730: Foundation Production

4.1 Why are there set tasks?

To make the work common for all candidates as far as possible whilst still providing some flexibility for Centres in terms of media to use and materials to study.

4.2 How strict are the recommended lengths of tasks and commentaries?

The minimum for print and website work is absolute. Centres should note the difference between expectations for individual and group assignments. For audio work the length of adverts should be quite close to that suggested. For video work, the length stipulated is advisory, as some variation is likely. A very short piece of work which is complex in its construction but appropriate to the task should not be penalised. Experience suggests that work which is considerably over the recommended length often loses focus and does itself no service by being longer.

The number of words in commentaries will not be physically counted by moderators unless they appear to be obviously too long, in which case they will be asked to discount anything more than 10% over the 2000 or 3000 word limit and, if necessary, deduct marks accordingly. Students should thus be advised not to go more than 10% over the maximums.

4.3 Should all students do the same task for 2730?

They can but they don't have to. Experience suggests that Centres which offer the options of the full menu of tasks often do their students a disservice as a consequence, since they have not got the time to teach students to use the equipment properly nor to analyse examples of real media texts from all the genres on offer with the class. You are advised, therefore, to stick to one or two tasks from the same medium. A few Centres give their students two opportunities with coursework and submit the better of the two. This gives more chance for students to pick up skills and to learn from mistakes.

4.4 What is meant by 'original material'?

Material created by the students from scratch. Photos they have taken for the project, video they have shot, audio they have recorded. 'Found' material is admissible but should be used in a new context and manipulated to suit that context. The minimum of original material must be submitted as well. Found visual material should be used only as a last resort or when it would be inappropriate to produce for real (such as a shot of an explosion). Too many candidates submit print artefacts dominated by images of real pop stars or sports people when they could easily construct their own images using students as actors playing the part

of such celebrities. This would demonstrate a much greater level of understanding of media construction. The exception with found material is music, as students are not expected for example, to make their own music soundtracks for their thrillers or music videos (though they may if they wish!)

4.5 Should students do non-assessed practical as well as the coursework?

Yes, without a doubt. Just as they would not be expected to go into an examination without any practice at timed essays, the same is true for practical work.

4.6 How much should teachers intervene on coursework?

Though coursework is the work of the student, it would be a dereliction of the teacher's duty to simply leave them to it. Clear advice on expectations should be given from the outset and students should be supervised and advised throughout in whatever ways you, as the professional teacher, feel are appropriate. Though teachers should not do it for them, they are free to suggest improvements throughout.

4.7 Can someone else do the practical for the students, from their ideas?

No. In group work, particular tasks may be shared so that someone else holds the camera while someone acts, but overall, candidates are expected to plan and execute ideas themselves. There is little opportunity for learning if the plans are simply handed over to someone else to make the product. In the event of candidates with severe disabilities who are physically unable to use particular equipment, direct contact with the OCR Subject Officer is advised.

4.8 How much time should be allocated to coursework?

Probably less than you think. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the longer students are given, the longer they will leave it to get on with the task. It is perfectly possible to plan, shoot and edit an opening sequence for a film or a childrens' TV programme sequence in three weeks of lesson time, provided students have been prepared in induction to use the equipment effectively. The same is true of the other projects. The same is true of the writing - give them longer and they are likely to just put it off longer. Tight deadlines adhered to by all work wonders for motivation and achievement!

4.9 How do I interpret the criteria for 2730?

One person's proficient work could be another person's competent and another's excellent. Overall, moderators are looking for 'best fit' with the criteria set out in the specification, so it is possible for work to fall within a particular level without necessarily achieving every single aspect in full. However, the levels are broad so there is scope for differentiation between top level 3 and the bottom. Try to identify elements from the marking criteria in the work and then look at your rank order to see if scores can be justified. Some material is available each year at OCR INSET to help.

4.10 What evidence of planning and construction is needed?

Some, but not mountains! For planning, moderators are looking to support Centres so take the time to complete fully the teachers' comments box on the Coursework Cover Sheet. Candidates should include some planning evidence, such as storyboards or pre-manipulated photos and early layout sketches with annotations. They do not need to include all the leaflets they gathered when looking at existing health campaigns or all the questionnaires they received back from audience research. Teacher evidence of both areas is crucial but it must match the product, as simply over-valuing construction when there is not the tangible evidence to support it, helps no-one and leads to downward moderation of marks.

4.11 How should work be presented for the moderator?

Neatly and clearly, labelled so that it is absolutely clear which work belongs to each candidate. There is no need for an individual tape for every candidate's video, but if they are on a compilation, there must be inter-titles which include candidate name and number and a list of names, candidate numbers and timings on the box. Finished print artefacts should be the first element of a student's folder, with any drafts as appendices at the back. No work should be larger than A3 size and print work must be presented in a simple plastic wallet. Web work should be accessible to the moderator online and a printout of the basic pages provided. Student writing should be annotated by the teacher and the Coursework Cover Sheet filled out in detail with appropriate reference to the marking criteria.

4.12 How should evidence of individual contribution to group work be provided?

The individual student's contribution must be evidenced by the teacher's comments on the Coursework Cover Sheet. In addition, students are expected to discuss their contribution in the writing and it may be useful to add some kind of self-assessment at the end of the project. It is possible that all members of the group could get the same marks for planning and construction as one another (although highly unlikely), but you should differentiate between them on the basis of their contribution and skills. In doing this, you should be fair

and must clearly justify the differences in your comments. Moderators will look to support your marks where possible.

5 Unit 2731: Textual Analysis

5.1 How much teaching time should be dedicated to this unit?

It is up to you, but it is perfectly possible to cover each section in four weeks of teaching time and, as with all units, there is some virtue in moving quickly to keep students focussed. For action/adventure films, extracts only are needed, with a variety of activities recommended to keep students interested and active. For the second section, whichever topic students undertake, it is sensible to offer a range of introductory activities before working in detail on the texts for the examination itself. Many Centres enter students for this examination in January of Year 12, using it as a foundation unit. Others enter it at the end of Year 12.

5.2 How is 'Action/Adventure' defined and what could be used for extracts for the first question in the examination?

Action/Adventure is defined very broadly, so that the extract chosen might come from a range of genres with action elements, from classic 'adventure' like Indiana Jones, through to 'crime, spy' films and even some science fiction films. Previous extracts for the examination have been taken from *The World is Not Enough*, *The Mummy*, *The Phantom Menace*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Spiderman* and *Mission Impossible 2*. The key factor in common is that the sequence should be a setpiece with action, enabling analysis of the five key elements of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene, special effects and sound.

5.3 What facilities are needed for the examination?

It must be possible for all students to see and hear the extract properly. From 2006 the extract will be provided on DVD. It is possible to show it on a large TV for small cohorts or using projection for larger cohorts. It is important that teachers carry out a confidential check of the disk in advance of the examination and ensure that screening conditions are adequate.

5.4 For the second question, do all students have to study the same pairs of text?

No. Centres are free to decide. For a large cohort it would make sense to have some variety.

5.5 How should pairs of text be chosen?

There needs to be some points of comparison and some opportunity for contrast. It is important to consider how students will write about the two texts in the examination. The Principal Examiner's report written after every session, gives useful advice about texts which worked well together and those which proved problematic.

6 Unit 2732: Case Study: Audiences and Institutions

6.1 Why is the examination format so different?

A variety of assessment styles is important for A level to avoid over-emphasis upon one type of skill. Hence, the examination for unit 2731 features 'unseen' analysis and prepared material whilst the examination for 2732 combines short answer comprehension-style questions with a more extended piece of writing.

6.2 What do students actually need to do to prepare for this examination?

They need to have a good up-to-date working knowledge of the key issues involved in either new media technologies or media ownership. They need to be able to refer to actual examples to support their points. They also need practice at the format of the examination in order to hone their skills.

6.3 What is meant by 'case study'?

It refers to either new media or media ownership. To only look at one new medium or one media organisation would not be advisable, since it is often difficult to draw conclusions based on a single example. For new media, a key element is convergence, which by its very nature involves the bringing together of different technologies. For media ownership, studying the BBC in isolation would give an entirely misleading view of how media industries operate because it is so different as an organisation to the major conglomerates.

6.4 Do students have to carry out research for this unit?

They can but they do not have to. It is useful to develop their research skills for A2 but they are not assessed on independent research for this unit so it is not essential. Drawing upon students' own experience of the media is an effective teaching strategy for this unit providing a good 'way in', especially for the new media technologies topic.

6.5 Should they prepare for both sections?

They could but there is a real danger that this would lead to a lot of wasted time in the examination, reading both sections and deciding which to do. Though there is overlap between them, it is probably better to choose one section so that students are focussed and then use concepts from the other to inform the issues covered.

6.6 How long should students spend on each question?

As the examination lasts an hour, they should expect to write at some length for the essay question (question 3 or 4), using half their time on it. The short answer questions should take 30 minutes maximum, with 10 minutes or more allocated to question 2b, which can carry up to 20 of the marks. They should not spend a lot of time on the very short questions worth only 5-7 marks. They can choose to answer these in note form.

6.7 How can teachers keep up with changes for this unit?

The web is undoubtedly the best source of material. Sites such as the BBC and The Guardian are both excellent for their coverage of new media and media ownership. The aim of the unit is to be as contemporary as possible so that students gain an understanding of media institutions and audiences as they exist now. Text books are likely to be good for the concepts and examination practice but will quickly go out of date.

7 Unit 2733: Advanced Production

7.1 Can there be overlap with 2730 tasks?

No. Care should be taken that tasks are not too similar, such as sequences from horror films or thriller trailers which can each overlap too much with the AS tasks.

7.2 Can the student use the same medium for 2733 as 2730?

Strictly speaking, no, but the medium counts as the institutional intention rather than the classroom technology used. Thus video may be used at both AS and A2 if, for instance, the AS work was the thriller and the A2 was a TV programme or a music video. Print could be used for the magazine at AS and then for a newspaper at A2.

7.3 How much free choice should be given?

This is up to you, but there is much to be said for common tasks as at AS, rather than allowing students too much freedom and too much variety of equipment. It makes marking and internal moderation easier if students are working on the same task. 'Free Choice' should be taken to mean free from OCR deciding the task.

7.4 What tasks work well for this unit?

Probably the single most popular task is the music promo, though documentaries and trailers are also frequently submitted on video. For radio, documentary is often the most successful option; print tasks such as local papers and specialist (not teenage) magazines are quite common and can be well done.

7.5 What are the key differences in the writing for 2733 compared with 2730?

Students have to write more and have to give a greater sense of context, with attention to audience, institution and comparison with real media output. There is also an expectation of more explicit critical understanding, though they should beware of simply trotting out theories in order to pick up marks. The most important use of 'theory' is to conceptualise what they have produced.

Please refer to the other questions on unit 2730 (Foundation Production) as many of the points are relevant to unit 2733 as well.

8 Unit 2734: Critical Research Study

8.1 When do the topics change for this paper?

The January 2007 assessment session sees the first opportunity to use the new topics. The June 2006 examination will be the last one to feature Concept to Consumption, Children and Television and Popular Music and Youth Culture. In January 2007, students will be able to do Children and the Media, World Cinema and TV Drama for the first time and there will be greater flexibility for some of the other topics as the stipulation of 'British' only will be dropped.

8.2 How should this unit be approached?

Very much as an independent piece of research by the students with the teacher in a supportive role, providing a framework for their investigation. Students are likely to need a lot of support with research methods and teachers will need to provide access to some resources, but the aim is that the student takes ownership of his or her project.

8.3 Should the students be offered all 9 choices?

It is up to you. In larger Centres it is likely that the full range of choices would be offered, but it is possible to specialise in fewer, provided students are given the opportunity to demonstrate real independence in their choice of topic and do not have their options shut down by teacher input.

8.4 How do I know if a proposed topic is suitable?

Try asking yourself whether it would be possible to answer the previous examination questions in relation to the topic. If you are still in doubt, you can get advice from the ecommunity or the OCR Subject Officer.

8.5 How long should students spend on this topic?

As with other units, there can be a law of diminishing returns. If they are given too long they are unlikely to get on with it. It is quite feasible to do most of it in an intensive way over a few weeks, with the opportunity for students to add to it if they are awaiting distant replies.

8.6 What is the status of the ‘notes’ in the examination?

They are not marked, but examiners have to initial them to indicate that they have been checked. There are clear rules about what is allowed in the notes, with the most important provision being that students cannot simply copy out great chunks of prose from them into their examination script.

8.7 If all students do the same topic will they be penalised?

Not if their projects are clearly individual research but if they are too similar and clearly the result of teacher transmission of knowledge, they cannot expect to score many marks for independent research.

8.8 How is this paper marked?

The marking scheme sets out the criteria for the different levels of marks and you are advised to acquire a copy from OCR Publications.

9 Unit 2735: Media Issues and Debates

9.1 When does this paper change?

The first assessment of the new topics and new style paper will be in January 2007. Soap Opera will disappear to be replaced by Music Programmes on TV and some other topics have a change of name and emphasis. Students will only have to answer two questions from three sections rather than one question from each of the three sections.

9.2 What texts should be used for this paper?

Any which meet the criteria for the topics. There are no 'set texts'.

9.3 Can students all study the same texts?

Yes, though they should have a range of examples which they can use in the examination rather than all having the same examples as if learnt by rote.

9.4 Will examiners have seen all the texts the students might refer to?

No but that does not matter, since they will be seeking conceptual understanding and the ability to engage with an issue or debate and use examples to support points.

9.5 How many topics should be studied?

It's up to you. There will only be one question on each topic but if you wish to give students a choice in the examination you would need to teach more than two. Most Centres will probably do two or three.

10 Appendix: Course Design

Model 1: Two productions at AS. Unit by unit.

Year 12 Autumn Sept/Oct	Induction: 10 sessions on equipment activities using cameras, editing and <i>Photoshop</i> ; 10 parallel sessions in classroom looking at four key concepts and building analytical skills.
Nov/Dec	Four week unit on Action/Adventure for 2731 for half of year group while other half of year group undertake Brief 2 for 2730. Then the groups swap over.
Jan/Feb/Mar	Similar model with half year group doing five weeks on video games for 2731 and rest doing Brief 1 for 2730. Then swap.
Apr/May	Whole cohort study New Media Technologies for 2732 then revision of 2731 topics before examinations.
May	Submit 2730 Coursework for moderation.
June	AS examinations.
Late June and July	All students continuing to A2 introduced to music video as a topic with analysis and background on the industry, then introduced to more sophisticated editing package: <i>Final Cut Express</i> .
September- November	2733 music video practical plus write-up for all Y13.
January	Submit 2733 Coursework for moderation
mid November to late January	2735 work on Media Issues and Debates paper topics - British Cinema and Music Programmes on TV (arising from 2733 work).
February to May	Focussed work on skills and structure for 2734 followed by independent research.
June	A2 examinations.

Model 2: Parallel teaching of topics/units

Year 12 Autumn Sept/Oct	Induction: building analytical skills and introduction to use of print.
Nov/Dec	Unit on Action/Adventure for 2731 in parallel with Celebrity and the Tabloid Press till Christmas.
Jan	2731 examination.
Feb-May	Teenage Magazine production for 2730 in parallel with Media Ownership for 2732.
May	Submit 2730 coursework for moderation.
June	2732 examination.
Late June and July	All students continuing to A2 begin Critical Research Study.
September- December	Critical Research in parallel with Media Issues and Debates (2735) topic 1.
January	2734 examination.
February to May	Practical (2733) - free choice video in parallel with second Media Issues and Debates topic.
May	Submit 2733 Coursework for moderation.
June	2735 examination.

Each model has its advantages and disadvantages. Consideration of resources, cohort and institutional demands will enable teachers to decide how to organise courses.