

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCE

GCE Media (8771/ 9771)

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Introduction

This is my second opportunity to report on the AS qualification and my first opportunity to report on the A2 qualification. The reports have been designed to give centres an insight into the moderation of the June 2007 series.

This Applied GCE has been developed to allow candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skill in an appropriate way.

The moderation of candidates work was undertaken through postal moderation or centre visits. Centres were given the option of a postal sample rather than a centre visit. Postal samples were, generally, presented in the correct format following discussions with the allocated moderator. Where candidate work was deemed appropriate for sampling by post this was agreed with the centre. Where work was unable to be moderated by postal sampling centres were offered the option of a centre visit.

For postal sampling the majority of centres provided the correct sample of candidate work after agreement with the moderator on the range of work required.

For centre visits moderators were, generally, given access to the whole range of candidate work and provided with an appropriate space in which to work. There was appropriate technology available to review all formats of media work.

The holistic nature of this qualification provides an opportunity for moderation of whole portfolios of candidate work. In the majority of cases centres were able to provide the moderator with portfolios of work across all AS and A2 units.

The majority of centres used the Unit Assessment Record sheets to record decisions and make comments on their candidates work. Where centres had not used this documentation it was sometimes unclear how decisions on marks had been made. Centres should use the Unit Assessment Record sheets to record their assessment decisions and reasons for awarding marks.

The range of work seen by moderators was generally of a high standard. In the AS qualification there were some excellent examples of investigations into media industries, research techniques and technology. As noted in my previous report there was generally a lack of understanding of audience, representation and job roles in the media industry. Many centres were, once again, unable to provide adequate opportunities for their candidates to investigate a media company or to identify and use a range of research techniques or identify relevant progression in skill levels. All of these issues are dealt with in the sections under each unit title.

The publication of a text book for both the AS and A2 qualifications has provided valuable material on research techniques, media industries and the skills required for media production.

There were, once again, some excellent examples of innovative methods of recording skills, undertaking research using relevant media techniques and finished media products.

The most contentious issue in this series appears to be the use of group work in Unit 3 Media Production Brief and again in Unit 5 Media Production Project.

Throughout the specification there are references to the candidate producing individual work for assessment. On page 37 in the introduction it states *"This unit will allow you to put into practice the skills you have developed in Unit 2"* and on page 40 *"For assessment you must hand in your pre-production, production and post-production work.."*

Unit 5 Page 62 *'It is essential you understand the need for using other people to support you in the production of your media product. ... You should consider using other people to support the production and post-production processes... You can, of course, help them in return with their projects.'*

In order to achieve these units candidates must produce their own pre-production, production and post-production work not photo-copied group work. If candidates have been supporting each other in these processes, for example as a camera operator or sound recordist, then this should be clearly indicated in the paperwork. Candidates could gain marks for helping one of their colleagues produce their work. It is clear from the Assessment Criteria for Units 3 and 5 that candidates need to produce evidence of their own understanding of pre-production, production and post-production.

There have been some excellent examples of relevant media products. The approach of some centres to the holistic delivery of the qualification has, once again, allowed some candidates the freedom to experiment and practice skills throughout the course.

Generally, the work seen by moderators has been of a good standard. There have, once again, been some excellent examples of innovative teaching methods being employed by teachers. There have been good examples of teachers comments on the Unit Assessment Record validating the marks awarded to their candidates. The range of media products produced in Units 3 and 5 has been varied and, in some cases, innovative and reflecting professional practice.

Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Media: Communication and Production (Single Award) (8771)

Unit 1 Industries, Texts and Audiences (6973)

This unit requires candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the macro-organisation of an area of the media industry. There was some confusion again in centres about what constitutes an area of the media industry. It may be inappropriate to simply study Hollywood as an area as this might not provide sufficient material for candidates. Using the BBC does provide material from which candidates can demonstrate understanding and knowledge. Information on the BBC is readily available and the candidate can place this information in their own framework of understanding. The use of Hollywood may provide some glamorous insight into the world of film but information might be difficult to find. It may be relevant to use a media medium such as newspapers or magazines as information can be easily accessed and examples found easily. This media sector could also provide a starting point for A01 (b) where candidates have to look at a media company (micro-organisation). Candidates must be guided clearly to an area of the media that the teacher has clear knowledge and understanding of not simply what might be the most glamorous. Equally, candidates need to be engaged by this work and so should have an opportunity to pick from a list and not simply given a topic. It may be relevant to provide a list and ask individuals or groups of candidates to research and come up with a report or presentation on that particular area of the media industry. These reports or presentations could be a good point of reference for all the candidates when trying to find material for A01 (b) or when deciding on a project for Unit 3.

Whatever was chosen for the media industry there appears to be only limited understanding of how this affects the industry's products.

A01 (b)

Those Centres that have been working hard to establish links with local media organisations were able to offer their learners a more meaningful and engaging context within which to develop their understanding of the internal organisation of a media company. Furthermore, where students chose to present their understanding through the production of a media text such as a presentation, leaflet, illustrated report, website or DVD; they provided evidence of both relevant knowledge and creative practical skill.

A04 (c) and A04 (d)

Although acknowledging that there has been some improvement on last year, the majority of learners could not demonstrate a thorough or sophisticated understanding of the concepts of representation and audience interpretation. A number of teachers are only offering a limited number of texts, and in some cases only one text, for analysis in response to these assessment criteria

Where candidates had been given the opportunity to analyse the conventions, representations and audience interpretations of their own choice of media texts in response to the assessment criterion, it encouraged both self-directed learning and personal engagement with the key concepts, leading to some thorough and perceptive responses.

Teacher observation records are a valuable, and often overlooked, way of recording the level of student attainment in relation to the assessment criteria.

Unit 2 Skills for Media Production (6974)

In general candidates responded well to this unit. They were able to identify a range of research methods and then employ them in the planning of a media product. Some centres used this as an opportunity to develop research for Unit 3 Media Production Brief. At the top of the mark band the research work was evaluative, wide ranging and analytical. At the bottom end there was an over reliance on class handouts and downloaded unannotated internet material. Candidates should be encouraged to keep careful and well-collated records of their research.

Teachers appear to have developed more confidence in constructing a skill development course, including media research skills. These research skills are an important element of any media production work and will form the basis of the candidates work for Unit 4 should they progress to the A2 qualification.

Skills audits were more prevalent in this moderation activity and provided moderators with an important measurement of pupil progress in relation to a range of competences. Where candidates themselves reflect in more detail on their own progress and plan for further advancement it enabled them to construct a more coherent and personal programme of skill development.

Centres are also becoming more familiar with the holistic nature of the qualification, looking for evidence of attainment in different Units.

Although clearly using relevant equipment and technology, those candidates who offered a more explicit evaluation of the equipment that they have actually used within the production tasks were better able to demonstrate *'an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of different versions of equipment and technology* A02 (c). In many cases this was forgotten or simply missed out by candidates.

There were many examples of both creative flair and the candidates' growing confidence with a range of production processes and techniques. Candidates who were offered the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills are significantly better at recording their own progress through audits and logs.

It is clear that many teachers have now noted that the criterion A02 (d) requires teachers to review the candidate's progress throughout the period of the course not just in this unit. This, of course, means that the teacher should assess this criterion at the end of the course rather than at the end of this unit.

Centres are also reminded that the assessment evidence may take a variety of forms, such as audio or video diaries, director's commentaries, illustrated reports, presentations and web pages.

Unit 3 Media Production Brief (6975)

It was good to see the range of media products produced by candidates. This ranged from sophisticated short commercials on the need for fitness and comedy shorts to posters and magazines on fitness techniques. It was clear that candidates had engaged with this brief and had been given an opportunity to demonstrate their developing skills in media production.

However, there was a lack of understanding of pre-production, production and post-production documentation. It is clear that many centres do not have an understanding of the documentation required for coverage of this criterion. The suggested documentation should be (according to the media format chosen): a proposal, treatment, storyboard / mood board / schematic / trial layout, script, production schedule, budget and call sheets.

In general candidates did provide a relevant media product that achieved its intention and demonstrated some imagination. Where candidates were given free reign to plan and produce their ideas it was clear that they had fully engaged with the product.

In some centres candidates had produced a group product with little evidence of the candidate's contribution to the process. The unit specification should have alerted centres to the need for each candidate to produce a media product in order to meet the assessment criteria. If a group approach had been undertaken each candidate must have contributed significantly to all areas of pre-production, production and post-production. A photo-copied group logbook is not sufficient evidence for A02 (a), A03 (b) and A03 (c).

The range of creativity, seen in the media products moderated, once again, demonstrates the skills that many teachers have in motivating their candidates to realise their potential. Candidates should be given every opportunity to build on the skills developed in Unit 1 and Unit 2. Their understanding of codes, conventions and genre should inform their planning for a media product. The skills developed in Unit 2 should provide an opportunity to prove that they have skills in pre-production, production and post-production.

A04 (d)

This was the weakest area of this unit was where many candidates failed to provide even a basic evaluation of their work or the product's fitness for purpose. Candidates should be encouraged to review their work and to ask others for their comments on their work and fitness for purpose of the product. All too often the evaluation was historical and not evaluative. Candidates must move away from what they did to how well it went and what they would do if they could tackle this again. A group critique of work with constructive comments from peers is a useful tool as is a showing of work to a focus group or small audience. Analysis of the results of this could provide valuable evidence for making changes to the product, resulting in a higher mark. Centres should consider providing alternative methods of recording evaluation such as a commentary track on a candidate's DVD programme or an on-going annotation of a print product.

General Comments

It was good to see such a range of achievement by candidates in this qualification. It is clear that the second round of this qualification has seen an improvement in marks as teachers have developed skills in delivery and have taken on board the comments from the previous Chief Examiners report.

However, it was clear from the moderation of this qualification that teachers are still not fully engaging with the Mark Bands and Assessment Guidance provided in the specification. There was evidence of marks being awarded for work that clearly did not meet the requirements of the mark band in which it was placed.

Teachers must ensure that there is evidence to support the awarding of marks. They must ensure that candidates produce appropriate material to demonstrate achievement of the mark being awarded.

Edexcel Advanced GCE in Media: Communication and Production (Single Award) (9771)

Unit 4 Research and Development for Media Production (6976)

This unit builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills developed in Unit 2 of the AS qualification. It is the starting point for the holistic delivery and assessment of this qualification.

Generally, this unit was delivered and assessed in an appropriate manner. Candidates had thought of imaginative and creative ideas that could be taken through to a finished media product. In some instances candidates had failed to identify a range of ideas and this limited them to researching and developing one theme. Teachers should be aware of the need for learners to think of and develop their own ideas rather than an imposed a theme that may limit them to one genre or technique.

AO2 (a)

In some cases candidates thought of a range of ideas but failed to investigate each idea and concentrated on researching only their chosen idea. It would have been good to see each idea the subject of intensive research activity that then led to the selection of one idea for further development. In order to achieve Mark Band 1 candidates have to '*have produced conventional ideas, which have been the subject of limited research*'. Some candidates failed to think of one really good idea and in these cases the teacher should have stepped in and provided the candidate with advice and support. A range of alternative topics could be produced by the teacher and held in reserve for cases where candidates find this work difficult.

It was noted that some centres had not fully understood the requirement for individual candidate work. Candidates need to produce their own ideas, research and development. They should be pitching their own ideas to an audience or client. In a small number of cases work was presented as photocopied research notes and a joint presentation. This would clearly present difficulties with differentiating candidates contributions to the work and the photocopied material could be seen as plagiarism. Learners must produce evidence of their own ideas and the ways in which they have developed them. This will be followed by a pitch and treatment.

AO2 (b)

Some candidates failed to provide evidence of the commercial viability of their proposed product. In many cases this was addressed only superficially and candidates commented on where the product would be shown and how much this might cost. Where it was addressed successfully candidates indicated how their product would attract an audience and the financial implications of production costs versus revenue generated. Some teachers were over generous in the marking of this criterion.

AO2 (c)

Candidates provided a wide range of evidence to support the development of their ideas. However, there was a reliance of downloaded internet pages with little or no candidate annotations. It is not appropriate for candidates to simply find material on the internet and consider this to be appropriate research. The use of sites such as Wikipedia does not provide valid research tools as these are simply the opinions of the users without validation. Many candidates did provide evidence of looking at books, magazines, contemporary material and research tools such as questionnaires and focus groups. Candidates need to focus clearly on the development of one of their ideas and use their research to provide the evidence for the development process.

AO3 (d)

Many candidates produced an effective pitch using both written material and presentation techniques. However, some candidates failed to produce a confident or persuasive pitch. This may be due to their lack

of preparation or practice in 'selling' their idea to a client or audience. Candidates should practice pitching techniques and produce presenter's notes to help them with their presentation. Candidates should provide the client or audience with handouts to help explain some of the finer points of the pitch. Teachers could elicit more information from candidates through a question and answer session at the end of the pitch. This may help provide evidence of the candidate's achievement of higher marks.

Some candidates failed to provide even an adequate treatment. The treatment should spell out to the client the details of the production. As such it should contain details of budget, initial script, sample storyboard or mood board or layout and a production schedule. In order to achieve the highest marks the treatment will have to be thorough. This was not seen in the majority of candidates work.

Unit 5 Media Production Project (6977)

This unit allows the candidate to demonstrate the skills they developed in the AS qualification to produce a finished media product. They will have produced one final idea that has been developed into a treatment. In this unit they will put this treatment into practice.

There were many examples of innovative media products produced across a wide range of media forms. Candidates used their time to produce media products that ranged from music videos to documentaries and printed products. Some candidates used animation techniques to produce short films whilst some produced radio programmes on a variety of topics. Some candidates took the same topic they used for their work in AS Unit 3 but this tended to limit them rather than expand their production skills.

AO3 (a)

This criterion tended to be the weakest element of this unit. Some candidates failed to provide sufficient information about their planning and management abilities. Many candidates did not demonstrate monitoring of their work. There was a lack of evidence of candidates working with independence and initiative and using appropriate documentation.

Teachers should consider providing teacher observation records to support the awarding of marks for initiative and independent learning. It may be advisable to provide blank templates for candidates to complete to demonstrate their use of documentation. Candidates could keep a personal diary, blog or video diary that demonstrates they have analysed what they are doing and have monitored activities in a realistic way.

The media products, in many cases, were imaginative and demonstrated a wide range of production skills. In this qualification it is essential that candidates produce their own media products in order to demonstrate their production skills not simply team skills. Teachers need to point candidates to this when discussing the development of their ideas in Unit 4 through to the production process. It is acceptable for a candidate to ask their peers for help in making a media product. However, the candidate must take responsibility for their own product and manage the team effectively. They might be able to claim some competencies in managing time and monitoring their work by helping someone else to make a media product.

In order to achieve the highest marks the media products must successfully achieve the intentions set down in the treatment. It follows that the treatment must be effective and provides a basis for the finished product to have a clear relevance and appeal to an audience.

The finished product must show creativity and flair with sophisticated and creative use of techniques and technology in order to achieve the highest marks. This was sadly lacking in many of the media products moderated. The candidates seemed to have gone with well tried, and sometimes tedious, remakes of contemporary media products. In the worst case scenario a thirty minute programme consisting entirely of static interviews did not allow a candidate to demonstrate appropriate use of techniques and technology. There was a real lack of creativity which was surprising when candidates had free reign to develop a product over a long period of time.

It cannot be stressed too highly the need for candidates to have sufficient time to think about and develop appropriate ideas for media products. They also need time to consider what they require for production and post-production. All of this, of course, leads to their review in Unit 6.

Unit 6 Professional Practice in the Media Industries (6978)

In this externally assessed unit candidates have to consider the work they are undertaking in Units 4 and 5. There is a prescribed structure that candidates must follow when attempting this unit. This is given in Appendix E in the specification.

Many candidates did follow this structure and many used a written report as evidence for assessment. Some candidates produced supplementary evidence in the form of a video report and in one case a director's commentary on a DVD product.

Candidates should have completed their work for Unit 6 on an on-going basis. It was clear from the majority of work moderated that candidates had left this work until all their production and post-production work was completed. Some candidates appeared to have rushed their work for Unit 6 and completed their review in a sometimes arbitrary manner. Candidates should use this unit as an opportunity to monitor their work as they progress through the qualification rather than see it as a stand alone exercise.

The review of work linking to professional practice needs to be proactive rather than reactive. Historical comments on work suggest that the review has taken place sometime after the production work was completed. It is essential that candidates see this process as a continuous and on-going reflection on their production work that allows them to make changes and monitor their work.

Some learners combined AO1 (a) with AO1 (b). However, these two criteria must be addressed separately.

AO4 (c)

This was the least well answered section of Unit 6. Candidates generally failed to compare their work with past practice. Many candidates did address current practice but could not achieve high marks because of their lack of reference to past practice.

In one instance, already mentioned above, a candidate commented in their director's commentary on their own short film by referring to the work of film directors they had studied. This include not just films from the recent past but films from the early days of the cinema and how this had influenced their own film making techniques. Candidates need to provide evidence of their understanding of past and current professional practice by providing examples or citing references to media products.

It is clear that candidates who failed to demonstrate management and monitoring techniques in Unit 5 were unable to comment on them in Unit 6. The holistic nature of this qualification requires candidates to link work across all the units in the qualification. A candidate undertaking an on-going review of their management and monitoring skills for Unit 6 may have been able to address any shortfall in their evidence for Unit 5. This will apply to other areas of the qualification.

Generally, it seems that some candidates had not been given sufficient time to complete work on this unit. In some instances it would appear that candidates had not been given clear guidance in completing their work to the prescribed structure given in Appendix E.

Teachers should note that the evidence for this unit can be provided in a variety of ways. These might be written, oral, a programme on video or audio format etc. however, it must follow the prescribed structure.

General Comments

It was clear from the moderation of this qualification that teachers are not fully engaging with the Mark Bands and Assessment Guidance provided in the specification. There was evidence of marks being awarded for work that clearly did not meet the requirements of the mark band in which it was placed.

Teachers must ensure that there is evidence to support the awarding of marks. They must ensure that candidates produce appropriate material to demonstrate achievement of the mark being awarded.

Candidates must produce evidence of their own work in this qualification. The use of group work and the inherent photocopied production documentation can lead to issues of plagiarism.

Grade Boundaries

Unit 1 (6973/01) INDS., TEXTS AND AUDIENCES

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	50	43	36	30	24	18
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 2 (6974/01) SKILLS FOR MEDIA PROD

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	50	43	37	31	25	19
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 3 (6975/01) MEDIA PRODUCTION BRIEF

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	50	43	37	31	25	19
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 4 (6976/01) RESEARCH/DEV.-MEDIA PROD

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	51	45	39	33	27	21
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 5 (6977/01) MEDIA PRODUCTION PROJECT

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	52	45	39	33	27	21
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 6 (6978/01) PROF.PRACTICE-MEDIA INDS

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	51	45	39	33	27	21
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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