



ASSESSMENT and  
QUALIFICATIONS  
ALLIANCE

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## GCE

### Media Studies

### Unit MED1

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## Unit 1: Reading the Media

This paper asks candidates to employ their knowledge and application of the Key Concepts – most particularly Media Language, Representation and Media Audiences – when analysing a media text. It also suggests that reference could be made to the remaining Key Concepts – Values and Ideology and Media Institutions – whilst also anticipating that an element of evaluation should take place, in terms of the appropriateness, success and effectiveness of the extract.

There is a great deal for candidates to do in the one and a quarter hours of the examination and it is highly unlikely for a candidate to manage every aspect of the analysis and evaluation suggested by the list of sub-topics. Examiners should be aware of this when marking papers and reward candidates for what they have achieved, **not** penalise candidates for what they have omitted.

It is also important to allow the candidates as much critical autonomy as possible. The point of this examination is to give candidates a springboard for the analysis and evaluation of a media text. While the sub-topics below give the candidates a scaffold upon which to formulate a response, it is also to be hoped that some candidates will have the confidence, and the understanding of the media text being examined, to perhaps explore areas that are both **unpredictable and unexpected**.

It is also important to note that an holistic approach is often utilised by candidates in the higher levels and the scaffolding can on occasions be ignored entirely.

The areas below represent a general guide to the areas suggested in the list of sub-topics, and as such cannot hope to be definitive.

**Please note** that the notion of a ‘balanced’ response to the text – utilising all the Key Concepts – has been replaced. Whilst some candidates will tackle all Key Concepts, the likelihood of this happening in a ‘balanced’ fashion in what amounts to 60 minutes writing is unlikely. It is far more likely that candidates will tackle aspects of the text which seem most appropriate and in some cases this may well mean that other Key Concepts seem less well handled.

Please note the instruction above – *examiners should reward candidates for what they have achieved, **not** penalise candidates for what they may have omitted.*

**General assessment criteria****Level 6 51 – 60 marks**

At Level 6 candidates will have an obvious confidence in their approach to the text. The response will be well structured and contain an organised understanding of the Key Concepts, which will be used in the analysis and evaluation of the text. They may well ignore the scaffolding in the question paper but take their own path towards revealing a clear understanding of the concerns of the question – but they may also engage in a debate, challenging commonly held viewpoints on occasion, using the text as a starting point. There will be a sense of the ambitious and engaged.

The response will be detailed yet avoid the descriptive at the top of the level. Reference to ideas or theories will be made where relevant and useful to the argument being proposed. Level 6 candidates will show clear evidence of critical autonomy.

**Level 5 41 – 50 marks**

Level 5 candidates will show a clear ability to analyse and evaluate the text in question. They will reveal a good understanding of the media Key Concepts, which they will handle well in their reading of the text. Their response will be thorough and detailed but without the confident grasp of Level 6. Their manipulation of the Key Concepts will not be total and in places may well be a little under developed. However, the textual analysis will be good. Ideas will be experimented with and a sense of the candidate's true voice will be evident. There will be a sense of debate and some reference to media theory where relevant.

**Level 4 31 – 40 marks**

Candidates at Level 4 will generally speaking show a solid/sound understanding of the media Key Concepts, although some concepts may be treated rather better than others. There will be a sense that the typical Level 4 candidate understands the Key Concepts but not in their entirety and in a rather simplistic way at times.

Analysis and evaluation will be sound but there will be some irrelevant description and repetition of school based learning rather than an individual grasp of the text. Media terminology will exist but will not always be utilised properly and may sometimes be misplaced. Candidates at this level will tend to look at the text concept by concept.

**Level 3 21 – 30 marks**

Candidates at this level will display a competent understanding of the media Key Concepts and will probably be better at dealing with Language, Representation and Audience than the other Key Concepts available to them. They will make attempts to analyse and evaluate though this may be rather limited and answers will tend to appear rather broad and unfocused. There will be points of merit made which will need to be rewarded.

Candidates at this level will frequently work their way through the text from start to finish and will also use phrases taken directly from the question paper. At this level it is often the case that candidates confuse description with analysis.

**Level 2 11 – 20 marks**

Candidates at this level will have a rudimentary understanding of the media Key Concepts and may be limited to an answer which really only looks at one or two of them anyway. Analysis and evaluation (if it exists) will be limited and often seem to repeat what has been learnt in the classroom without any real sense of understanding taking place. There may be a lack of relevance and answers may lapse into the generalised response. There is likely to be a large amount of description with the occasional critique attached.

**Level 1 0 – 10 marks**

Very limited responses to the question. Candidates may really only understand one (maybe two) media Key Concepts and very superficially at that. Answers will tend to be brief and quite generalised – displaying little engagement with the media or indeed the text. There may well be isolated moments of merit which must be rewarded.

## Question specific marking descriptors

What follows are some suggested areas that candidates might explore. Experience of four examinations so far would suggest that generally speaking most/many will stick to predictable areas but there will also be many candidates who produce the unexpected and the unpredictable. Thus the descriptors below are really only a guide; examiners will have to remember at all times to mark as positively as possible and bear in mind that if the unexpected is backed up with specific reference to the text then it must be treated accordingly. It is impossible to second-guess every candidate. The list below simply represents some suggested paths and is meant to be helpful when marking. The General Assessment Criteria are your final recourse, and please **do not** think in grades, candidates must be placed in the appropriate level.

### *Media language*

#### **Narrative structure**

There is a narrative of sorts. As the camera leaves the water in a POV shot and moves from the pool down into the street to rest on the front windscreen of David Beckham's car - 'Feel the Breeze' travels towards the camera at the bottom of the screen. The camera may well be interpreted as the breeze or perhaps one of the snowflakes that we come across at the end of the advertisement. It is important to note that the advertisement is for *Adidas ClimaCool* - a type of athletic shoe - presumably one with superb ventilation. No doubt candidates will be able to tell us all about the shoe and indeed possible other advertisements that have appeared for this product elsewhere in the media. Also of course information about David Beckham and his *Adidas* contract may be discussed. What is that smile on his face at the end all about? Interpretations will be interesting - or is it just bad acting?

#### **Camerawork editing and mise en scène**

Quite sophisticated camera work - movement from pool into the sky and down again - through a pair of shoes at one point - very David Fincher/David Lynch - inevitably passing the ubiquitous women sitting by the pool or being photographed in their swimwear. This gives the impression on first viewing of being one continuous shot but there are edits - and also a couple of close-ups to interrupt the flow, such as the women staring in the direction that the wind (and then the snowflakes) blows - culminating in David Beckham.

Sophisticated environment - roof-top swimming pool - obviously warm - luxury items floating about - has an American feel (presumably deliberate). It certainly tries hard to disguise the place but the high rise buildings and nature of the car suggest USA. So it is deliberately anonymous but Stateside is suggested.

#### **Music and other sound**

Stranglers '*Peaches*' is actually a song which outraged feminists at the time of its release - post modernism allows it to be accepted (perhaps?). Not that candidates would know that necessarily - though some might recognise and make reference to it. 'Strolling along minding my own business....' - so quite appropriate - raunchy beat - fits quite well with the content of the advertisement.

Sound effects are minimal - distorted splash as camera rises out of the water and a permanent 'whoosh' as we fly through the sky towards David Beckham.

The emphasis is on the song and it will be interesting to see to what extent candidates spend time sorting out the words.

## ***Representation***

### **Gender**

There is a male in the swimming pool - almost all other noticeable figures in the advertisement are women – mainly scantily dressed - and note the bikini-clad model being photographed on the pavement - generally looking towards and with the camera towards the final shot of David Beckham. Candidates will surely pick up on the incipient sexism of the advertisement - and adding the song actually makes the representation possibly quite offensive to some. Except that there is an air of fantasy about the whole narrative - indeed surrealism - which some candidates may pick up on when discussing representation.

### **Celebrity**

The main focus of the advertisement ends up being the shot of David Beckham wearing the athletic shoes getting into his car. Celebrity endorsement at its peak, and no doubt candidates will spend quite some time discussing the image of David Beckham and his choice of products to endorse, which so far have been remarkably successful. Note how he has been chosen to endorse the new range of mobiles which are currently selling poorly and Marks and Spencer etc. Discussion will probably take place about his image and his ability to appeal to both men and women, young and old.

### **Genre**

#### **Codes and conventions**

This will enable candidates to discuss the codes and conventions of advertisements and in particular those for trainers, most of which have become narratives in their own right and are made to differentiate the appeal/image of each major manufacturer. This is an area that candidates can be expected to know more than us. *Adidas* could be seen to have struck a blow by signing David Beckham and tend to make advertisements which are verging on the surreal/strange - unlike say *Nike* which always stress the sporting aspects.

### **Media audience**

#### **Target audience**

The young, the trendy and the fairly well off - except that in terms of priorities trainers speak volumes and are a high priority for many teenagers though town/city dwellers in the main. Expect answers to include aspects of life-style and the usual notion that anyone over 25 stops wearing trendy trainers and only shops at Tesco's.

### **Values and ideology**

#### **Assumptions about the audience**

Trainers have become an essential part of lifestyle and image - for some. The people that they are important to will probably receive this advertisement very positively, whereas those of opposing views may well argue vociferously about the assumptions being made here in terms of fashion and waste etc. Could be quite an interesting debate.

#### **Values implicit in the text**

Young, rich, lazy lifestyle - hanging about the pool – hedonistic. In a strange sort of way this is brought back to earth by David Beckham since he is seen as such a 'family man' etc and actually quite politically correct. There may well be some debate about trainers/money/the 'Third World' etc. under this heading.

***Media institutions*****Advertising industry**

This may well be a section that is really only answered by those candidates who have studied this area in Paper 2, and we must be careful we do not penalise candidates who omit this section or answer it less well. Again, it may allow candidates to start discussing the nature of the industry and how it can, in some cases, be as interesting as the mainstream programming it interrupts. Perhaps something too about the world we live in and its domination by style, fame etc. After all, what if David Beckham has been pushed off his pedestal?