General Certificate of Education

Media Studies

MEST2 Creating Media

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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General

This January a total of 553 candidates submitted folders from 147 centres. There was a large number of reworked and resubmitted work from Summer 2009. Again, the most popular brief was Brief One, with fewest candidates attempting Brief Three. There was a mix of platforms submitted with all three platforms proving popular. Broadcast was more often submitted for Brief One than Brief Two. It did appear that some resubmissions had not been reworked from the summer, even down to the submission of last year's cover sheet. The same work should not be submitted twice for assessment and where January is used as a resubmission some improvements should be made to the work.

Administration

There were some inconsistencies in the administration of submissions. Some candidate record forms were not completed correctly in that they did not have candidate signatures or any teacher comments to support the marks awarded.

However, most work submitted was accessible and easily accessed. Given the fact that a candidate's folder contains several elements, it is important that work is clearly labelled and packaged in such a way that allows the moderator to find each candidate's work. It has been requested that, where possible, individual discs are sent for each candidate. It would also be very helpful if draft print work was differentiated from the final production, as in some cases this wasn't obvious.

Supporting annotation varied. Some centres gave limited information about the candidate's work whilst others gave more detail and this helps the efficiency of the moderation process. Annotation is especially important where group work is submitted in order to allow the identification of individual contributions and, therefore, helps contextualise the marks awarded by centres.

Centres are urged to consider the practicalities of moderation when submitting work. Submission guidelines are available on the AQA web-site in the 'key materials' area http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/arts/media_materials.php?id=06&prev.
Where there were problems accessing work this tended to be because:
- Moving image material was sent in a format other than DVD. Even where a DVD disc is used to submit moving image work it is important to convert the moving image files so that the DVD can be played on a domestic DVD player as well as on a computer.
- Some web-sites are still being sent as either printouts (which hampers the ability of the moderator to see the work as it was intended) or as raw data files. Web-site productions should be converted to working web-sites before submission and checked before sending to make sure the sites are working as intended. Web sites can be submitted on memory sticks or as URLs if the candidate has uploaded the work to the internet.
- Some print work was sent as data files which can be difficult to access, but more importantly, does not allow the work to be seen as a fully realised piece of work.

Research and Planning

The quality and amount of research varied greatly between centres with some candidates producing more than the required six pages and others just submitting a couple of photocopies of magazine articles with little or no analysis or annotation. Centres are reminded that the work submitted for research and planning should be a sample of the candidate's work which demonstrates the range of work undertaken and supports the mark awarded. Not all research was informed by the chosen brief. For example, research into a Hollywood film has some limited connection to Brief One, task a where the candidate is taking the film option, but less where the candidate is producing materials for a television product.

Some research was clearly directed very specifically by the centre. Candidates should be encouraged to undertake individualised research to enable them to respond to the chosen brief/task. At times, research seemed limited in its relationship to the work completed.

Briefs/Tasks

Most candidates showed clear links to the chosen briefs although there were some centres who were selecting the brief for the candidates and a few who dictated the nature of the tasks that candidates were to undertake. It is not appropriate that all candidates complete the same identical tasks. For example, all candidates from one centre submitted a trailer and two articles for Empire magazine. In some cases the specifics of the brief/task were not taken into account. For example, several magazine front covers were submitted for Brief One, task (b) rather than the 2-3 page feature articles requested.

Broadcast

Most candidates created moving image pieces for the broadcast tasks. Weaker candidates had limited awareness of the codes of the format they were working in and were less able to follow (for example) the conventions of the trailer in their work. Stronger candidates combined the replication of codes with some creativity in the construction of shots and editing and were able to successfully allude to recognisable genre codes.

Common technical issues were poor sound quality and an over-reliance on hand-held and/or 'amateur' footage. Whilst the latter could be considered a convention within some genres, some candidates who made this choice interpreted this as a way to avoid formal planning and editing.

There were a number of radio broadcasts submitted. Better pieces went beyond a simple interview sandwiched between music and demonstrated a knowledge of radio formats through inclusion of idents, jingles and/or presentation style.

Print

There were many successful print pieces submitted which showed an awareness of layout and design conventions along with the replication of house styles. Weaker candidates were less competent in terms of generating print material in the appropriate proportions with font sizes often being too large and, sometimes, the use of columns being abandoned entirely. Higher grade candidates showed more attention to detail in the presentation of their pages and were able to connect content and language choices to appropriate publications and audience.

Candidates should be encouraged to avoid found images where possible. In addition, when using self generated images they need to consider the construction of photographs carefully as some of the images used were little more than snapshots with some clearly being holiday and/or prom photographs. Mobile phone cameras tend not to provide images at the appropriate resolution for the work being submitted.

It is recognised that some centres may not have access to particularly sophisticated print technology but A4 is not always the appropriate format for a publication. Newspaper pages, for example, when simply converted to A4, often lose sight of the proportions of the page and so designs are less successful. Similarly, A4 printouts often discourage a consideration of the print/image ratio which is often part of specific house-style/genre codes.

At times, the two publications chosen for the print option were similar in terms of the publications' functions and target audience (e.g. *Empire* and *Total Film*) and so candidates were unable to demonstrate the range of their knowledge regarding media language choices being selected for specific audiences. Occasionally, the publications chosen, made it difficult to complete the task effectively either because the publication was inappropriate for the task (backstage gossip on a teen drama in *Elle*) or the style of writing was difficult to emulate (*Screen*).

E-Media

Web options were quite successful on the whole. There were some issues regarding the accessing of the work and some web work was not submitted with working links. Where links were working, weaker candidates had given limited consideration to navigation and links were sometimes hidden (e.g. a hotlink attached to an image which is not always clearly identifiable). At times, navigation was confused with different formats or designs being used on the submitted pages and/or pages without links to the rest of the site creating a 'dead end'. The issue above, regarding snapshot and found photographic images cropped up with some e-media submissions.

Some candidates submitted web-sites created on web-based web building sites (such as wix.com) or in software where templates are provided. An over reliance on templates and tools of this nature means that the candidate is limiting their technical engagement with the task and assessment needs to reflect this.

Stronger web sites considered the aesthetic appeal of the site and some creative approaches to Brief Two were submitted where the task was considered in a way that took audience interests and/or lifestyles into account rather than simply providing information on healthy eating/sexual health etc. Similarly, higher level work considered the functionality of the site in its design and the inclusion of elements which identified and/or encouraged audience participation.

Evaluation

Many evaluations focussed on the production process rather than analysing and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the productions. More focus needs to be placed on the key concepts and how they are reflected in the productions. Higher level evaluations considered the productions in light of the requirements provided by the brief/task they were working to and considered how they had met the stated function of the productions and appealed to the target audience. Candidates should be encouraged to work within the word count guidelines given and also to ensure they evaluate their work on both tasks. A larger proportion of candidates discussed the third platform in their evaluation than did last summer.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.