General Certificate of Education

Media Studies

MEST2   Creating Media

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

General

This summer a total of 11121 candidates submitted work for assessment from 569 centres. Brief 1 was again the most popular brief from the choices provided with Brief 3 being completed by the least candidates. All three platforms were worked on across the briefs although broadcast was a less popular choice for Briefs 2 and 3. Please note that from September 2010 the briefs will have changed. Brief 3 will have been replaced and the remaining two have been reworded slightly.

Administration

In general terms there were less technical and administrative problems considering this is now the 3rd time the unit has been assessed. Most centres were very efficient in the completion of paperwork and ensuring that the candidates' work was accessible for moderation. Candidates' submissions now contain a number of elements and some centres did not include all the work within the samples sent to moderators. Sometimes this was an administrative error but sometimes the candidates were submitting incomplete folders. Where the latter occurs it would be helpful if centres could please indicate this clearly to ensure there is no confusion. Similarly, some practical work was sent with minimal labelling and so it was difficult to know which work belonged to which candidate. Some work was labelled with first names or nicknames which moderators found difficult to match up to the candidates. Please label all work with the centre number and the candidates' name and number to help the moderation process proceed as smoothly as possible.

Again, whilst most centres submitted work that was in the appropriate format and was easily accessed, some centres did not follow the submission guidelines published on the AQA website. Where there were problems this tended to be with e-media and/or broadcast work. E-media should be submitted electronically as working websites. Alternatively, candidates can upload their work to the web and send the URL as their submission. Web sites should be checked before submission to ensure links, embedded materials etc. work as intended. Print submissions of websites do not allow the candidates' technical abilities to be assessed fully. Broadcast work should be sent in a universally accessible format. It is best if DVDs are sent that are playable both on domestic DVD players and computers. Radio work did not cause any issues.

Centres are reminded that Centre Declaration sheets should be completed and signed by the teacher(s) and Candidate Record forms for all candidates need both the teacher's and the candidate's signature. Annotations on the candidates' work or notes on the Candidate Record forms should give as much detail as possible – especially when group work is being submitted. This helps the moderator understand why marks have been awarded they way they have. Group work should be limited to one of the two tasks undertaken with the second task being an individual piece of work.

Research and Planning Materials

Many centres are sending far too much research and planning materials to the moderator. The specification asks for 5-6 pages only (in total) and this should be a representative sample of the work undertaken by the candidate. Research and planning should be relevant to the brief/tasks being undertaken by the candidate and where they are working in a group should be examples of the individual work undertaken. There is still evidence that some centres are directing the research and this should be avoided. Candidates should be able to demonstrate their own learning within the materials sent and this should be influencing the practical and evaluative work completed by the candidate.

Briefs/Tasks

Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the brief/task's requirements. Care should be taken however when reading the briefs/tasks to ensure that the amount of work required for the submission is adhered to and the format being worked on is appropriate. Whilst it is appreciated that individual centres may have certain technical limitations in terms of which briefs/tasks can be completed, centres should avoid being overly prescriptive in terms of which brief/task is to be worked on and the content of the practical work. There was evidence that some centres are directing all candidates to work on one brief only and some centres had whole groups of candidates submitting very similar work - for example whole year groups making horror trailers or creating features for the same magazines. Inevitably this limits the candidates' ability to respond creatively to the brief/task.

Broadcast

Broadcast was a popular choice, particularly with Brief 1. Some candidates were responding very creatively to the brief showing good levels of understanding of the codes and conventions of the form they were working in (e.g. the trailer) and attempting to appeal to the specified audience appropriately. Better candidates considered codes and conventions but also worked to use media language to create atmosphere. Candidates who varied their camera shots and used music effectively could be awarded higher marks than those who simply replicated codes and used technology in a basic way. Some broadcast work was quite repetitive and used limited varieties of camera shots. Trailers with slow edits did not work as well as those that recognised that the pace of trailers is often very fast and extra creativity is needed where candidates are limited in terms of location choices. The 'Blair Witch' inspired trailer is still very popular. At its best, candidates recognise that there is a need to create tone and atmosphere whilst weaker students use the handheld technique to create simple chase sequences with limited editing. Stronger candidates also used post production effectively from creative use in titles and special effects. Where candidates are limited to filming on school/college grounds they could perhaps look at creating some variety in their presentation of the footage or perhaps integrating the setting into the narrative more specifically.

Print

There was some very high quality print work submitted which showed an awareness of layout and design codes and effectively replicated house styles from exiting publications. Some misunderstandings regarding the format of the 'feature article' were still present though with magazine/newspaper front covers, posters, full page adverts and single reviews being submitted. Centres are reminded that tasks require two feature articles of 2-3 pages each to be submitted. Candidates need to demonstrate their understanding of different audience groups and so magazines which are very similar (eg Empire and Total Film) do not allow the candidates to do this. Stronger candidates chose publications with distinct audiences that meant their features could be approached in different ways. Some features appeared to use templates created by scanning in elements from existing publications instead of candidates creating them for themselves. Candidates should be encouraged to replicate layout and design codes as closely as possible bearing in mind the size of font, the proportions of the page, use of images, captions, page numbers etc as well as the use of columns. Close attention to detail in these areas creates work which can be rewarded given the candidate's attention to detail.

E-media

It was good to see candidates' e-media work becoming more adventurous this year with animation, music and embedded video all being submitted. Many candidates were considering the need to encourage audience interactivity within their sites and to provide audiences with a range of gratifications/activities/rewards. Some websites were simply informative and these tended to be less engaged with audience appeal. At their most technically basic, the three pages of the website should be hyperlinked and candidates should consider navigation around the site. The design of some websites was rather basic and this limited candidate achievement. Where templates were used or internet web building facilities this too was self limiting as the constraints of the software reduces the candidates' opportunity to consider audience appeal or design in a creative way.

Use of Images

Both print and e-media work was substantially improved by the inclusion of planned and carefully constructed images. Found images need to be kept to a minimum (no more than 20% of the imagery used) and the use of 'snap-shots' reduce the effectiveness of the work submitted. Stronger candidates constructed their images carefully and used costume, setting, make-up and props effectively. Programmes such as Photoshop were also used to enhance images adding to the technical ability being demonstrated.

Evaluations

Evaluations were sometimes the weaker part of a candidate's submission. Stronger evaluations considered their own work in light of the brief's requirements and considered how effective their final productions were in meeting the specifics of the tasks they were attempting. Media concepts were at the heart of stronger candidates' work as was a consideration of audience appeal and codes and conventions. Weaker candidates used the evaluations to provide a narrative on the research and/or production process or to simply describe the work they had completed. An engagement on the strengths and weaknesses, again based on conceptual knowledge was at the heart of higher level evaluations. Some candidates are still not including any discussion on the 3rd platform as identified in the mark scheme.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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