

Media Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7860**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3860**

Report on the Units

June 2006

3860/7860/MS/R/06

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All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

The reports on the Examinations provide information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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Chief Examiner's Report

The Principals' reports which follow offer advice to Centres designed to help them in their preparation of candidates for the examined units and on the administration of the coursework units, which was particularly problematic this year with increased numbers of Centres risking their candidates' overall results due to poor organisation of coursework. Centres are urged to heed the advice in the reports in the interests of their candidates and the smooth running of the assessment process.

In particular, Centres are reminded of the importance of forecast grades for each unit which are requested before the examination period begins. These grades should represent the Centre's best estimate of a candidate's likely performance in a particular unit, based upon the teacher's knowledge of the candidates and on the outcomes for previous candidates of similar ability.

These forecasts may be used by OCR in a number of circumstances where a query arises in relation to a candidate's results, such as the loss of a script and in the checking process after the award meeting where forecasts are compared with actual results and any major discrepancies are checked to ensure that candidates have been marked fairly. They are also referred to in the event of a results enquiry to help decide whether further candidates' work should be looked at.

Centres are reminded that these forecasts should be realistic in terms of students' likely performance on the unit and should offer differentiation between candidates. Simply predicting all candidates the same grade is unhelpful.

The first assessment session for the changes to topics in units 2734 (Critical Research Study) and 2735 (Media Issues and Debates) is January 2007. Centres should note that the deleted topics will not be available on the examination papers, even for those candidates who are re-sitting a paper.

Further support and advice on the new topics for these papers will be available through OCR's INSET programme, details of which are given on the OCR website (www.ocr.org.uk)

2730 – Foundation Production

General Comments

There were just over 18000 candidate entries this session. Overall, Centres and candidates are to be congratulated for their hard work and commitment to the specification.

Centres are reminded that they are required by QCA to authenticate candidates' coursework by submission to the moderator of a signed Centre Authentication Form (CCS160). Moderators spent some considerable time this session chasing these mandatory sheets from Centres.

The majority of the work fulfilled the requirements of the specification, although there were a few smaller centres which persisted in submitting bulky files of supporting material with their candidates' practical work. The general level of Centre comment appears to be improving as evidenced by centres placing candidates appropriately in Level 4 for the production report. There is a general consensus of understanding as to what constitutes an appropriate production.

ICT skills seem to be developing. This is evident in the steady increase of centres entering Level 4 work for the print brief - teenage magazine. Centres are reminded however, that candidates need to use original images. The use of found images as the focus of the front cover of the magazine undermines the spirit of this brief. Centres are also reminded that the website brief requires a URL address to be supplied and that the web-site is required to be on-line during the moderation process.

Administration and presentation of work for moderation

Although the administration of this unit was well executed by the majority of Centres, there were still a large number that did not meet the deadline. The occurrence of the half-term break during the moderation period is not an acceptable reason for not forwarding marks or work. Holiday dates are known well in advance and Centres should plan accordingly. Accurate completion of the Internal Assessment Mark Sheets (MS1) is also vital for the moderation process. Finally, Centres are reminded that work should be annotated with reference to the level criteria in the specification.

Issues included:

- Mandatory documentation omitted (e.g. Centre Authentication Forms (CCS160))
- Internal Assessment Mark Sheets (MS1s) submitted late
- Samples submitted late (sometimes weeks late for no good reason)
- Incomplete Coursework Cover Sheets
- Illegible MS1s
- Arithmetical errors on MS1s and/or Coursework Cover Sheets
- Work sent work with no postage or insufficient postage (leaving the moderators to trek to the post office and to pay the excess).

It is vital for Centres to follow the moderation procedures by completing paperwork and submitting documentation and work on time, if the moderation process is to be completed and results issued in August. In this session, there were several Centres who came very close to not having their candidates results issued because of delays in completing moderation – caused by the Centres themselves.

In addition, many Centres continue to have technical difficulties in presenting work in the appropriate format and pass on these difficulties to the moderator by sending in work in unacceptable formats. Moderators then experience problems in accessing and assessing the work. The only acceptable formats are outlined in the specification on page 60.

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They are:

- audio work may be submitted on either CD or cassette
- video may be presented on either DVD or VHS (not CD Rom)
- web work must be accompanied by a live URL as well as printouts or on disc
- print work may be no larger than A3.

Mini DV, VCD, CD Rom and minidisks are not acceptable. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to produce work in the required format (and fully functioning). If moderators, cannot access work, it cannot be moderated and will be returned to Centres.

Centres must ensure that internal deadlines are set early enough to be able to solve any potential technical problems and send in work in appropriate formats at the right time. Work should be ready by the same deadline as the MS1 and therefore ready to send when the sample request arrives from the moderator.

Centres are reminded that, where there are ten or fewer candidates, they should send all work with the MS1 (and the Centre Authentication form) before the deadline. If candidates have been withdrawn or are absent then the MS1 should also be completed accordingly and the appropriate copies sent to OCR and the Moderator. If a single candidate has is absent or withdrawn, the MS1 should not be marked as '0' for the candidate – this led to several Centres having to complete Amendment to Coursework Marks forms.

As with earlier sessions, Centres are also reminded that it's vital to wrap the artefacts well – many VHSs, DVDs and Cds arrived damaged and often unviewable. It is also important to label all artefacts with the Centre number and candidate's name. Some moderators have spent hours trying to match the artefact to the written component.

Centres are reminded of the importance of making and retaining copies of all work submitted for moderation. OCR is required to keep samples of candidates' coursework for awarding, archiving and training purposes and so cannot guarantee that all work submitted will be returned following moderation.

The Set Briefs:

The most popular brief was the teenage magazine. The radio and television briefs were only presented in small numbers, as were the games package and the web-based work. Centres that offer candidates a wide choice of production briefs often do their candidates a dis-service, as this breadth causes difficulties for the centre assessment procedures.

The film thriller set brief explicitly requires candidates to illustrate how their work will relate to a 15 or 18 certificated. Candidates must ensure that they illustrate how their text caters for the audience. Without this clarification – most likely expressed in the Production Report – candidates are unlikely to achieve a Level 4 mark. However, although the set brief indicates 'suitable for an 18 audience', Centres must be mindful of their duty of care towards the candidates in the work presented for moderation. A number of texts seen this session concerned moderators with regards to safety issues.

Detailed planning and the monitoring of candidates' work is vital to the success of video projects. General levels of technical competence were good and most Centres seemed to understand and enjoy the brief. The main technical problems were lighting and sound quality. Some Centres use the music track as the main sound element. Care needs to be taken with this as moderators have seen a small number of examples where the end production could be taken for a 'music video'.

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

The television brief offers the opportunity for inventiveness given the openness of the task in terms of genre. Animation, interesting titles and montage titles sequences all appeared in good measure. Some of the least successful examples tended to be over-wordy and dominated by presenters to camera rather than attention to camerawork and editing.

The teenage magazine brief appears to be developing well. The effective use of ICT is having an increasing and positive impact upon the outcomes achieved.

Each candidate must include three original images in their magazine. This is defined in the specification as 'photographs taken by the candidate themselves, with proof supplied in the Production Report appendix'. Many of the texts seen by moderators used large found images of personalities and smaller self-created images. This skews the presentation of the final text and it is not always clear to moderators where the three original images are in the layout of the magazine. Centres are advised to avoid the use of found images completely. Doing so would enhance the success of this brief. Candidate's own original work should be the focus of the marking criteria. Level 4 Construction clearly indicates that a candidate '...is expected to consistently demonstrate excellence...' For candidates to demonstrate this indicator, the criteria must apply to their original images and not just those which are found images.

The advertising campaign for a new health education campaign or charity was generally well-executed and made good use of original images manipulated for context. Candidates tend to use existing charities and re-brand them. It is worth considering the option of inventing an entirely fictitious charity, or using a little known medical condition, as this could lead to more attention to form rather than an emphasis on content. Centres are encouraged to engage candidates' thoughts about where campaigns could or should be placed or shown. Every media text has a context.

There was some evidence this session of the video games package. What was seen was adequate for the marks awarded, though few made Level 4. The kinds of images needed are tightly bound by conventions which may be difficult for candidates to emulate.

What was heard of the radio brief this session was developed and presented with enthusiasm. The best work showed clear evidence of planning, scripting, sound mixing and editing. The most appealing productions were not 'read' texts but brought the medium alive through an appropriate mixture of voices, music, and pace to create a package that would interest a radio listening audience. The medium still offers a great deal to the creative candidate.

There was little evidence of the web work for set brief 6. The use of PowerPoint presentations for this brief is not fit for purpose. Centres must provide access to software such as Flash or Dreamweaver. For the duration of the moderation period, the web pages (for a new band / music artist) should be placed on line and a URL should be indicated on hard copy printouts of the web pages.

Assessment Criteria

Overall the majority of Centres applied the assessment criteria with confidence. As with previous sessions, there were Centres whose marks were either reduced or raised. This is done in order to bring marks in line with the agreed base line standard within the moderation process of quality assurance. Centres are reminded that the application of marks must reflect the level criteria as stated in the specification.

This session witnessed a number of Centres where rank order was questioned and this led to moderators asking Centres to remark work. One major reason for the rank order issue is the apparent lack of an internal standardisation process.

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

The most common issue that arises from the application of the assessment criteria to a candidate's work is the level of comment provided by the Centre. If comments on the Coursework Cover Sheet are detailed, then the moderator can see how marks have been arrived at. If Centres do not provide detailed comments, it is much harder for moderators to support assessments made by Centres.

Construction is the category which still tends to be over-rewarded, though on occasion, inflated marks for planning and the production reports are in evidence.

Advice:

- Common tasks for all candidates within a Centre seem to work best and provide the Centre with less difficulty in arriving at a rank order.
- Expertise and the development of skills in one medium / task can be achieved by focusing upon one set brief, which could be expanded year on year across two or three set briefs.
- A clear policy on health and safety should be established and followed.
- The content of productions, along with clear and detailed planning must be in place and discussed before productions are started.
- The emphasis upon the use of original images must be made clear in all print based work.
- Access to appropriate equipment, resources and training (for candidates and staff) should be provided.
- The close study of real media texts related to the candidates' choice of brief encourages more detailed understanding of that task with the potential of more appropriate outcomes (and marks).
- Deadlines (internal for candidates and external for the Centre) should be met.
- Clear labelling and administration paper work and detailed comments from the Centre on candidates' work and the Coursework Cover Sheets supports the moderating process

Unit 2731 - Textual Analysis

General Comments

The June 2006 session had almost 14,500 candidates entered. The majority fully understood the requirements of this unit, especially as far as Section A is concerned. However, Section B continues to be the question that sees a significant number of candidates underperforming, not due to lack of knowledge about their chosen texts, but due to lack of attention to the requirements of the question paper rubric or examination technique.

There were fewer examples of candidates who had run out of time than in previous sessions and the majority of candidates answered both questions. There were fewer lower level answers to both sections.

All questions were considered appropriate in their level of demand, allowing for good differentiation between all candidates, especially in Section B. There were no significant issues raised by Centres regarding the choice of extract or wording of questions.

Where they continue to apply, some observations have been repeated from previous reports to help Centres in their preparation of candidates for this unit.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Textual Analysis - Unseen Moving Image Extract

1 The extract chosen, the ship chase and battle sequence from *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (Dir. Gore Verbinski 2003), provided ample opportunities of examples of the five technical aspects of moving image language for discussion.

The mark scheme contains details of the possible points that could have been made in an analysis of the extract.

Screening Conditions

Centres appear to have adapted well to the change to screening the extract on DVD. It may be preferable for Centres to use a large space, such as the Hall, Games Hall or Drama Studio with a video/data projector and a large screen, so that all candidates experience the same conditions. Some measure of blackout will improve picture quality and care should be taken to test sound and picture quality in advance. Most data/video projectors have limited sound projection, so it is advisable to add a booster speaker(s).

It is the responsibility of Centres to check that every candidate can see and hear clearly, especially if they have specific difficulties with either sense.

Previewing the Extract

The DVD extract is sent in advance with precise instructions to Centres regarding when they should preview the DVD in order to check that it functions and whether any adjustments need to be made to sound and picture quality.

It is the responsibility of the Centre to preview the DVD extract when advised, as OCR cannot rectify any problems on the day of the examination. If the DVD has not arrived when expected, Centres are advised to contact OCR at once, rather than wait until the day of the examination.

The opportunity to preview the extract is for technical reasons only. Any Centre suspected of leaking information about the choice of extract to candidates, or using this knowledge to gain an unfair advantage will be referred as a potential malpractice case and candidates will be at risk of being withdrawn from the examination or having their marks disqualified.

Note-making

As far as note-making on the extract is concerned, Centres should address helpful strategies directly with their candidates in advance (for example, dividing notes into five sections for quick reference) and give them ample opportunities for practice. The notes are not marked. They are simply to aid the student in recording details from the moving image extract and should be as brief and clear as possible.

Approaches to answering the question

It is well worth considering a recommendation to candidates that they approach writing about each of the technical aspects in turn, or in pairs, instead of in a chronological way. Whilst it must be stated that these technical aspects of moving image language have a combined effect, this might encourage the chronological approach, which often results in candidates leaving significant gaps. It is this factor in particular, which often leads to few top-level answers, as the mark scheme requires a near comprehensive response, without significant gaps, at the top level.

Centres are reminded to emphasise to their candidates that their answers are required to be in continuous prose. They should not use sub-headings, note form or bullet points.

Examiners are looking for as balanced an analysis as possible (in proportion to the extract chosen) of all five technical areas. Many candidates' answers were uneven, commonly with two or three of the aspects dealt with by only a brief sentence or two.

As has been observed before, mise-en-scene is often neglected and the minutiae of camera shots / angle / movement and position tends to dominate some candidates' answers at the expense of analysis of other aspects. Some candidates failed to make any comment on the setting, locations, costumes and props.

Candidates might be advised to start their answer with a detailed analysis of the extract's mise-en-scene. Candidates must remember that simply stating the location and what characters are wearing does not constitute textual analysis. Saying that a pirate is wearing a pirate's hat does not really constitute analysis.

SFX eluded many candidates and was often omitted entirely. Many candidates seem to think that SFX refers only to CGI, ignoring stunts and pyrotechnics.

The best answers discussed the variety of shots and editing and how these created a dynamic sea battle with clear positioning of the audience's concern for the heroes rather than the villains. The strongest responses covered all aspects represented in the extract and wrote with enthusiasm and energy, clearly relishing the detail of the extract, including the careful management of the audience's mood, by means of editing, dialogue and visual jokes, such as the fork in the eyeball! There were many excellent, comprehensive answers but for a significant number of candidates, the discussion of camera techniques dominated their answer and other aspects were not covered at all or only very briefly. Centres should explore in depth the creation of meaning by the use of different camera shots with their candidates, rather than just the ability to spot and name them. Again, many candidates simply wrote a generic answer (eg "a close up shows the expression" or "an establishing shot shows the whole scene") that could almost apply to any extract, rather than offering a close reading of what they have been shown.

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There was little evidence of informed approaches to analysing editing, for example, temporal and spatial editing and how the narrative of the sequence and its effect on the spectator was achieved by the choice and succession of shots. There appears to be widespread misunderstanding of the 'jump cut'.

The precise contributions of music and sound to the extract's meaning continue to be under-analysed. Few candidates were capable of identifying instruments and styles of music and their effect on the sequence, favouring generic comments, such as "the music builds drama/tension etc", without examining how this was achieved. Analysis of sound (as well as of mise-en-scene) rarely went beyond a cursory discussion of realism.

There were too many examples of candidates using immature and informal terms, such as 'goodie' and 'baddie', which is very disappointing at Advanced level. Many candidates offered very simplistic analysis of colour and costume.

Textual analysis is a core skill in media study and candidates should be able to analyse any media text with confidence and accuracy. Weaker candidates' answers were superficial, generic and stated the obvious with little evidence of media study skills.

Advice for Candidates for Section A

- Make useful detailed notes on the extract
- Identify moving image language techniques accurately
- Select appropriate examples from the extract to discuss – you do not have to cover the whole extract or every example
- Analyse why / how these aspects are used to create meaning for the spectator – deconstruct what you see and hear, explain function, purpose and effect
- Refer closely to the set extract – no generalised analysis of action adventure films nor reference to what you might know about the rest of the film
- Cover all five aspects – do not miss one out
- Avoid just describing what happens – do not just give a descriptive chronological commentary – analyse and interpret.

Section B: Comparative Textual Analysis

There was some evidence of strong teaching, with many candidates well prepared to address issues of representation using comparison of appropriate texts. There were still many examples of candidates answering a question that had been set in a previous examination session or failing to address the question in front of them.

Some candidates produced very general discursive responses (especially for the newspaper question), which were not tied to an analysis and comparison of two specific texts (with stated editions or episodes). This limited their attainment as far as providing specific textual evidence is concerned.

Other candidates offered a textual analysis of two texts, assured and detailed, but completely disconnected from the question set. This inevitably led to underachievement, as they had not answered the question set.

It is crucial that candidates understand the processes involved in representation and are thoroughly prepared on the chosen topic using pairs of appropriate texts that offer ample opportunities for comparison. Often comparison is addressed in a perfunctory final paragraph rather than throughout the answer.

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

Candidates should remember that they are required to identify their two chosen texts (and their episodes / editions) at the start of their answer to this section. Sometimes there was no mention of a text until well into a candidate's answer.

There were a few examples of Centres that offered pre-prepared answers to this section, with candidates using very similar introductions and essay structures. This degree of over-preparation restricted candidates and made them unable to adapt what they knew to the specific focus of the question set. They underperformed as a result.

2a Consumerism and Lifestyle Magazines

There were some good examples of carefully chosen magazines, good comparative textual evidence and an understanding of representation. The most successful texts are mainstream gendered lifestyle magazines. The comparison of a male with a female magazine offered the greatest opportunities for meaningful comparison.

There were still some examples of Centres choosing magazines that could not be defined as lifestyle magazines, but which were niche publications and too difficult for candidates to tackle in this assessment context.

In general, the issue of 'ideal lifestyle' was addressed well, with candidates selecting appropriate examples from their chosen magazines to illustrate their analysis. There were some excellent examples of detailed textual analysis and comparison.

2b Celebrity and the Tabloid Press

This was the second most popular option. This question was considered to provide excellent differentiation between candidates as its focus required candidates to address a specific aspect of newspaper coverage of celebrity. There were some assured answers, with some excellent examples of textual analysis and discussion of representation of celebrity. There were still occasional responses that relied on that week's news, which were no more than superficial general discussions of celebrity news and many examples of candidates not answering the question or simply offering all they knew about a particular newspaper, whilst repeating the question.

There were some examples of candidates using 'broadsheet' newspapers, such as The Times and The Guardian. Whilst the terms 'broadsheet' and 'tabloid' are not as simple to use since the introduction of the compact edition used by most traditionally 'broadsheet' newspapers, candidates need to appreciate that the topic refers them to study of traditionally 'tabloid' or 'red top' newspapers.

2c Music Culture and Radio

As usual there were few answers on this option. However, most candidates were well prepared and had a firm grasp on how music culture was represented in an aural medium.

There was the occasional incidence of a candidate choosing to answer this question in preference to the topic for which s/he had been prepared.

2d Gender and Television Sitcom

As in previous sessions, this was the most popular option and most candidates were well prepared with good background knowledge of the genre, chosen texts and an understanding of the concept of representation.

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A significant number of candidates referred to many episodes briefly, or none at all, failing to focus tightly on a specific comparative analysis of two chosen episodes.

Weaker responses confined themselves to character descriptions or superficial analysis of representations in which individual behaviour is seen as representative of wider values, without any acknowledgement of the way that humour or irony might affect the reading of the programme.

The use of differentiated texts would be helpful to all candidates. For example, the sophisticated wit and cultural references of texts such as *Frasier* and *Will and Grace* eluded many less confident candidates. The most successful answers were often on the simplest and most conventional sitcom texts, such as *Fawlty Towers* and *My Family*. However, there were some excellent examples of confident candidates relishing mature and informed discussion of more challenging texts such as, *Absolutely Fabulous*, *The Office*, *Friends* and *The Simpsons*. Some candidates struggled to engage with analysis of *The Office* and *The Royle Family*, due to their generic unconventionality and performance modes.

Whilst there may be many interesting points to make about gender representation in *Sex and the City* and *Desperate Housewives*, neither are sit-coms.

2e Conflict/Competition and Video/Computer Games

There were more examples of Centres choosing this option in this session than in previous ones, with a few candidates, as always, choosing to answer it in preference to the option for which they had been prepared.

It was observed that some candidates would have fared better if they had not been given free choice but had been prepared on at least one common game text. Weaker responses relied on description of a game's narrative and outcomes with little attempt to provide any detailed textual analysis of game elements.

Advice for Teachers for Section B

- Choose a topic that plays to your strengths and resources
- Select texts that engage and interest candidates, appropriate to their ability
- Teach the basics of textual analysis and the concept of representation
- Give concise and helpful, rather than exhaustive, definitions and contextual information on a topic
- Ensure that the question paper rubric is adhered to in all respects, especially in the requirement to compare texts
- Give plenty of examination practice and prepare candidates in examination technique and how to answer unseen questions.

2732 – Audiences and Institutions

General Comments

There were around 18000 candidates for this paper, of which the vast majority answered on Section A. There were very few rubric errors, usually involving candidates answering both sections, in which case the higher mark counted. Centres which had obviously 'schooled' their cohort in how to approach the examination paper (by doing practice examinations and discussing best strategies) allowed their candidates to achieve to the best of their abilities. Centres which seemed not to have discussed the structure of the paper, what was needed for each of the questions or the best way to maximise marks in minimum time, severely disadvantaged their candidates.

Some Centres are still instructing students to do surveys of their peers as the basis of their case study. These candidates' answers lack any real detail and concentrate too much on percentages of consumer response. Too much freedom is not helpful to the candidates, although too much control can also be a problem. There were Centres which gave their candidates too limiting case studies. Having *'The Matrix'* as a focus for part B, for example, was very problematic. Only a few of the cohort had enough institutional context related information to be able to address the question adequately. Many candidates offered textual analysis, rather than institutional detail. Some Centres are still delivering too much (inappropriate in some cases, erroneous in others) 'theory' to their students.

Time management and essay structure remain two of the most significant areas for improvement, with evidence once again that many candidates are spending too long on the short answer questions and not leaving themselves adequate time for the essay. Most candidates scored well on the short questions, but only those writing at some length could hope to cover the necessary ground to attain marks in the level 3 and 4 mark bands for the essay questions. Centres are reminded that material covered for 2b should not be simply replicated for Q3 or 4.

There are encouraging signs that many Centres are learning from past papers and candidates are more successful, both in terms of their time management and subject knowledge. Most Centres had ensured candidates had good case study material to refer to, though a minority seemed to offer very narrow options to their candidates in terms of the breadth of material taught.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

1a Almost invariably all candidates scored full marks.

1b Many candidates did not seem to understand what 'real time' might imply, confusing it with 'realism' or 'reality' which limited their marks.

1c Generally answered well.

2a Most candidates understood what convergence means.

2b Many candidates did not use examples from outside the passage and/or did not explain their answers.

3 Overall the best answered question but a huge variety of case studies was offered. Candidates need to be steered away from 'out-moded' examples, however, like DVD.

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It is evident that much of the material studied for Section A is fast becoming old media (DVD, Digital TV). However, when done well, these technologies can offer some scope for comparison with other media. Centres should consider using some cutting edge popular new media such as blogging and podcasting as well as considering the social uses of new media such as MSN, webcams and mobile phones. Whilst there is evidence of this in case studies of MP3, there is much scope for it to be extended. Other recommended case studies would be the growth of sites like MySpace and Youtube.

Many candidates wrote very effective responses which were substantiated by their analysis of their own and their peers' use of MP3s and computer games, which is to be encouraged. However there is still a tendency to cover too many technologies too thinly and to not really engage with how audiences *actually use* new media. In most cases there was a stark contrast between those candidates who had evidence and examples to support their argument and those who did not.

4 Some candidates showed a really good grasp of the institutional contexts of new media production. Computer games consoles, in particular, made good case studies with some knowledgeable use of evidence. There were a number of answers still not really making use of thoroughly researched case study evidence however - relying on casual assertions of the 'they do it because we like it' kind. Centres are encouraged to explore the relationship between the hardware and the software used to make the technologies work in this context - particularly in the use of the iPod, which was often written about but not in any depth or with much knowledge. Overall, there was still too much on what technologies are capable of doing rather than analysis, ideas and argument.

Section B

1a Full marks for the majority of candidates.

1b Students often mis-interpreted the question. Few discussed what 'must have' might mean.

1c Some very good responses. Many over-looked the word 'recent' in the question.

2a Where candidates understood the meaning of synergy, they tended to score well.

2b This question was often handled well with clear use of own case study material.

3 This was the more popular question of the two essay questions, with some good case studies, notably on the music industry. Responses ranged from those with clear case study evidence to those where candidates obviously had not done much revision and did not know what Murdoch owned. As always, the BBC is a problematic case study for candidates unless they have a really confident grasp of psb and commercial broadcasting.

4 Many candidates who chose this question tended to go for the hypodermic model as an answer. Many answers were one sided, reductive and literal.

Overall, it seems that where taught well, Section B can yield excellent results. However, where candidates are unclear about the material which they have been taught, Section B produces very poor scripts. Section A is more likely than Section B to tap in to existing student knowledge and allow them to draw upon their experience.

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

Advice

- candidates need more timed practice in advance of the examination
- candidates need to balance their responses according to the mark weighting
- candidates need to read the passage and the question carefully
- Centres should prepare candidates with more than one example of media industry or technology in order for them to grasp trends and concepts
- credit is given for understanding and analysis, critical comment and application of examples. Candidates should be advised against simply listing facts.
- the changing definition of 'new media' is well worth exploring - this unit should be cutting edge!

2733 – Advanced Production

General Comments

Just over 11000 candidates were entered. There was some good work submitted by Centres. Technical skills are continuing to develop; however, there seemed to be less outstanding work than in previous sessions, perhaps because more Centres are entering their strong candidates in January.

Moving image work remained the most popular option, especially music videos, but there were increased numbers of short films, film trailers and TV documentaries and slightly more print-based work than previously, including newspapers and magazines. There were also some cross media packages but, again, almost no radio or ICT work. Although the technical skills exhibited by candidates seem to be improving generally, Critical Evaluations are not getting any better. Some Critical Evaluations did not make sufficient shift from the expectations at AS to those for A2 and many candidates continued to use a format similar to that outlined for AS. The A2 Evaluations often showed insufficient evidence of research into existing media and made little reference to relevant theory or concepts, thereby preventing candidates from accessing the highest mark levels. The specification outlines what elements this writing should contain and how this work should be assessed (pages 47, 77 and 80).

An increased number of Centres created work which was too close to the set AS briefs. No AS briefs or variations of AS briefs should be used at A2 - even if a Centres' candidates have not presented that particular brief themselves at AS. By their very nature, the AS briefs are designed to be of appropriate demand and difficulty for that level of assessment and are, therefore, of insufficient demand for this higher level of assessment.

Administration and presentation of work for moderation

The administrative procedures undertaken by many Centres were not efficiently executed. Issues included:

- Mandatory documentation omitted (e.g. Centre Authentication Forms (CCS160))
- Internal Assessment Mark Sheets (MS1s) submitted late
- Samples submitted late (sometimes weeks late for no good reason)
- Incomplete Coursework Cover Sheets
- Illegible MS1s
- Arithmetical errors on MS1s and/or Coursework Cover Sheets
- Work sent with no postage or insufficient postage, (leaving the moderators to trek to the post office and to pay the excess).

It is vital for Centres to follow the moderation procedures by completing paperwork and submitting documentation and work on time, if the moderation process is to be completed and results issued in August. In this session, there were several Centres who came very close to not having their candidates results issued because of delays in completing moderation – caused by the Centres themselves.

In addition, many Centres continue to have technical difficulties in presenting work in the appropriate format and pass on these difficulties to the moderator by sending in work in unacceptable formats. Moderators then experience problems in accessing and assessing the work. The only acceptable formats are outlined in the specification on page 60. They are:

- audio work may be submitted on either CD or cassette
- video may be presented on either DVD or VHS (**not** CD Rom)
- web work **must** be accompanied by a live URL as well as printouts or on disc
- print work may be **no larger** than A3.

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

Mini DV, VCD, CD Rom and minidisks are not acceptable. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to produce work in the required format (and fully functioning). If Moderators, cannot access work, it cannot be moderated and will be returned to Centres.

Centres must ensure that internal deadlines are set early enough to be able to solve any potential technical problems and send in work in appropriate formats at the right time. Work should be ready by the same deadline as the MS1 and therefore ready to send when the sample request arrives from the Moderator.

Centres are reminded that, where there are 10 or fewer candidates, they should send all work with the MS1 (and the Centre Authentication form) before the deadline. If candidates have been withdrawn or are absent then the MS1 should also be completed accordingly and the appropriate copies sent to OCR and Moderator. If a single candidate has is absent or withdrawn, the MS1 should not be marked as '0' for the candidate – this led to several Centres having to complete Amendment to Coursework Marks forms.

As with earlier sessions, Centres are also reminded that it's vital to wrap the artefacts well – many VHSs, DVDs and CDs arrived damaged and often unviewable. It's also important to label all artefacts with the Centre number and candidate's name. Some Moderators have spent hours trying to match the artefact to the written component.

Centres are reminded of the importance of making and retaining copies of all work submitted for moderation. OCR is required to keep samples of candidates' coursework for awarding, archiving and training purposes and so cannot guarantee that all work submitted will be returned following moderation.

Assignments

The majority of Centres and candidates devised appropriate tasks, taking into account their collective strengths in terms of skills and resources. Many candidates showed high levels of engagement in their work, from the initial planning and research stages through to the realisation of their work. Such work had been supported well by Centres.

Video

Video was the most popular medium, consisting almost wholly of music videos/pop promos for a range of genres and in a range of styles. Most were quite derivative and showed a real understanding of the conventions of the genre. As in previous sessions, many candidates took a wholly narrative approach, ignoring the fact that in industrial terms this approach is quite rare – most tend to feature the artist in a performance situation. The best examples of production work from Centres had a performance element with good use of close up (rarely seen in the weakest videos), excellent lip-synching, well-synchronised guitar/drum playing, shown through dynamic filming and a with a rapid edit rate. The weakest work looked like short films set to one song, or just a series of shots (often the same shot size) set to music. Some Centres had offered candidates a shortlist of songs to choose from and these tended to work better than those where Centres offered a free choice. Moderators noted that the dance/techno genre(s) might be better avoided, as they tend not to stimulate images, narrative or theme easily for most candidates. Producing videos for *The Prodigy* is possibly best avoided! On the other hand, several moderators noted that hip hop produced some effective work, including a piece from one group of female candidates who questioned notions of masculinity in black pop culture. The work showed a real sense of a genuine issue being explored through direct contact with actual media texts that exploit and encourage certain narrow definitions of what it is to be a modern black man in popular culture today. The ideas and the text fused together in a stimulating and sustained synthesis.

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

There were some good animations produced for a range of purposes and audiences. This is an area that might be developed, especially with the simplicity of software such as *i-stopmotion* and *Framethief*.

Film

This session saw more trailers and short films than in previous sessions. Some of the short films were effective exercises in story-telling in miniature and there were some ambitious and quite controlled pieces from some candidates, including attempts to play around with time and space in a very complex manner. The trailers showed what a demanding task this is to do well. The best ones were multi-layered and episodic in form. Weaker ones were highly narrative based suggesting a film opening more than a trailer. Many of the trailers were very similar to the AS film brief. Any thriller/gangster/crime/horror approach risks leaning too far towards the AS film brief and should, therefore, be avoided. At least one Centre submitted a range of exceptional trailers in a range of genres/styles, including romance and drama.

Television

There were some excellent examples of documentary this session, ranging in subject from the inevitable 'teenage issues' to a very stylish documentary featuring historical reconstructions. Many were rather unadventurous and showed a lack of appropriate interviews. Several were highly effective, stylish, controlled and informative. It is to be hoped that this is a form that will be explored more in future sessions. There was a little TV news produced – but this was generally less successful.

Print

This was proportionately more popular than in previous sessions. Most print work was submitted as part of cross-media packages. There were also some pages from either new newspapers or magazines. The newspaper brief should provide the appropriate level of demand for A2, yet they were sometimes unlike any real paper, showing great swathes of white space and with an ill-advised choice of font (Comic Sans should be avoided at all costs!). Magazines were still a little too close to the AS magazine set brief. Centres need to ensure there are sufficient (prominent) original images that are also audit trailed in the supporting material so that the moderator can see (a) that they are original and (b) how they have been manipulated and cropped.

ICT/New Media

There were still very few ICT/new media-based submissions in this session which was surprising given that many candidates possess a passion for computer games and many are undoubtedly making their own websites at home. Very few Centres provided a URL for the sites that were submitted. This is mandatory. If a Centre cannot see how live access to the work on the web can be achieved, then the brief should be avoided. Likewise if Centres do not have access to web-building software, the web brief should not be chosen. One centre submitted their work as an Adobe Acrobat file which is unacceptable.

Radio

Once again there was very little radio work this session, but there were a few effective radio plays and some very weak radio format shows.

Cross Media

This is becoming less popular than in earlier sessions. Cross media production tended to be the weakest option, perhaps because of the range of teaching that has to be covered in order to prepare candidates. The best examples of those seen were truly cross media and tended to be promotional materials for a film or CD in a number of different media. Some moderators noted that they saw inappropriate materials, including crayon packaging (with crayons!), confectionary wrappers, t-shirts and a sock puppet. Other moderators noted how very 'thin' some packages were consisting, for instance, of just a poster and DVD cover. As a rule of thumb, all A2 projects should be more substantial than the AS set briefs.

Assessment

As always most Centres' marks were quite accurate. However, there was a significant minority which marked outside tolerance, necessitating adjustment in line with agreed standards across the national cohort. Those Centres which used the wording of the assessment criteria when writing Coursework Cover Sheets tended to be far more accurate in their marking. Many Centres' comments were detailed and perceptive and allowed for confirmatory moderation. Yet those Centres writing very little – or nothing – in the boxes at the back of the cover sheet were often quite inaccurate in their assessment of the work.

Construction was most frequently marked generously, especially at the top. Critical Evaluations were marked a little generously by many; yet Planning was sometimes marked harshly. Centres are also advised to note the teacher observation element for Planning and not just rely on what is in the candidates' files. Moderators were pleased to note that more Centres annotated the Critical Evaluation than previously, as required.

There were issues in the merit order for a number of Centres, indicating either ineffective internal moderation or insufficient attention being paid to the assessment criteria. This was particularly notable in Centres which offered a *range* of briefs but marked one medium more generously than another.

As with all previous sessions, the moderation team was pleased to see a range of creative, technically skilled and informed work for this unit, underpinned by excellent theoretical teaching and technical training.

Advice

- The best tasks build on the strengths of Centres in terms of their skills and resources.
- Critical Evaluations should include:
 - a systematic account of the stages of planning and production
 - detailed reference to relevant real generic examples, indicating evidence of independent research
 - detailed reference to the relevant areas of institutional context and clear understanding of where the candidate's own production would sit within this
 - detailed reference to audience feedback and use of theoretical framework in which to place the production.
- Use the wording of the assessment criteria when writing cover sheets as this keeps the assessment within the appropriate level.
- Keep to the deadline for sending mark sheets and, where there are 10 or fewer candidates, send all work with the MS1 by the deadline, including the Centre Authentication Form.
- Work should be ready to send when the sample request arrives from the moderator so that the centre can respond promptly.

2734 – Critical Research Study

General Comments

Candidates performed well in this session. There very few candidates who achieved marks in level 1 band and most candidates achieved marks in level 3 or above. There were some excellent responses and were more candidates achieving 75+. Evidently, research had often been enthusiastically tackled, even by weaker candidates.

Some candidates had very detailed notes. While not writing in continuous prose some candidates' notes were very detailed in bullet point form. This goes against the spirit of the paper and does not, generally, help candidates.

Some centres had a number of candidates researching the same focus and using similar resources (although there were some individual primary methods). Other Centres had seemingly provided candidates with much of their secondary research in the form of class handouts therefore candidates were unable to discuss logistics and could not reference their sources of properly evaluate them. It was also noticeable that some candidates studying Children & TV had simply used psychology notes and some studying Women & Film had used film studies notes as their only form of secondary research. These practices are not in the spirit of the paper and do not benefit the candidates.

Most candidates were aware of the rubric of their particular topic, however many candidates studied a very narrow focus (sometimes only one film) which did not allow them to explore the relationship between their case study and the wider topic.

It was pleasing to see that many candidates had devised a focus question or hypothesis that allowed them to investigate a particular area of interest, rather than broadly considering topics such as 'Children & TV Violence' or 'The representation of women in horror films'. There were some candidates, however, who set themselves very complex or convoluted hypotheses e.g. 'Youth cultures are no longer subordinate but completely co-modified'. In these cases responses tended to lack fluency and clarity and the candidates would have been better advised to explore a more manageable topic. The main hindrance to students' ability to succeed on this paper is not being guided to choose a clearly focussed and coherent hypothesis to focus on at the start.

Candidates who are well prepared, organised in their research and specific focus, and can write coherently/fluently do very well. There were some impressive answers. Less well organised candidates who had not been guided as to the requirements being looked for, tended to flounder in more narrative, disjointed and over assertive rather than evidentially based responses.

The fluency of candidates being able to construct a coherent, point-by-point argument (backed up and substantiated) is important. Teaching coherent essay style to express research clearly would benefit most students. Teachers cannot teach the topic but they can teach analytical written response styles. Most candidates make a fair and honest attempt to address the question and a more disciplined focus on how they express relevant (rather than all) points would help them score more highly.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Generally answered well however the following points were noticeable:

- Many candidates spent valuable time writing up to two sides explaining why they chose the topic and their focus area. Limited marks can be gained from this.
- While it was pleasing to see more reflection and evaluation in most candidates' work, this was often very general and not specific to actual methods or sources that the candidate had used. Many candidates had not been taught the difference between reflection and evaluation.
- Many candidates did not reference their sources but talked generally about newspapers, websites & books.
- Some candidates explained and evaluated a range of methods, but cited only one source for each. A range of sources, where possible, should be cited.
- Explanation of logistic was often unclear. Phrases such as 'I stumbled across..' or 'I was lucky to bump into..' suggest a haphazard, rather than a logical and well planned, approach.
- There was an increased use of observation as a primary method and this was rarely appropriate, and often simply anecdotal, for example - 'I observed that a lot of the people I know who do drugs listen to hip hop'.
- When addressing their sources, very few candidates really understand the difference between bias and balance.

Whilst this unit is an individual research unit, candidates should be taught researching skills including correct referencing and how to reflect upon and evaluate their methodologies and the use of terminology correctly.

Question 2

There was a very varied range of responses with some candidates writing an excellent response to question 1, linking in findings from their research and demonstrating understanding of the topic. However the question 2 response was highly generalised and did not reference findings, resulting in a lower mark. Candidates are advised to balance their time and fully familiarise themselves with the very differing demands of each question.

Candidates generally handled the distinctions of 'Methods' for question 1 and 'Findings' for question 2 well. There was, in some cases, a tendency with some answers to question 2, especially with Women and Film and Popular Music and Youth Culture, to adopt a heavily historical narrative approach rather than a more precisely primary and secondary research focussed discussion or argument. These type of answers were frequently lengthy and detailed, but merely retold, for instance, the history of women in film over the past 100 years, or the rise of rock music since the 1950s to the present day. This could just be a competent paraphrase of a film or music textbook rather than precise and specifically researched findings.

Generally, most candidates seem to have used their time well and differentiation was fairly apparent by outcome and focus.

Women and Film Popular topic

There was a range of responses from very narrow case studies on one star or film to some extremely strong responses discussing women's opportunities in the industry and focusing on Jane Campion and Kathryn Bigelow. One particularly strong response focused on the representation of Halle Berry from the point of view of her gender and racial background and then within the context of the industry and film genre. Laura Mulvey still featured prominently but less so than in the past and many stronger candidates questioned the relevance and validity of her work, some exploring the idea of a reversal of the gaze and questioning whether there is a 'Female Gaze'.

Popular Music and Youth Culture Less popular than in the past.

Some excellent responses in which most candidates addressed, at least implicitly, the concept of youth culture. One candidate explored the way in which youths segregate into subcultures in order to define themselves and differentiate themselves from the mainstream, questioning whether a youth culture is shaped and influenced by music or whether it establishes its image and attitudes and then finds appropriate music to suit them.

Politics and the Media Very few responses

Some focus on London Bombings and the aftermath. One candidate focused on the 'branding' of David Cameron and the way he is represented in the tabloid press.

Children and Television Most popular topic

A range of responses, although most candidates focussed on one of the following:

- The influence of violence in TV programmes
- Advertising – its impact on eating habits or gender stereotyping
- TV as an educational tool.

The best candidates developed an argument considering whether TV can influence children's perceptions and behaviour and, if so, whether this in a positive or negative manner. Some interesting and inventive primary methods were used, for example giving children in a focus group 'Zap' cards to throw down every time they see an act of violence. These were used to determine whether children of different ages have different perceptions about what constitutes an act of violence. One strong response researched the viewing habits of a group of children in a rural area and compared them with those of a group of inner city children, while another compared children's responses to violence in cartoons with that of factual violence in the news, supporting findings with audience theory and concluding that children can differentiate between fact and fantasy.

David Buckingham was cited frequently. There was less focus on the Bobo Doll experiment although the Jamie Bulger case was cited in many weaker responses as 'proof' that violence in the media has a direct and negative impact on children.

Sport and the Media Moderately popular

There were some very strong responses, especially those discussing the coverage of women's and disabled sports. Stronger candidates made good use of primary research by interviewing local sports coaches or promising young female athletes from their Centres. There were some studies of footballers in the run up to the World Cup with weaker candidates tending to describe some tabloid coverage of, say, Wayne Rooney, with little consideration of the wider relationship between sport and the media.

Concept to Consumption Very few responses

There were few strong responses for this topic. Some of the weakest included a case study on Heat magazine, merely describing the contents of the magazine and a description of the development of the iPod.

Community Radio Very few responses

There were some excellent case studies of local radio stations where candidates had interviewed radio personnel and canvassed the opinion of the audience to explore the ways in which the station develops and sustains a relationship with the community.

Crime and the Media Increasingly popular

There were very strong studies of the representation of crime either in the news or in TV drama/film. Some stronger candidates considered how audiences perceive crime, whether this is influenced by the media and whether their perceptions are correct in terms of actual crime figures. Many case studies focused on the glamorisation of crime e.g. in the gangster genre, with varying degrees of success. Better responses contextualised the texts and considered the values and attitudes of the time and place. Weaker responses simply argued that media representations of crime negatively influence the audience and some suggested that the media should 'educate' the audience and that glamorised images of crime should be censored. Some simply described the codes and conventions of, for example, the gangster genre or discussed one TV series out of context.

Please note that for January 2007 onwards some of the topics have changed. Some have remained the same – some have changed slightly in their requirements and some are no longer available. Please read the details of the new topics on pages 50 and 51 of the GCE Media Studies specification (for teaching from September 2005) very carefully.

2735 - Media Issues and Debates

General Comments

There were just over 11000 candidates entered for the examination. The majority completed three questions as required and relatively few experienced time-management problems. On the whole, candidates were well prepared and used case studies appropriately to illustrate their points. The examination requires candidates to combine an understanding of well researched academic theories with their own case studies and apply these to the specific question on the examination paper. Less successful candidates often do not understand the key media concepts, are not able to illustrate their answer with appropriate case studies, or fail to address the particular question, but choose rather to address the general issue.

It was apparent that some Centres had provided their candidates with essay plans, and in some cases, paragraphs for essays. This is not helpful, as candidates reproducing their learnt essays fail to respond to the actual questions set on the paper and consequently, cannot be rewarded with many marks. Generalized responses, similarly, cannot gain many marks.

It was noted that many candidates included statistical information in their responses as a means of illustrating a point. This practice is to be applauded and candidates can be rewarded for backing up their arguments with such evidence. However, many candidates failed to give any indication as to the source of the information provided. For example the claim that “85.4% of British adults read a local newspaper compared to the 66% who read a national newspaper. It is therefore clear that local newspapers are important to their community.” was not substantiated by a source. Candidates should be encouraged to indicate, albeit briefly, the source of their information, when they make such assertions. This might encourage them to be more discerning about their sources of information and to question them rather than simply accepting them as fact.

Comments on Individual Questions

1 This was a popular choice. Candidates were asked to discuss the continuing appeal of soap opera. There were plenty of references to devices that media institutions use to attract and retain viewers, such as melodrama, multi-stranded narratives, realism, scheduling strategies, and developing relationships with supporting media texts such as celebrity magazines and tabloids. Many students observed that soap’s success depends in part on realism, and in part on melodrama, but failed to examine this seeming paradox.

Relevant theories were explored competently by many, though one candidate laid blame firmly at the door of the theorists with the comment: “*One of the reasons Eldorado did so badly was because of the Uses and Gratifications Theory.*”

Eastenders and *Coronation Street* were the most frequently cited case studies. *Hollyoaks* was often well used to illustrate audience-targeting techniques, perhaps, because this is popular viewing for many candidates. *Brookside*, and *Eldorado* were used by many as examples of soaps that have failed to maintain their appeal. Whilst *Eldorado* is a relevant example, it is shows the tendency of Centres to rely on case studies that are getting out of date. Many examples which could be regarded as ‘out of date’ continue to be used by candidates. Mark with AIDS, Den and Angie’s divorce, the Who shot Phil storyline examples from *Eastenders*, for example, are still quite common. These are legitimate, but candidates are encouraged to put them into a recent historical context. Many candidates do not keep up with current or recent texts and trends. Few were aware of the general decline in numbers of viewers for the genre and consequently, their arguments lacked accuracy.

Unfortunately, some candidates seem unable to spell correctly the names of their studied soaps. *Coronation Street* has been problematic and there are still too many candidates referring to 'soap oprah.'

2 Candidates were asked to reflect on how far broadcast news accurately reflects society. The extent to which news is determined and shaped by broadcast institutions' need to maintain ratings was explored successfully by able candidates. Recent case studies, including terrorism, the World Cup, political scandals and high profile television reality shows were often used well to illustrate points about balance, newsworthiness and news selection.

Some candidates referred to the increase in citizen journalism that is having an impact on news reporting and journalism generally. Centres who make sure that their schemes of work keep track of current developments in the media give their candidates an edge in many areas of this specification – this topic being one of them. Weaker candidates confined themselves to descriptions of Galtung and Ruge's work, though many had difficulty with spelling their names.

Many candidates commented on what they consider to be the biased coverage of some broadcast news. Candidates from one Centre observed that the BBC were not allowed to show people jumping to their deaths from the Twin Towers, though ITV could because it is a commercial station. Study of the Ofcom Code of Practice for news and current affairs programmes and of the BBC's policies for news and of their accountability would better inform the answers of many candidates.

Inevitably, television case studies were more frequent than radio, which was tackled mainly with reference to Radio1, and local commercial stations. One candidate affirmed that "*Radio 1 is not really interested in news.*" Another commented that GWR's news "*is always a couple of minutes late because they are not bothered about news.*"

3 Candidates were asked to consider the extent to which audiences have benefited from the 1990 Act. The intended focus of the topic is the deregulation of the airwaves and the subsequent proliferation of radio and television channels. A handful of candidates tackled this question, quite legitimately, from a far broader perspective, having studied the wide ranging scope of the whole of the 1990 Broadcasting Act.

4 The question asked how the British film industry has managed to survive. Candidates who had confined their studies to textual analysis of a selection of films tended to struggle with this question. Better answers were those which approached the question from an institutional perspective, where candidates had used their chosen film texts to illustrate their points.

Many candidates discussed international partnerships, tax breaks, lottery funding and the role of various organizations and institutions in their support of the industry.

The social realist genre is popular with some Centres, and is successfully used to illustrate a targeting of a niche audience. Heritage films, and the definition of Britishness featured in many answers. *Bullet Boy* and *Kidulthood* were popular choices of the more recent texts. A sentence or two from a very able student in this year's examination is succinct, thought-provoking, and very quotable: "*The most successful British films of the last decade have been productions such as James Bond and Harry Potter – their Britishness only skin deep, with Hollywood values to the core, made exclusively by Hollywood money. To answer the original question, I believe the British film industry has survived only by diluting its Britishness. By embracing globalization, and particularly Americanisation, British filmmakers ensure themselves an audience – even if it is at the cost of their ideals and principles.*"

5 Candidates were invited to consider how and why genres change over time. Popular choices were horror, science fiction, western, film noir, gangster and romantic comedy. There were some outstanding answers on this question from thoroughly prepared candidates with a very comfortable knowledge of two or three genres. It was nice to see many candidates writing with pleasure and authority on pre 1980s films from a range of genres. Some candidates used *Brokeback Mountain* very effectively to illustrate how a tired genre can be used to explore and challenge social and sexual mores. Elsewhere, able candidates discussed the merging of genres and the concept of hybrids and sub-genres. One Centre had encouraged its candidates to engage with US teen films such as *Teen Dreams*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, and *Clueless*.

Another Centre had successfully enabled their candidates to grapple with the 'rom-com' genres by studying *Annie Hall*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Maid in Manhattan* and *Bridget Jones' Diary*.

6 Candidates were challenged by a quotation that suggested censorship is to be avoided. Some candidates offered a rather one-sided response either agreeing or disagreeing with the quote. More able candidates used case studies, old and new, to outline reasons for and against censorship. Though some case studies from film history will serve to make useful points for many years to come, it was clear that the candidates who had best engaged with this topic were those who applied their understanding of the concepts to recent and current films and thus engaged in the debate on a contemporary level. *The Passion of Christ* and *The Da Vinci Code* were used by some candidates to consider the issues of anti-semitism and blasphemy respectively. Unfortunately though, some candidates wrote about Mary Whitehouse as if she had made her observations on censorship just a few weeks ago.

Understanding of effects theories and case studies to support and oppose the various theories, were pleasing features of many answers. Unfortunately, there were many factual inaccuracies cited by candidates.

7 This is the most popular topic in this section. The question focused on the extent to which magazines create or reflect society's values. Able candidates analysed theory and recent research in the area, and confidently explored the issue via a pleasing range of appropriate texts. Some strong answers looked at the development of feminist theories and applied this to magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *More*, exploring the paradox of representing independent career women, whilst telling them how to lose weight and look like a celebrity. Many candidates had used Laura Mulvey's gaze theory well, and talked knowledgeably about differing modes of address: ironic readers, and the post-feminist bloke-lash phenomenon that arguably brought the lads mags into being in the first place.

Unfortunately, many candidates failed to get to grips with the debate. Weaker answers gave a superficial treatment, relying on textual analysis that barely went beyond the front cover of a couple of men's magazines.

8 Candidates were asked to consider the importance of a local newspaper to its community. Most candidates referred to a local newspaper distributed within their neighbourhood, and outlined its intended appeal. However, very few candidates went beyond a fairly superficial treatment of the issue. Local newspapers come in a variety of forms. Their treatment as a homogenous mass by many candidates is disappointing. For example, one Centre's candidates believed that all local papers were free and weekly because all three in their area were. Candidates should be encouraged to go beyond a basic description of the contents of their local paper, with some token observations about its audience. Several candidates from one Centre commented that only the elderly read local papers, so that they could read the obituaries.

Candidates should study a variety of forms of local newspapers, and understand that the contents of each are shaped by a number of factors – not just by the community that is served.

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

9 The question invited candidates to consider whether self regulation of the press was a satisfactory arrangement. Many candidates set out to argue that self regulation is unsatisfactory, largely because newspapers spend most of their time invading the privacy of celebrities which people like to read about. However, there were some excellent answers to this question. Some Centres have clearly got to grips with the topic, providing their students with a range of relevant, interesting and controversial case studies that have challenged them intellectually and enabled them to explore this important area fully.

The PCC was regularly referred to, though there is general confusion or ignorance regarding its role, powers and membership.

Many candidates thought that the press is free to publish whatever it wants, without constraint. One typical example began: *The British press, unlike many other countries, are not regulated whatsoever.* Another affirmed: *“There are no laws restricting the freedom of the British press.”*

Some reference to defamation should be an integral part of this topic.

**Advanced GCE Media Studies) (3860/7860)
June 2006 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2730	Raw	120	98	88	78	69	60	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2731	Raw	90	67	61	55	49	43	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2732	Raw	90	66	59	53	47	41	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2733	Raw	90	99	89	79	69	60	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2734	Raw	90	70	63	56	50	44	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2735	Raw	90	70	63	56	50	44	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

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

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3860	13.40	38.03	65.92	85.16	94.61	100.00	16237
7860	12.23	41.04	74.04	92.41	98.61	100.00	12135

3860 - 16237 candidates aggregated this series

7860 – 12135 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
www.ocr.org.uk/OCR/WebSite/docroot/understand/ums.jsp

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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