

Media Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7860**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3860**

Report on the Units

January 2007

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a unitary awarding body, established by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the RSA Examinations Board in January 1998. OCR provides a full range of GCSE, A-level, GNVQ, Key Skills and other qualifications for schools and colleges in the United Kingdom, including those previously provided by MEG and OCEAC. It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers.

The mark schemes are published as an aid to teachers and students, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which marks were awarded by Examiners. It does not indicate the details of the discussions which took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking commenced.

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.

Mark schemes and Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this mark scheme or report.

© OCR 2007

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annersley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622

Facsimile: 0870 870 6621

E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Media Studies (7860)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Media Studies (3860)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

Unit	Content	Page
2730	Foundation Production	1
2731	Textual Analysis	4
2732	Case Study: Audiences and Institutions	10
2733	Advanced Production	13
2734	Critical Research Study	17
2735	Media Issues and Debates	25
*	Grade Thresholds	28

Foundation production 2730

General Comments

There were over 1000 candidates this session. Overall moderators indicated that the work presented maintained the standard from the summer. That centres are working with the specification to ensure consistency is a positive development and this illustrates the hard work and commitment of teaching staff in the majority of centres. There is a clear sense of creativity explored and developed in this unit of the specification, for which candidates and centres are congratulated.

Centres are reminded that the Coursework Authentication sheet (CCS160) is a requirement and should accompany either the work or the MS1 sheets, which are sent to moderators for the selection of the moderated sample. It is pleasing to report that most centres, this session, sent this form, without a further reminder.

The majority of the work fulfilled the requirements of the specification and although there were a few centres that still entered large supporting files with their candidates' work, this is clearly becoming the exception. Centres are clearly noting for the January session the need for brevity and a close adherence to the word count. It is hoped that this will also be the case in the May session. There is a general consensus of understanding as to what constitutes an appropriate production.

ICT skills do seem to be developing and this has been evident in the steady increase of centres entering Level 4 work for the print brief - teenage magazine. Centres appear to be heeding the need for candidates to use and manipulate original, rather than found images. Centres are also reminded that the New Media website brief does require a ULR address and that the web-site is required to be on-line during the moderation process.

The administration of this unit was well executed. There are still centres that do not meet the required coursework deadline; this must be adhered to as it can even delay results being issued to centres.

The Set Briefs:

It appears for this January session that the most popular tasks were the print brief; the production of a teenage magazine and set brief 1 – the film thriller.

The film thriller set brief explicitly requires candidates to illustrate how their work will relate to a 15 or 18 certificated audience and perhaps for this reason it is clear that the 'stalker' thriller is still prevalent. Candidates must ensure that they illustrate how their text caters for whichever audience. Without this clarification – most likely expressed in the production report – candidates are unlikely to achieve a Level 4. Centres are advised to support their candidates in this requirement. The opening titles must be included within the sequence. Centres would do well to ensure candidates keep to the recommended two minutes as stated in the specification. Editing of video footage is crucial and the need to be well practised in the use of 'pace' within such a sequence enhances the opportunities of gaining higher marks.

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. There are some centres that use the music track as the main sound element. Care needs to be taken with this, as stated in the June 2006 report, as moderators again saw a small number of examples where the end production could be taken for a 'music video'.

Report on the Units taken in January 2007

Centres must ensure that Health and Safety issues and the use of inappropriate language are addressed. It is still the case with car chases, bedroom scenes and night time scenes with the use of knives and toy guns, where concerns for both the safety of the candidates and the implications of police intervention exist. Well considered, detailed planning and the monitoring of candidates' work can only support effective practice and outcomes. The most effective thrillers do not need to include horror conventions or violent scenes.

There were very few, if any examples of the television brief being offered this session.

The teenage magazine brief appears to be developing well. The use of ICT is having a growing impact upon the outcomes achieved. If the use of found images were to stop, the results would be even better! Centres are also reminded that those working as part of a group have to create the equivalent per candidate to that of one working individually (see page 62 of the 3rd edition of the specification.)

The advertising campaign brief was generally well-executed and made good use of original images manipulated for context. In general, candidates use existing charities and attempted to re-brand them. It is worth considering, as stated before, 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 also encouraged to engage candidates' thoughts about where campaigns could or should be placed or shown. Every media text has a context.

There was little evidence this session of the video games package. It is possible that the requirement of the three original images is more difficult for this brief, given the nature of how images for games packages are themselves created, usually from the game itself.

Again there was little heard of the radio brief this session. It almost seems to be a medium not experienced in media studies! The 'invisible' medium still offers a great deal to the creative media studies candidate, if centres can support this potential.

As stated above there was more evidence of the web work for set brief 6. There were a few examples that worked very well. However, there is some difficulty with moderators being able to access web addresses/sites. For centres encouraging candidates to develop this brief, it is clear that the specification (3rd edition p12) does not allow the use of 'PowerPoint' presentations in this section as it is NOT fit for purpose. The specification clearly states that centres must provide access to software such as Flash or Dreaweaver and that 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.' (Appendix A p60 3rd Edition)

Centres are also advised to visit the above page reference in the 3rd edition of the specification as a number of other points concerned with text production are listed.

For example: no print item is to be larger than A3

Candidates are advised to make their own copies of their work if required for personal portfolios as OCR may retain work for INSET and archive purposes.

Assessment Criteria:

Overall the majority of centres did apply the assessment criteria well. As with previous sessions there were a small number of centres whose marks were either reduced or raised. This is done to bring a centre's marks in line with the agreed base line standard within the moderation process. Centres are reminded that the application of marks must reflect the level criteria as stated in the specification. One moderator has pointed to the fact that some centres will make cursory links to Level criteria. When this occurs moderators may find it more difficult to support a centre's assessment, because little evidence is provided by the centre is support of its initial award of a Level and a mark within that level.

Report on the Units taken in January 2007

This session did witness a very small number of centres where rank order (order of merit) was questioned and this led to a small number of moderators asking centres to remark according to the Level criteria as illustrated in the specification. One major reason for the rank order issue is the lack of or lack of detail in the internal standardisation process in which centres should undertake. This a more common feature in the summer session than in the January session; in the main due to the larger cohort entry.

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.

Administration:

The best practice witnessed by moderators is where the moderator can easily access the text outcomes (especially print) from the written work and any appendices. As has been stated previously, centres and candidates support the moderation process, when all administration and 'tips' in coursework presentation are made a priority. This clearly supports the moderation process. Deadlines always seem to be an issue; unfortunately for the moderating team, their time is not endless!

Advice to Teachers:

- 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.
- A clear policy on Health and Safety needs to be in place.
- The content of productions, along with clear and detailed planning are in place and discussed before productions are started.
- The emphasis upon the use of original images is made clear in ALL PRINT based work.
- Access to appropriate equipment, resources and training is essential (for candidates and staff).
- 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). It is recommended that such study takes place from the outset.
- Deadlines (internal for candidates and external for the centre) should be met.
- Clear labelling, effective administration, efficient paper work and detailed comments from the centre on candidates' work is needed in order to support the moderating process.

Unit 2731 - Textual Analysis

General Comments

The January 2007 session had almost 9,000 candidates entered. The majority fully understood the requirements of this unit, especially as far as Section A is concerned. However, as reported in the June 2006 report "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. 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 battle sequence on an ice lake: King Arthur, (Antoine Fuqua 2004), provided ample opportunities of examples of the five technical aspects of moving image language for discussion.

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 very important that Centres check the contents of the DVD prior to the exam

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

Question 1

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. Candidates' answers are uneven, when two or three of the technical aspects are dealt with by only a brief sentence or two. The strongest candidates were able to deconstruct the sequence skilfully, using the technical areas as the starting point for an analysis of how meaning was created in the sequence. There were fewer very weak responses and fewer candidates producing purely descriptive answers than in previous sessions

Mise-en-scene was well addressed and candidates readily made comment on the setting, locations, costumes and props of the film sequence. The sequence was fruitful for good candidates, providing a wide range of possible readings.

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.

SFX eluded many candidates and tended to be treated less thoroughly than other areas. Many candidates seem to think that SFX refers only to CGI, ignoring stunts and models, for example. Indeed some candidates actually describe the ice cracking as a pyrotechnic special effect rather than CGI. Many comments on editing were confined to the pacing of the extract and the return of the expression 'jump cuts' does not heed the advice of previous reports on the use of this term. Centres need to pay attention to the key editing functions of manipulating time (as opposed to pacing), controlling narrative information for the audience (creating suspense or surprise) and constructing perspective. Given the amount of academic material that exists on the functions of editing and its central role in the filmmaking process, there is little justification for this lack of attention.

The highest scoring candidates were able to select examples from the extract and in detail discuss the variety of shots used and link these to the other technical aspects of the sequence. The extract provided a plethora of opportunities to examine camera shots, from long establishing shots to the use of close ups. Stronger candidates would select a sequence of shots to analyse and provide examples, weaker candidates were too descriptive and could only identify and describe shots. The use of camera movement was important in this extract, many candidates making reference to the low angle shot under the ice. The candidates were able to identify the seriousness of the battle and the perils of the situation. Whilst many candidates were clearly engaged with the costume, weapons and makeup of characters, there were still too many instances of reference to 'Keira and her team' and 'goodies and baddies'.

Sound was analysed much better during this session. Many candidates were able to identify the sound of the wind and its isolating and howling effect. Candidates considered the sound effect of arrows flying through the air and considered the difference between the impact on ice and those that found their target. They could also identify the sound effect of the ice cracking with the CGI of this visually occurring. It is pleasing to note that sound is beginning to be integrated with wider aspects of technical analysis, for example, with character, mise en scene and at times special effects. However there remains an area of improvement in discussion of sound in terms of diegetic and non-diegetic sound and how it is recorded into a soundtrack, using different layers of sound and sound effects.

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.

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.

2 (a) **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, for example, 'Grow Your Own' and 'You and Your Wedding', Sainsbury's magazine and 'Autosport'.

In general, the issue of 'aspirations' 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. Most candidates were able to respond to the issue of aspirations, although this was frequently interpreted in a very general manner (for example, physical, health, romantic aspirations) rather than focussing on consumerism. Some candidates offered a very narrow range of examples, concentrating on front covers and a single advert/article as evidence.

(b) **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 show how the celebrity is represented in visual and written conventions. There were some assured answers, with some excellent examples of textual analysis and discussion of representation of celebrity. When well prepared though candidates were able to offer detailed ideological analysis providing an opportunity to explore the inter-dependence of tabloids and celebrity. Centres are reminded that Candidates need to write the editions of the newspapers studied at the beginning of their answers.

There were still occasional responses that relied on that week's news, which were no more than superficial general discussions of celebrity news. At the same time some Centres are clearly working to detailed (and 'past') case studies which offer a rich source of material for the candidates, for taught and critical study.

Some candidates tried to cover too much of the news stories in an edition which meant they struggled for detail in their answers. Centres need to provide a balanced approach to the number of pages they cover. This may mean selecting appropriate stories from an edition, as there are many examples of candidates not answering the question or simply offering all they knew about a particular newspaper, whilst repeating the question.

As reported previously, there is continued use of examples of candidates using 'broadsheet' newspapers, such as 'The Times'. 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.

(c) Music Culture and Radio

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. The music culture can be discussed through the presenter and or music and style of the compared shows. 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.

(d) Gender and Television Sitcom

As in previous sessions, there were some excellent answers to this topic. 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.

However, 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. Candidates should write the specific episodes that they study at the top of the exam paper.

There were some excellent answers, which focussed on the understanding of gender representation and its construction, evident from the strongest candidates. Far too many answers failed to focus on appearance and dialogue, preferring to offer general accounts of gender in sitcoms. In many cases, candidates had pre-prepared answers, which were not adapted to the question and mise-en-scene or character behaviour were common choices of evidence in discussion despite the question. There were many rehearsed answers, which did not address the question.

Too many candidates are failing to offer comparative analysis and there is also a tendency in weaker candidates to ignore alternative stereotypes of gender and to make assumptions based upon an overly narrow range of representations. There was evidence of candidates discussing narrative and character over the requirements of the question: which was to discuss dialogue and appearance.

The use of differentiated texts would be helpful to all candidates. Very good answers on 'Absolutely Fabulous' and 'Men Behaving Badly' focused clearly on the question and wrote in detail about appearance and dialogue. There was some good work using 'Friends', 'Only Fools and Horses' and 'The Simpsons' and 'The Vicar of Dibley' and 'My Family'. Some candidates struggled to engage with analysis of 'The Office' and 'The Royle Family', due to their generic unconventionality and performance modes.

As reported in previous PE reports 'Whilst there may be many interesting points to make about gender representation in 'Sex and the City' and 'Desperate Housewives', neither are sit-coms". Nor are the 'Green Wing' or 'Scrubs' good example of a sitcom and they do not enable candidates to fully address the rubric of the question set.

(e) Conflict/Competition and Video/Computer Games

A small number of centres chose this option.

Although there were excellent analyses of how games represented conflict and competition, these tended to focus on game mechanics and structures, such as the relationship between the player and the game. Very little attention was given to the

ways that conflict was encouraged through the analysis of character or level design. Some responses proved informed and showed significant understanding of video games for example in the study of *Grand Theft Auto*, which was at the heart of all analyses in comparison with *Fatal Frame*, *Devil May Cry* and *Tomb Raider*. Weaker responses relied on description of a game's narrative and outcomes with little attempt to provide any detailed textual analysis of game elements.

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. Candidates would have fared better if they had not been given free choice but had been prepared on at least one common game text.

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.

Unit 2732 - Case Study: Audience and Institutions

General Comments

There were around 4000 candidates for this paper, many of which seemed likely to be re-sitters and of which the vast majority answered on Section A. There were very few rubric errors involving candidates answering both sections, in which case the higher mark counted. Centres who had obviously 'schooled' their cohort in how to approach the exam paper (by doing practice exams and discussing best strategies) allowed their students to achieve to the best of their abilities. However, there were a lot of answers to the essay questions which assumed the question would be the same as in previous sessions. The best candidates were distinguished by their ability to 'think on their feet' and address the question set.

Some centres are still delivering too much (inappropriate in some cases) theory to their candidates who often seemed not to understand it and rarely applied it to relevant case study material. The best answers tend to build upon candidates' own experience of the media and attempt to contextualise it with new thinking.

The best papers were those where the candidates' time allocation was appropriate. They had been advised as to how long to spend on each of the questions and the content was comprehensive, relevant and detailed.

Some centres advised their candidates to answer the paper in reverse order. This can work up to a point, as it guarantees ample time will be spent on the essay question, but in some cases it can result in easier marks being forfeited as the early questions remain incomplete.

Question specific comments

Section A

- 1 (a) This question was mostly answered correctly, although a few candidates answered with 'the internet' rather than PCs and some missed the point, responding with either items that could be plugged in somewhere, such as headphones, or concepts of connectivity.
 - (b) Was answered very well, though again some candidates failed to read it properly and did not refer to statistical evidence.
 - (c) (i) Mostly fine, although a number of students mis-understood 'cocooning' or only said that teenagers were 'plugged into digital devices'.
(ii) Connectedness identified well. Some missed the 'shared opinions' part of the answer.
- 2 (a) Was generally answered well.
 - (b) Most candidates used evidence from outside the passage, but there was a significant minority who talked of parents as if they were dinosaurs ! Many gave vivid accounts of parental frailty compared to their own technological wizardry but few reflected upon the social uses made of the technology in each case. The question could be approached as parents v children now or children now v parents when they were young. There were many wild assumptions about when various technologies began, but the best answers all showed evidence of logical thinking and observation of real world media use.

Report on the Units taken in January 2007

- 3 The majority of students opted for this question, however, some did not really engage with issue of 'creativity' and instead offered points on pre-taught old exam questions: portability, miniaturisation etc. A few students relied on an 'I surveyed ten people' type of approach. There were several centres, however, which had clearly engaged with the idea of current new media use where there was lots of evidence of thoughtful discussion of MySpace, blogging, podcasting and Youtube for example. In most cases, candidates could still have benefited from even more specific reference to actual examples. Some assumed that any new technology was inevitably more creative, assuming for example that watching HD TV was more creative than watching analogue.
- 4 There were some very good answers to this question with reference to detailed case studies, particularly the iPhone and social networking. Weaker responses tended to be just a run-through of facts about particular technologies rather than showing understanding of the issues.

Section B

Relatively few candidates answered this section.

- 1 (a) Answered well
- (b) Also answered well.
- (c) (i) Some understanding, but candidates sometimes translated 'portfolios' as a set of products or simply a folder.
- (ii) The concept was generally quite well understood
- 2 (a) Answered well.
- (b) Actually answered well, with good examples from outside the passage.
- 3 Those answers which did not become weighed down with theory or 'political' comment about globalisation were the best. There were some excellent case studies here, based around the release of particular films and broadened out into a consideration of Sony and Newscorp's global roles. Other commonly used case studies were Apple, Microsoft, Nintendo, Google and Virgin.
- 4 A familiar question but often poorly answered, with the inter-relationship often not explored.

Overall

Positives: Many candidates had been well prepared with a range of examples. Several centres in particular had prepared the candidates to discuss their own experience of User Generated Content on the internet very well and these candidates did very well on section A. The best centres/candidates obviously knew the importance of mark/time allocation for the answers.

Problems: Misunderstanding of the word 'creativity' in section A, q3. Candidates using theory which they did not understand; from Uses and Gratification to Marshall McLuhan Examples of 'downloaded' teacher opinion about the role of media industries ie. the evil that global industries do!

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

- 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
- Candidates should be encouraged to draw upon their own media experience and to 'theorise' it/critically analyse for themselves rather than apply heavy-handed existing theories (hypodermic, etc)
- 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!

Unit 2733 Principal Moderator's Report

It continues to be the case that moving image work is by far the most popular option, especially music videos but, as in the previous session, there were increased numbers of short films, film trailers and TV documentaries, with slightly more print-based work than earlier sessions (including newspapers and magazines); there were also some cross media packages and more ICT than previously. Yet again, there was very little radio production.

Critical Evaluations seem to have strengthened a little for this session with a clearer development from AS to A2 and with both greater evidence of research into existing media and increased reference to relevant theory and concepts. However, candidates who had opted for the Production Report style of sketchbook presentation or blow-by-blow printout of paperwork for planning and production, were hindered from producing an analytical approach to their evaluation. It is also noted that, at this level, it is disappointing that much work achieving high level 4 marks for Planning and Critical Evaluation was not matched by Construction work at a similar level; this goes against the spirit of a unit which has production work at its heart.

What was surprising were the still-significant numbers of Centres who created work that virtually replicated the set AS briefs; therefore it has to be repeated that 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 Foundation Production set briefs are designed to be of appropriate demand and difficulty for the AS level of assessment and are, therefore, of insufficient demand for Advanced Production, the higher level of assessment, A2. Furthermore, if the same brief has been used at AS the candidate runs the risk of the work contravening the malpractice regulations.

The administrative procedures undertaken by some centres remained less efficiently executed than one might expect and typically this meant MS1s or samples being sent late. Some centres still left vital details off their candidate cover sheets and many centres continue to have technical difficulties in presenting work in the appropriate format, both of which leads moderators to have great technical difficulty in identifying, accessing or assessing the work. The only acceptable formats are outlined in the Specification (Revised Edition p60); it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that they have set their internal deadlines early enough to be able to solve any potential technical problems and create the work for submission in the required format. This session, a fair number of artefacts (mainly data discs and DVDs) had to be returned to centres to resubmit in the correct format – centres need to make sure they have at least finalised their DVDs for playback in other DVD players.

Many centres did not seem to have noticed that the new Specification, with its changed mark boundaries, had come into operation and this led to a number of centres having correctly identified the level but then not awarding marks to match the level identified; in such cases the centre may have needed its work scaling upwards. There were issues in the merit order of a few centres, indicating either ineffective internal moderation or insufficient attention being paid to the assessment criteria. It should also be noted that unfinished work cannot reach a level 4 for planning, a fact overlooked by several centres in assessing candidates' work.

Assignments

The vast majority of Centres and candidates devised appropriate tasks, framing briefs that used their strengths in terms of skills and resources. The strongest centres seemed to be those where there had been close supervision by teachers of candidates' ongoing work, with a series of intermediate deadlines, which ensured candidates were fully supported in producing their best work comfortably by their final deadline. Several centres produced blogs with URLs as part of their planning evidence; these often included storyboards, location shots, working links to other videos by the same artist etc – and were dated, thereby providing clear indication of time management. These were popular approaches as far as candidates were concerned and provided welcome *additional* evidence for moderators.

Video

Unsurprisingly, video remained the most popular medium, and generally consisted of music videos/pop promos for a range of genres, styles and target audiences. There were some accomplished music videos; this session a larger proportion of candidates produced performance-based pieces, following the more common industrial approach, and, as always, the best examples employed a good use of close up with excellent lip-synching and well-synchronised instrumentals. In the strongest pieces, editing was tight and camerawork varied; the weakest music videos had similar shot sizes throughout and were not edited to the beat.

Film

This session saw some excellent film trailers and more short films than in previous sessions. Centres still need to ensure that the work does not bear any resemblance to the Foundation Production brief – gangster/crime/horror approaches were all in danger of coming too close to the AS film brief. Centres also need to consider their role *in loco parentis* in the representation of drug taking, filming of car chases, use of dummy weapons etc.

Television

There were some good documentary productions this session, the best concentrating on quality rather than over-long productions (a five-minute extract is sufficient when produced with care and thought). Centres need to consider sound in both TV and Film production and should think about purchasing cameras that have external mic sockets (there are some reasonably priced ones on the market still) and the mics to go with them.

As last session, there was a little TV news produced – but this was still fairly weak.

Print

There were a few effective and informed newspapers, but other candidates seemed to have produced their papers using inappropriate software such as Word. Centres might consider investing in more appropriate software for the task if they intend offering this brief. Magazines often remained too close to the AS magazine set brief. Centres are also encouraged to submit the work at the appropriate scale and format – an A4, laminated 'newspaper' held together by a treasury tag does not present itself at its best. There remained issues over the lack of original images created by candidates.

ICT/New Media

Web sites were generally very poor. It is essential that the centre's computer system can cope with uploading the sites when completed – it is compulsory that sites have a working URL for moderation; if this is not possible, then this is not the brief to choose. Sites that are text heavy or with poorly integrated image and text will not gain the higher marks. It is also to be expected that sites will include sound and video as appropriate. There were a handful of cut scenes from video games but, again, these tended to be very weak.

Radio

Once again there was very little radio work this session, largely consisting of radio format shows.

Cross Media

Cross media production was a little stronger this session, with several centres having candidates working in three of the following: radio, print, video, web. It seems necessary to remind some centres yet again that t-shirt production, key rings, coasters and the like are *not* appropriate artefacts for submission for this unit.

Assessment

As in previous sessions, most Centres' marks were quite accurate; there was the usual significant minority marking outside tolerance, necessitating adjustment in line with agreed standards across the national cohort, but this was often because the centre did not seem to have realised that the Revised Edition of the Specification had come into operation and that, consequently, the marking criteria had changed. Centres using the wording of the assessment criteria when writing their cover sheets were usually accurate in their marking; those centres writing little on the cover sheet were often quite inaccurate in their assessment of the work.

Administration and presentation of work for moderation

Centres were generally efficient in sending work for moderation, but some still missed the deadline for sending mark sheets or waited too long before responding to sample requests. Work should be ready by the *same deadline as the MS1* with the artefacts for all candidates saved onto disc/VHS (in the case of film, video and audio work), uploaded on to the web (in the case of web sites) or printed out (in the case of magazines and newspapers) and therefore ready to send promptly when the sample request arrives from the moderator. Centres are reminded of the only formats that are acceptable:

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

No other formats can be accepted; centres need to ensure early on in their planning process for this unit that they are equipped to present their chosen medium in the required format.

It is also vital 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. The built in menu on DVDs must be in a font size that is large enough for moderators to be able to read. Final print outs of print work must be *at the front* of the portfolio, not buried at various points throughout the portfolio in amongst the research and drafts.

Centres are also 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 the Board and Moderator.

Yet again, several centres sent work with no postage or insufficient postage; the Royal Mail tariff has changed but several centres did not take this into account.

Centre Authentication Forms were sent out more routinely this session

Centres are reminded once again 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.

Report on the Units taken in January 2007

As ever, in spite of the caveats above, the moderation team was often thrilled and moved by some of the strongest work and was generally pleased to witness the creative, skilled and informed work candidates had submitted this session, work that was underpinned by sound theoretical teaching and effective technical training.

Advice for teachers

- The best tasks build on the strengths of centres in terms of their skills and resources.
- Websites must be fully realised and have a working URL – if the centre's network cannot cope with this requirement teachers should consider an alternative brief and medium.
- 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.
- Note that the Revised edition of the Specification is now applicable. 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.
- Ensure work is ready to send when the sample request arrives from the moderator so that the centre can respond promptly.
- Keep files slim and manageable and don't include print outs of all the secondary research or all finished questionnaires. Put the cover sheets on top, followed by the artefact, then the evaluation. Put all appendices and drafts at the back of the file.

2734 – Critical Research Study

The Critical Research Study is intended to provide candidates at A2 level with a unique opportunity to engage in active independent investigation into a media related topic, enabling them to study the topic, learn about it and develop an individual critical response to the media issue/area researched. In addition, the unit allows candidates to develop research skills which will be useful to them in higher education or in the workplace.

General Issues

In this session there was some improvement in candidates' responses at the middle and lower levels. In many cases, however, candidates are not achieving their full potential through lack of preparation or being ill-advised. The quality of work from the best candidates far outstrips those in the next group below. A significant number of Centres are taking an inappropriate approach to the unit and failing to appreciate the spirit of the unit's intentions.

Many Centres are still either teaching the topic content to candidates, therefore denying them the opportunity to undertake their own research, or failing to provide adequate advice and guidance to candidates attempting to undertake research : [Some inappropriate topics were: the use of Hawkeye as a fair tool for deciding umpiring decisions, and the use of CCTV in controlling crime in school].

Candidates from some centres have apparently decided, independently, upon almost identical specific areas of study and have chosen exactly the same texts as case studies. In these cases it is clear that independent responses are almost impossible to be achieved and candidates could not be awarded the highest levels in the marks scheme. In contrast, there are Centres who, although they have taught the basics of research, leave candidates to their own devices when developing their original ideas.

The lack of detail across all topics, in audience research, is still of concern. For many candidates, a common format seems to be to cite two types of audience research with a questionnaire for quantitative data and a focus group for qualitative data. Many candidates do not give any detail of their questions, the rationale and most importantly the detail of the actual responses. Where studies in Children and Media, in particular, depend on the audience responses it is disappointing that the Audience study element underplayed.

Several candidates manage to write Question 2 Findings essays without any reference to sources or evidence they clearly have researched, according to their hand written notes and cover sheet. Some candidates respond with substantial reference to theory but manage to avoid referring to a single media text.

A worryingly large number of candidates did not produce responses to both questions, and some did not seem to realise that there were two questions to answer. On occasions candidates respond with a single answer and the examiner is left to guess where Question 2 begins. There is also an increase in the number of brief and superficial responses. This is not a result of poor time management rather a reflection upon a lack of depth and detail in the responses as a whole (perhaps as a result of insufficient focussed research).

There was a greater tendency for centres to allow candidates to either have too open a research question (Does advertising affect children?) or a too focused and sometimes inappropriate slant on a topic (Is Hawkeye technology better than cricket umpires?). 'Findings essays' tended to gather around the pass/fail, the C/D and C/B notional thresholds. This suggests that perhaps some candidates are entered in January, as a trial examination, and one has to ask the question is this an expensive or worthwhile educational option if too many underachieve?

Report on the Units taken in January 2007

While some centres clearly, and appropriately, provide induction on methods of research and how to evaluate the value and reliability of evidence there were too many candidates who reference random internet sources without attempting to make a distinction between different types of sources, let alone methods.

It is worth advising candidates to ensure they present a balance between academic theory, serious and popular criticism, textual analysis, institutional and contextual analysis and audience studies. The lack of balance and coverage in both the Methods and Findings essays was the main reason for lower marks in the majority of instances where understanding was implicit, but knowledge or clarity was not evident.

However, it was encouraging to see the beginnings of worthwhile responses to the new topics. This has meant that there was scope for more diversity to study and this allowed for some invigorating contemporary issues around news reporting, moral panics and ideological debates: about non-integrated communities, health and crime issues. World cinema also allowed for some interesting topics around inter-country influences on genre and authorship.

The downside of this phenomenon was the increase in candidates importing unmediated case studies of topics brought in from other subject areas and units: such as Sociology, Psychology, Health and Social Care and Sports Studies that paid lip service to media issues, institutions and representations.

Administration Issues

There are an increasing number of centres who are not fulfilling the requirements for the cover sheets and presentation of the notes. Some cover sheets were completely blank apart from a single signature from the candidate or teacher.

The cover sheets must be signed by both the candidate and the supervising teacher. The topic being undertaken must be recorded on the cover sheet together with the specific area of study.

On the reverse of the cover sheet details of media texts used, such as specific television programmes or films should be recorded and below this a list of sources for research.

There were fewer examples of the use of inappropriate notes but there were some examples of typewritten notes and notes that were complete answers that were then copied. In these cases the scripts are forwarded to the appropriate authority as examples of malpractice and candidates risk being awarded a mark of zero.

Should a candidate have no notes to submit a letter of explanation from the centre should be forwarded with the cover sheet and script to the examiner.

There were some centres whose candidates entered responses to topics no longer available within the new specification. All centres must read the new specification to ensure that all they are aware of the new topics and the changes to some of the old topics.

Question Specific Comments

Question One - Comments relating to all topics.

Most candidates are utilising a range of appropriate methods, however centres should be aware that simply stating that a method has been used is not sufficient – explanation (not merely description) and reflection are essential to achieve the top band of level 2 and above. Also, while Q1 focuses on research methods, a clear sense of the topic is necessary in order to demonstrate that the research is appropriate. Some sense of purpose should also be demonstrated – many candidates simply start their response to Q1 with a description of their initial internet searches without establishing a context for the research.

It is disappointing that some of the more innovative methods of primary research seen in previous sessions have not been in evidence. Those who did use original methods attained highly such as the candidate who interviewed a university lecturer while on an open day and then used this lecturer's latest academic paper as secondary research.

Many candidates are using the internet for their primary research by posting messages on a specialised site or on MySpace. In some cases this is most effective, however many candidates fail to plan this thoroughly and consequently the research is of little use. Most candidates identify appropriate secondary sources; however there is often an over-reliance on Wikipedia with little or no reflection on its reliability. Many candidates are using entries on Wikipedia that are only "stubs": that is they are very basic definitions that require further supporting evidence or expansion. It is made clear at the foot of an entry that this is a "stub". There is also a disturbing trend emerging where candidates cite textbooks, including AS Level and even GCSE texts, as their sole academic source.

While it is perfectly acceptable for candidates to discuss research sources that proved to be less useful than others, this should not form the basis of the response. Also, candidates should be aware that discussing methodologies that were inappropriate and stating what they could have done instead (but didn't) is not going to be enough to enable them to attain a high mark!

Cause for concern is the use of the ubiquitous questionnaire, within the context of an Audience Study, sometimes veering on the superficial, like a consumer survey of shopping tastes likes and dislikes. Whereas the conventional Media Studies audience study tends to be linked to issues of representation or identification there is a tendency to overuse the questionnaire and focus group simply for a self-fulfilling function (does advertising influence children - yes probably!). It is recommended that Audience Studies are carried out at the end of all the other primary and secondary research into theoretical, textual and contextual meanings, unless it is a pilot survey to ascertain initial public perceptions or to test out the validity and quality of the final questions. Another exception to this advice is where the investigation is premised around the whole study of audience perceptions, especially in such topics as Children and the Media or Women's perceptions of representations/issues in Women and Film, for example.

Candidates should choose people for their questionnaires and/or interviews/focus groups on the basis of their appropriateness and not simply because they happen to be easily accessible from their own school or college or, even worse, just simply from their own media studies class.

Inappropriate requests for interviews with stars and celebrities are still common. Some candidates are a little too hopeful with these requests for information and clearly wait too long for responses that they highly unlikely to receive. It is difficult to reason why an examiner can validate as legitimate failed responses to such requests, especially when unnecessary detail concerning such requests dominate the response. [Even though one person did get Gary Lineker, or an assistant, to respond to a query on hooliganism in football and another obtained a signed photograph from Julie Andrews when asking for a response regarding Mary Poppins and its feminist stance.]

Report on the Units taken in January 2007

In one instance it was suggested that the advantage that a book had subheadings was quickly cancelled out by the disadvantage that there were too many pages to read in the one book. It is advisable to focus on methods actually used and on the value and purpose of using a source. At the same time, comments on the veracity, bias, reliability and accuracy of any survey or source would also be valid objects of the methods' evaluation.

When specific texts are chosen for case studies a clear rationale for their selection should be given.

There were some very interesting responses at the top level and these were notable for their engaged, detailed and inquisitive approach to their chosen study.

At the outset candidates should try to establish that "this is what I want to find out" rather than "this is what I think" and then insist on proving it regardless of appropriate research. There is still, within some centres, low expectation of the skills involved in this unit. The step up from AS taught Units to individual and independent research, involving the retrieval and selection of a range of factual and academic information as well as the production of a reasoned and lengthy written discussion and analysis, using supporting evidence is clearly very difficult for some candidates. There needs to be a demand that candidates go beyond simple content analysis and strive to achieve a level of textual analysis beyond denotation which is connotative. In addition, candidates should be encouraged to recognise that they will be rewarded for a range of methods used and reflected upon. In Question 2 candidates will be rewarded for demonstrating they can reference their sources of evidence when they find out something they did not previously know and they will demonstrate they understand media texts, practices and institutions better.

Question 2

General Comments

Many candidates are able to present their findings and offer some discussion of the topic. However, some candidates fail to explore the issues and debates within a topic area, simply describing the research findings. A sense of the relationship between the focus topic and the broader context should be established. Also, many candidates still explore a very broad focus topic that does not allow them to engage in detailed debate.

Comment on individual topics

Topic 1 - Advertising

A large percentage of candidates covered this new topic. Some candidates researched very broad areas of study such as 'the use of sex in advertising', while others focused too closely on a single campaign such as the NSPCC 'Full Stop' campaign. A balance between the two is desirable, allowing for some detailed analysis within a broader context. The best example of this was a study of Coca-Cola's advertising campaigns over the years, considering the changes in the content, style and emphasis of the adverts as a result of changes in society, technology etc. Other interesting case studies included some about products with a changing demographic or a need to re-brand or re-target to adjust to recent Ofcom restrictions regarding targeting children and food. A good knowledge of corporate policy, institutions and regulatory bodies also featured in some responses. Candidates should be aware of the purpose of advertising – some candidates took a very moralistic view of the negative effects of advertising and failed to consider the institutional context at all. The weaker responses seem to avoid any kind of textual analysis or clear description of the advertisement's basic form, structure and meaning or relied exclusively upon the textual analysis of a single advertisement.

Topic 2 Children & the Media

A substantial number of candidates opted for this revised topic (3rd most popular) with varying degrees of success: many of them broadening their study to forms of media other than TV, as the new topic allows. Responses were varied with some very well researched institutional angles and interesting audience responses. There was a tendency, still, to summarise the responses of questionnaires or audience focus groups without much detail. For this topic, in particular, to simply gloss findings of a case study in one paragraph seems to undervalue the significance of effects, and potential diversity of audience responses. For example, a common statement would simply and abruptly be thus: “the findings of my sample of four children proved my point that children are affected by television viewing”. This summary comes with no quotation or citation of individuated children’s responses.

Another problem for centres is the very broad nature of some of the focus questions. For example, questions such as, ‘Does television affect obesity?’ seems to invite an undue emphasis on the state of the nation’s eating habits rather than a focus on detailed textual analysis of advertisements, or a less scientifically ambitious question, entailing psychology and food studies, about children’s attitude to body shape or size? It would be better if the research started from the point of view of the children’s consumption of television and the various representations within its output. There were some excellent responses from candidates who analysed the ‘educational’ elements of television and were able to draw on institutional intentions to ‘educate and entertain’. There were some excellent audience studies that were detailed, and analysed thoroughly their variously found data, offering the candidate a chance to observe variation and difference in their sample, and in relation to their hypothesis. In contrast, too many discussion or focus groups consisted of very little actual data as evidence and all too frequently was cursorily reported as verifying the candidate’s hypothesis with no detail or citation of verbal or written response.

The effects of video games on children were also a popular area of study, although some candidates focused on more of a psychological/medical viewpoint than a true exploration of the media. Advertising was popular within this topic, particularly the impact of junk food advertising and the Jamie Oliver campaign – some candidates were very successful, having interviewed parents and conducted experiments with young children to support their secondary findings. One impressive response used a letter to a newspaper (raising concerns about various media effects on children) as a starting point and researched each one of the concerns producing a balanced argument about the positive and negative impact of the media on children. It is pleasing to note that fewer candidates are relying on the Bobo Doll experiment as ‘proof’ that violent images affect children’s behaviour.

Topic 3 Community Radio

Very few candidates attempted this topic. There are still problems with discussion within this topic. The few responses that were undertaken tended to be very descriptive. The best responses consider stations target & appeal to their niche audiences.

Topic 4 Crime & the Media

This is an increasingly popular topic (2nd most popular). A very wide range of marks were achieved but many candidates opted for inappropriate topics such as gun crime & rap music or music file-sharing. Most of these were seemingly recycled from the Popular Music topic that is no longer available but without adjusting the stance or context. Centres should be aware that the rubric states that the 'representation of crime in the media' should be the focus. Many candidates provided a more sociological study eg the relationship between drugs and crime with some (tenuous) link to the media eg by focusing on a single film such as *Trainspotting*. Candidates who did follow the rubric were able to attain high marks. One strong response analysed the way in which crime has been reported in *The Mirror* and *The Times* over the past forty years, comparing the publications and considering the changes in the amount and type of crime reported and whether this mirrors reality.

There were overall very few outstanding responses to this option. Responses were typically weakened by too general an approach. A popular focus was computer games and to what extent they influenced violent crime. Some were able to engage with effects debates on a basic level but rarely were candidates able to explore the texts themselves in any depth or investigate the wider context.

Topic 5 Politics & the Media

There were significantly fewer responses to this topic than in previous sessions, but they were usually of a very good standard. Candidates answering this topic clearly were involved in politics and provided a wide range of research methods and sources. There was a well handed discussion on political satire from the 60s to the present day and another on the impact of political cartoonists in the press.

Topic 6 Sport & the Media

Although still fairly popular fewer candidates attempted this topic in this session. The ones that did usually had quite partisan views and failed to study the literature of sports economic and politics or the academic body of research already available. Some candidates seemed to focus purely on the cult of celebrity – considering the career of a single sports person (or in some cases footballers' wives & girlfriends!). Football hooliganism was studied by a number of candidates, although most failed to develop an appropriate argument within the rubric. Where candidates really did explore the relationship between sport & the media some interesting discussions emerged. One impressive response considered the coverage of disability sport in the media. The research was wide - including interviews with able-bodied sports candidates and sports candidates with disabilities - and this candidate drew on many comparative secondary sources to produce a considered, balanced argument. Another strong response considered the development of cricket as a popular spectator sport and discussed how far this was due to media coverage.

Topic 7 Television Drama

There were relatively responses to this topic. The majority were on soaps or crime drama series but candidates were mostly unable to apply theories of realism or reference any reputable commentator for either genre, of which there are many. There was a tendency to be descriptive with few candidates managing to find an area that allowed for argument or debate. Some interesting contrasts and comparisons were made between British and American dramas from the same genre, although simply describing an episode of *CSI* and one of *The Bill* and commenting that the tone, style and narrative content are different because *CSI* is "over the top" and *The Bill* "realistic" with no context or further discussion or comment is not of sufficient substance. In fact one or two centres had candidates having virtually the same specific area of study and one instance of exactly the same episodes of *CSI* and *The Bill* were also used.

Given the wealth of material available within television drama it is disappointing to see so little imagination in the selection of specific areas of study.

Topic 8 Women & Film

This was by far the most popular topic and produced a very wide range of responses, including very strong responses from those candidates who apply close textual focus and link it to a macro level of debate about representations and the issues concerning the relationship between women and cinema. There was a strong sense that theoretical debate was required to grapple with the study, missing from approaches to several other topics. There was, therefore, among quite a few candidates, a good sense of structured essays which utilised theory and texts to illustrate ideas and interpretations.

Weaker answers, again, tended to limit their analysis to one or two films, of a particular actress, without generalising on their importance or presenting a comparison of a range of films that represent an evolutionary or distinctive signature.

Many candidates still focus on a very broad topic such as 'Opportunities for women in the film industry' that does not assist them in focusing research and engaging in detailed debate. Some candidates seem to confuse the issue of opportunities for women with the representation of women in film – while these two areas are clearly linked candidates should not simply state that the lack of female film directors proves that the male gaze exists. Some very strong responses were written on female film directors particularly Kathryn Bigelow and Jane Campion. Some, however, were highly descriptive of a director's career and films, paying little attention to the broader context. One excellent response considered the representation of women in Bond films over the decades, tying analysis of the film texts into social and historical context and considering some of the more subtle and complex issues of representation that are often missed when a candidate studies this topic. The work of Laura Mulvey was used widely although more candidates were questioning her theories and considering differing viewpoints. The San Diego University 'Celluloid Ceiling' report was cited frequently in discussions about opportunities for women in the industry and some candidates had contacted organisations such as Women in Film & Television to further their research.

Topic 9 World Cinema

This topic produced an encouraging number of very interesting essays and there have been some exceptional responses to this option and even some of the weaker candidates seem to have fared better, possibly because it is an opportunity to explore texts of particular personal interest. Specific areas of study were as diverse as studies on auteur and movements within: the Nigerian film industry, Japanese, Thai, Hong Kong, Indian and Hong Kong, Mainland Chinese cinemas and the global interaction and reciprocation between US and these cinemas as shown by such figures as Quentin Tarantino. Weaker responses tended to list films and their content without attending to their style, distinctiveness or impact. One candidate considered the growth of the Bollywood industry, while another highly impressive response analysed the work of Pedro Almodovar focusing particularly on the way in which he directs/represents issues of female sexuality and gender.

Japanese animation and 'the influence of Asian cinema on Hollywood' were also common focus areas. Most candidates except the very highest wanted to explore their focus in relation to Hollywood and offer as their main issue some comparative study which was textual based. Women in Miyazaki's films compared to Disney heroines was successfully discussed by a number of candidates and achieved very high marks for one candidate who was able to contextualise this more effectively.

Report on the Units taken in January 2007

One distinctive response discussed 'World Cinema as polemic- a critical consideration of the portrayal of politics within World Cinema'. The candidate had specifically looked at the representation of fall of the Berlin wall represented in *Goodbye Lenin* compared to 'The West's ruthless devouring of Eastern identity' in *Fallen Angels*, also managing to discuss *City of God* and *La Haine* in the process.

Few candidates seemed to consider European cinema as "World Cinema".

Advice to Teachers

The report as a whole is essential reading. However key elements are below:

- The cover sheets must be signed by both the candidate and the supervising teacher.
- Do not leave candidates to their own devices when developing their original ideas.
- Give substantial assistance to candidates in choosing specific areas of study and formulating a problematic or hypothesis.
- Where possible avoid candidates addressing identical specific areas of study and choosing exactly the same texts as case studies.
- Teach the methodologies of research
- Support candidates to ensure that they present a balance between academic theory, serious and popular criticism, textual analysis, institutional and contextual analysis and audience studies.
- Make clear the difficulties with over-reliance on Wikipedia with no reflection on its reliability.
- Make sure that candidates choose people for their questionnaires and/or interviews/focus groups on the basis of their appropriateness and not simply from their own media studies class.

At the outset encourage candidates to establish that "this is what I want to find out" rather than "this is what I think" and then insist on proving it regardless of appropriate research.

2735 Media Issues and Debates

General

There were some major rubric changes for this session of the 2735 examination, the most important of which was the shift from three to two questions, thereby enabling students to spend more time on each question, and explore the concepts via their cases studies in greater depth. Though one examiner suggested that many candidates made disappointing use of the extra time per question, the experience in most cases was pleasing. A large percentage of candidates had made good use of the time and had explored the topics in depth. Pleasingly, the able candidates in particular, were able to demonstrate a profound understanding of concepts and their case studies, focusing in depth on a small number of texts and examples.

Another important change to this examination paper was the introduction of a choice of two questions per topic. There are now 18 questions on the examination paper, from which students select two. Previously, students had been asked to answer three from nine.

One very pleasing consequence of this change was an increase in the number of candidates who successfully attempted to answer the question of their choice, as opposed to regurgitating learnt answers regardless of the set question. Presumably, candidates now faced with a choice of questions feel more inspired and inclined to direct their learning more specifically.

It has to be said, however, that some examiners reported that too many candidates are still failing to answer either of the set questions, relying instead on haphazard offloading of material learnt during the course.

There were some slight changes to topics – for example, the questions on broadcast news now include ‘current affairs’ programmes (though there was no evidence of centres taking advantage of this expansion), and the magazine question now expects candidates to go beyond study of the texts and include the institutions as part of their focus.

The most significant change in terms of topics was the dropping of the ‘tv soaps’ question in the Broadcast Section (A). This has been replaced by questions on Music Programmes on Television. There were some pleasing responses to this topic, and clearly many candidates had enjoyed studying this area. However, more candidates were inclined either to go for the television and radio news questions, or to leave this section altogether, and plump for topics in the Film and the Print section. This is the first Media Issues and Debates paper where candidates have been able to omit a whole section.

It remains to be seen whether the abandonment of the soaps topic will cause a general avoidance of the Broadcast section by many centres. It would be sad if this were to be the case.

Individual Questions

Music Programmes on television

Both of these questions yielded some good responses. One examiner observed for the first of the two questions: *“Answers were refreshingly varied, including discussion of MTV and the other niche music channels, Pop Idol and reality competitions, the rise and fall of Top Of The Pops and its rivals, the use of pop songs on the soundtracks of tv dramas [both diegetically and not], Later with Jools Holland, even classical music. Conclusions too, therefore, were equally varied, but valid.”*

Answers to the second question were often competent and well informed, but rarely developed.

Broadcast News and Current Affairs

A popular topic in this section, though many candidates had difficulty in applying their case studies to one of the set questions. One examiner noted: *"It was apparent that the majority of candidates had prepared an answer on the presentation of news and were trying to reshape this to fit a question on audiences determining content. The more able candidates managed this to an extent but it was a tall order – the result was that many answers presented an over-stated polarisation of audiences - GMTV for housewives, Channel 4 News for businessmen etc, and relied on mise en scene and running order of stories as evidence."*

Another commented that very few references were made to current affairs programmes, with some candidates only considering aspects such as mise-en-scene and mode of address as evidence of 'dumbing down'. A large number of candidates used the recent Celebrity Big Brother story as an example of audiences setting the news agenda.

Contemporary British Broadcasting

This topic was attempted by some candidates. Knowledge of the industry was generally sound, and informed opinions about the effects of deregulation were frequently evident. Weaker answers were marred by factual inaccuracies, and by limited use of case studies.

Contemporary British Cinema

'Notting Hill', 'Four Weddings' and a 'Funeral', 'Dirty Pretty Things' and 'The Last Resort' were amongst the more commonly used case studies in this topic. Many candidates seemed well prepared to discuss the concept of 'Britishness'. There was a general tendency to oversimplify US cinema. One examiner noted that answers in this topic were better informed than in previous years in relation to institutional issues, and there was thus less reliance on textual analysis.

The Concept of Genre in Film

The two questions in this topic appealed to equal numbers of candidates. Some had difficulty explaining how an understanding of genre might contribute to one's understanding of film, other than to suggest, somewhat dangerously and not a little arrogantly that media studies students are better equipped than others when it comes to cinema visits! However, some very impressive answers to the other film genre question tended to prove the point that an understanding of genre might well contribute to one's enjoyment of particular films.

Censorship and Film

One examiner observed that some candidates seemed confused by the phrasing of question 11, noting that "a few candidates seemed to be unsure what the censors were reflecting on, but most got the idea that "reflect" was the liberal approach and "protect" the conservative. Protecting society's values reasonably included protecting the young and weak-minded, but no longer "the great unwashed" as one centre called them."

There were useful comparisons between the BBFC and its American and European counterparts, especially in relation to their protection of children and their differing attitudes to sex and violence. One examiner commented: *"Most candidates offered a range of suitable case study texts but two centres made one common error - suggesting that Battleship Potemkin was censored when in fact the crucial point about this example was that some film societies were allowed to book the film and others were not."*

Most candidates wrote clearly about the difference between censorship and classification.

The Magazine Industry

This was the most popular topic in this section. Examiners noted on the whole that many candidates seemed to be addressing the questions from the perspective of gender, perhaps reflecting schemes of work that have not yet been refocused on the magazine industry. One examiner urged, with the vehemence of capital letters: “Centres need to engage MUCH more with magazine publisher strategies and how they attract advertisers - this is very easy via the magazine websites, which almost all feature a PDF pack for advertisers.”

Another examiner commented: “The more institutional slant of question 14 evaded most candidates, and the few who did attempt it would have been better using their material in addressing the previous question.”

Local Newspapers

This topic was tackled by a minority of candidates. Though there were some pleasing answers, centres should be advised that the local newspaper institutions, like the rest of the media industry, are fast-changing places. Many candidates offered outdated information to support their answers. In similar vein, many candidates had barely considered how local newspapers have developed in recent years. The gloomy quotation offered as a starting point for discussion in question 16 was taken by too many candidates as an invitation merely to contribute to the air of pessimism. Better informed candidates considered how local newspapers are continuing to survive, and in many cases, to thrive – against the odds! The internet has reached local newspaper offices, too.

Freedom, Regulation and Control in the British Press.

A very small number of candidates answered questions on this topic.

Advice to teachers:

- **Make sure that candidates are familiar with the new examination format. Two questions must be answered in two hours. Candidates should spend an equal amount of time on each.**
- There are two questions for each topic. Happily, this seems to have had the effect of causing candidates to focus on answering a set question, as opposed to answering a general question. Encourage candidates to apply their knowledge and case studies to the set question that they are addressing. Vague and generalized answers will not be rewarded as highly as those that focus on a specific question.
- **There are some changes to topics (for example: ‘tv soaps’ has gone, magazine and gender has become ‘the magazine industry’... check all of the topics).**
- This is a synoptic paper that covers all media concepts covered during the AS/A2 course. Media texts are always a good starting point, but candidates ought to be encouraged to investigate the audiences who consume and the industries that create them.
- Candidates should be encouraged to explore their case studies in some depth. A few case studies done well is usually a better recipe than many case studies glanced at superficially.
- Encourage candidates to explore the concepts via their case studies; be aware that some candidates, during the examination, will offer a confused and unconvincing essay if they rely on half-understood theory. Conceptual understanding serves candidates well. Theory for the sake of it is unnecessary.
- Check that schemes of work are not out of date. The media changes fast. Every examination session, examiners report that some centres are giving their candidates outdated, often erroneous information.

**Advanced GCE (Media Studies) (3860/7860)
January 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2730	Raw	120	98	88	78	68	59	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2731	Raw	90	68	61	54	47	41	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2732	Raw	90	68	61	55	49	43	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2733	Raw	120	99	89	79	69	60	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2734	Raw	90	67	60	53	47	41	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2735	Raw	90	69	62	55	49	43	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie 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	18.08	40.96	64.21	88.19	99.63	100.00	271
7860	3.03	36.36	81.82	93.94	100.00	100.00	33

304 candidates aggregated this series.

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

(General Qualifications)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: helpdesk@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity



OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553