OCR
RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

GCE

Report on the Units

January 2008

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Advanced GCE Media Studies (7860)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Media Studies (3860)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

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General Comments

This report has been compiled through the comments from a number of Assistant Moderator report forms.

There were 1486 entries. Overall moderators indicated that the work presented for this session was well considered within the requirements of the specification, although with a small sized entry the standard of the outcomes were satisfactory or good, rather than outstanding.

The majority of centres are working with the specification to ensure consistency; illustrating a level of hard work and commitment of teaching staff in the majority of centres. It is pleasing to report that most centres, this session, sent the Centre Authentication form (CCS 160), without a further reminder required.

The majority of the work fulfilled the requirements of the specification, although there were a few centres that still entered large supporting files with their candidates' work. There is a general consensus of understanding as to what constitutes an appropriate production.

Centres appear to be heeding the need for candidates to use and manipulate original, rather than found images. Centres are again 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. Thank you to those centres that provided this information this session.

The administration of this unit was reasonably well executed. There are still centres that do not meet the required coursework deadline; this must be adhered to particularly in the summer session as this could delay results to centres. Where work is annotated with attention to the Level criteria in the specification, it is clear that these centres are supported in their judgements by the moderation process.

The Set Briefs:

It appears for this January session that the most popular brief was again divided between the print brief; the production of a teenage magazine and set brief 1 – the film thriller. There appeared to be an increase in the other print brief – the advertising campaign, but there was little evidence of the New Media or Radio briefs.

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. To include the opening titles within the sequence being offered is very important to the success of the work. Centres would do well to ensure candidates keep to the minimum time limit 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. There is some evidence that some 'openings' are more like trailers.

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 previous reports, as moderators again saw a small number of examples where the end production could be taken for a 'music video'.

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 but only support good and effective practice and outcomes. The most effective thrillers do not need to include the 'horror' conventions or violent scenes.

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

The teenage magazine brief was well represented. The use of ICT is having a growing impact upon the outcomes achieved. If the use of found images were to stop, then this brief would bring a clarity of intention to the work that would enhance the success of this brief. As stated above more use of original images was evident in this session.

Centres are also reminded that those working as part of a group have to create the equivalent to that of an individual (see page 62 of the 3rd edition of the specification.)

The advertising campaign brief was 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. Is it 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. There were only a very few examples of the new media – web site brief..

Assessment Criteria:
Overall the majority of centres did apply the assessment criteria with confidence. 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 of quality assurance. Centres are reminded that the application of marks must reflect the level criteria as stated in the specification. Moderators have pointed to the fact that some centres will make cursory links to Level criteria, which occurs more extensively with the larger entries in the summer session, although there were examples this January. When this occurs moderators may find it more difficult to support a centre's assessment, because little evidence is provided by the centre in support of its initial award of a Level and a mark within that level.

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.

It has also been pointed out by a number of Assistant Moderators, that when a centre allows candidates a 'free choice' of the set briefs, and that centre enters candidates' work that covers a range of set briefs, usually that centre's marking of the work is not as focussed as is the case when a centre enters candidates' work from one or two set briefs.

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.

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 is in place.
- The content of productions, along with clear and detailed planning is 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 (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).
- 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 / centre assessment sheets - in order to support the moderating process

2731 Textual Analysis

General Comments

The January 2008 session had almost 9,000 candidates entered. The majority fully understood the requirements of this unit and all questions were considered appropriate in their level of demand, allowing for good differentiation between all candidates, especially in Section A. There were no significant issues raised by Centres regarding the choice of extract or wording of questions. In addition there were no rubric issues raised by candidates responses.

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: ***Superman Returns***, Bryan Singer 2006, 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

The extract, **Superman Returns** lent itself to some detailed and thorough answers. This extract produced a broad range of detail being picked out, with candidates choosing a wide variety of points in the clip to use as exemplification of the technical film techniques used.

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. It must be noted that many candidates covered all 5 aspects of the analysis for question one, and also answered on the whole extract rather than focusing on just the action sequence used in the second half of the extract.

More so than in previous sessions, examiners reported balance in candidates responses – they covered textual analysis of all five technical areas. 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.

The concept of mise-en-scène was well addressed and candidates readily made comment on the contrast and variety of settings used – in the apartment, the use of outer space and the urban metropolis. Candidates were able to pick up on the contrast between locations and the action that took place, the use costumes and props in the film sequence were often discussed at length, for example, the use of a spacious home, Superman's outfit and superhuman powers he holds or the combat dress of the police and the useless power they had against the protagonist in the extract. All to often though we still have reference to the 'baddie' was dressed in black, connoting he was evil. The sequence offered a plethora of opportunities for candidates to examine the issue of mise en scène and this technical aspect of the extract was addressed well by most candidates. Candidates were least able to comment on lighting and performance as part of mise en scène and it would be encouraging to see more centres' address this in the last few remaining sessions.

SFX eluded many candidates and tended to be treated less thoroughly, than other technical areas. As previously reported, many candidates seem to think that SFX refers only to CGI, for example ignoring stunts and models. The candidates were able to recognise the use of computer generated images, in particular: Superman flying, his suspension in space and when Superman is shot in slow motion in the eye. The extract certainly enabled candidates to develop a discussion of special effects, given the combat sequence used in the second half. Many candidates could recognize the use of pyrotechnics and CGI. There were some highly enterprising interpretations of the use of CGI/ slow motion action shots at the end of the extract, when Superman's qualities are represented by the deflection of impenetrable bullets – he is untouchable. The most able candidates were able to discuss the function of the effects and the performance of Superman as having superpowers/ being superhuman. In the majority of cases, an explanation was given by candidates of how special effects were created and the different types that may have been used; rather than being analysed in terms of the meanings being produced.

Editing remains problematic in many students' responses. Many comments on editing were confined to the pacing of the extract, however more candidates than previous sessions showed the ability to discuss action and graphic matching of shots, within the sequence, indicating that Centres are beginning 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. For example there was plenty of evidence of analysis of the discussion in Lois Lane' apartment at the beginning of the sequence. Candidates could analyse the conversation through the use of shot reverse shots and 180-degree rule of editing. Also, whilst the police were in combat with the protagonist, candidates would often make reference to matching of shots to provide continuity, likewise, with the flight of Superman and the journey he takes into space and his return to earth. In weaker responses editing was under represented and often appeared as a gap in candidates answers. There re-emerged one or two misunderstandings of the function of jump cuts.

All candidates were able to select examples from the extract and at times provide detailed discussion of the variety of shots used. The most able candidates could link these to the other technical aspects of the sequence. The ***Superman Returns*** extract provided plenty of opportunities to examine camera shots, from long establishing shots to the use of close ups. In particular candidates correctly identified the panning rotation of the camera around Superman as he is suspended in space, and many candidates would discuss the use of the long shot as establishing shot or as creating perspective, for example, Superman flying to space and then the sequence illustrates his perspective of earth from space. 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 were able to discuss the movement of the camera in terms of the actions of the characters and more so than in previous sessions.

Sound was analysed much better during this session. However there was evidence of confusion between recognising the use of diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Many candidates were able to contrast the use of sound in the extract from the relaxed ambience of the apartment at the beginning of the extract, to the peacefulness of space, the voice of Superman's father, to the chaotic sirens of police cars and the mayhem of the city. Candidates considered the use of sound effects, from the 'swooshing' of Superman's flight to the roar of the use of the supergun. More able candidates would link the use of sound with the editing or use of mise en scène in the extract, or occasionally candidates would discuss the soundtrack as a means of conveying mood or atmosphere in the sequence. It is pleasing to note that sound is beginning to be integrated with wider aspects of technical analysis, for example, with character, mise en scène and at times special effects. In conclusion, not only were observations on elements of sound and film grammar applied frequently in analysis of a particular sequence but more advanced terms such as 'parallel' and 'contrapuntal' sound were being used correctly.

Advice for Candidates for Section A

- Do not just give a descriptive chronological commentary – analyse and interpret.
- 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
- Cover all five aspects – do not miss one out
- If you can do make links between different film techniques used, for example, between sound and editing

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*. 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.

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 and therefore these candidates would be awarded fewer marks.

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 and disadvantaged candidates whose knowledge and understanding of the texts would be detailed and thorough. Often comparison is addressed in a perfunctory final paragraph rather than throughout the answer.

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, for example GQ and Vogue/ FHM and Cosmo Girl and Zoo magazine.

In general, the issue of consumerist values was addressed, with candidates selecting appropriate examples (adverts and editorial) from their chosen magazines to illustrate their analysis. Whilst there were occasions when candidates struggled to understand 'consumerist values', there were many very good examples of detailed textual analysis and comparison. Very few deal with consumerist values in the sense of 'buying things'; most candidates took it to mean the 'values of the consumer' and then proceeded to analyse 'idealised lifestyles'. Candidates were able to respond to the issue of consumerism, although at times, this was interpreted in a very general manner (for example, as lifestyle, aspirations or ideals) 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.

2 (b) Celebrity and the Tabloid Press

Centres are reminded that candidates need to write the editions of the newspapers studied at the beginning of their answers. This question was considered to provide differentiation between candidates as its focus required candidates to show how the celebrity is represented through gender or age. Good examples used included Heather Mills and Paul McCartney, Amy Winehouse, and Britney Spears. There was evidence in the candidates answers that they would attempt to address both gender and age, when given the time permitted they could concentrate on one or the other for a more focused response.

There were some assured answers, with some excellent examples of textual analysis and discussion of representation of celebrity. However, centres are reminded of the need to select carefully the choice of celebrity examples used, for example, there were a lot of responses which used the current stories on the inquest into the death of Princes Diana, which has yielded some good responses, but also some very general ones in relation to the concept of celebrity.

The choice of example here would need a lot of contextual teaching rather than focusing on the key issue of representation. Overall students were able to address differences in gender representation in relation to celebrity culture.

There was a lot less evidence of responses that relied on that week's news, which were no more than superficial general discussions of celebrity news.

2   (c)   Music Culture and Radio

There were only a handful of responses marked for this option. It was noted that one centre made a useful comparison was made between local radio stations of a youth music genre and Classic FM. Lots of useful comparisons were made about the listeners and their music culture, whilst a common weakness was that little time was devoted to exploring the influence of the music itself.

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.

2   (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 some candidates were too content on simply describing storylines in each of the episodes that they studied or lacked comparison, offering a final paragraph as an evaluating address of the question set. The reliance on knowledge of past paper questions was also evident, with examples of candidate responses, which focused either simply on characters or on dialogue/ appearance.

There was less evidence this session of candidates referring to many episodes briefly, or none at all, and therefore led to more tight focus 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. There was plenty of evidence of candidates being able to discuss plot/storylines in relation to gender representation, including Absolutely Fabulous and Men Behaving Badly. The strongest candidates could explore a range of gender representations, for example in texts such as Will and Grace with Men Behaving Badly, whilst considering the importance of plot development in relation to the situation comedy. Weaker candidates could explore such issues and would frequently rely upon character functions and quite simplistic character comparisons. There was on occasion a focus on the discussion of class and gender in sitcoms, rather than a focus on gender or age, for example in responses to the Royle family and My Name is Earl. These responses would lack discussion on the key issue of gender representation.

The use of differentiated texts is helpful to all candidates. Very good answers on 'Absolutely Fabulous' and 'Men Behaving Badly' focused clearly on the question and wrote in detail about narrative/ storylines and plots. Coupling and Friends as texts worked well because of their similarities in characters/situations/target audiences meant that storylines/plots were based on similar occurrences, allowing an excellent basis for comparison. There was some good work using Everybody Loves Raymond, My Family, Friends and The Office, The Vicar of Dibley and My Family and Malcolm in the Middle and Third Rock From The Sun. Some candidates struggled to engage with analysis of The Office and The Royle Family, due to their generic unconventionality and performance modes.

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2   (e)   Conflict/Competition and Video/Computer Games

A small number of centres chose this option.

There were very few examples of centres choosing this option in this session. As in previous sessions there were 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. A weakness with answers to this question was that in many instances the candidates picked their own games and little appears to have been taught about making useful comparisons between conflict and competition. Particularly unhelpful were comparisons between different sports games on the Wii, or two very similar a action games. In these cases candidates could not deal with the rubric of the question to compare and contrast, because the game content and style was too similar. Had candidates had been prepared and worked with recommended and taught texts the answers might have been more focused.

Those candidates that would discuss conflict/ competition in analysis of the game itself and supported by textual evidence would gain higher marks.

Advice for Teachers for Section B

- Choose a topic that plays to your centre's 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.
- Encourage your student to balance the appropriate time allocated to both questions
- Provide questions for students to practice and raise issue with rather than try and work out what question will appear on the paper, this will help the student avoid answer past paper question and encourage them to interpret and evaluate the question set in section B.

2732 Case Study: Audiences and Institutions

Once again the vast majority of candidates answered on Section A: New Media Technologies and in general the standard of responses showed improvement over previous sessions. Rubric errors have been almost entirely eliminated and most centres seemed to have prepared their candidates well for the task. Only a small number of centres fell into the trap of over-theorising for this paper, in which cases candidates were unable to mobilise examples from their own experience to answer the questions. Several centres adopted the strategy of getting candidates to respond to the questions in reverse order. In general, these candidates did well on the essay question but many ran out of time and missed out an early question. Those using the option of writing in note form for the short answer questions usually benefited from this strategy.

Section A: New Media Technologies

1   (a)   Most candidates got full marks for this question by identifying statistics in the passage which supported YouTube's popularity

      (b)   Most candidates responded confidently to this question and received full marks. However some failed to address the second aspect of encouraging violence and focused entirely on copyright infringement.

      (c)   (i)   This was generally well handled by candidates who understood this was regarding avoiding YouTube detecting illegal files.

      (c)   (ii)   Most candidates offered definitions of bandwidth including such features as space, memory or speed.

2   (a)   This was answered well with many candidates gaining full marks. Many cited the cost of bandwidth and high running costs for the companies' possible demise in the future.

      (b)   This question was generally handled well with many candidates citing a range of examples outside the passage. Popular ones were MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, Wikipedia, Second Life, World of Warcraft, iTunes and 4OD. Many candidates clearly discussed the changing nature of audiences media use and when supported by examples enabled them to gain top marks. Some sophisticated responses also debated how the internet may in fact not change all audiences' media use. They argued that some groups such as the elderly still rely on traditional media forms.

             Weak responses relied heavily on the passage or discussed other media rather than the internet. Examples are key for this question and candidates need to be careful to respond with more than just a 'common sense' answer to get the top marks.

3   This was a popular question and was generally answered well. Many candidates were well prepared with case study material that enabled them to discuss the ways NMTs offer new experiences to audiences. Top answers confidently used a wide range of examples and evidence to support a variety of relevant points. Interactivity, increased socialisation and portability were particularly relevant issues that were explored. Relevant examples used were iPods, the iPhone, Nintendo Wii, CGI, Digital TV, HDTV, Xbox Live, Second Life, and the range of hand-held consoles such as DS Lite and the PSP.

Strong candidates examined the debate that new experiences aren't always offered by NMTs eg the proliferation of channels is often an illusion of choice. One sophisticated response also took a critical viewpoint and argued that Apple's range of iPods were in fact more about creating a brand identity than actually offering the audience any new experiences.

Weaker responses lacked specific detail and some focused too much on the question from the previous session. Some candidates also relied too heavily on examples from the passage which meant responses were repetitive of 2b. This exemplifies the need for a range of case study material so students have a range of examples to draw upon.

4   This was a less popular question but some candidates made a good attempt. Successful answers focused on specific industries such as Virgin MediaVs Sky or Sony Vs Nintendo. However many candidates that responded failed to focus on specific industries and as such didn't address the question set. Top level candidates were able to offer a sense of debate and acknowledge that whilst NMTs may threaten industries they were also necessary to drive the industries forward and provide healthy competition.

Section B: Media Ownership

1   (a)   The majority of candidates answered this correctly identifying the three consoles and gaining full marks.

(b)   Again most candidates correctly identified some of the many methods used to dominate the market. Many received full marks.

(c)   (i)   Most candidates identified this as talk, discussion and interest again allowing them to receive full marks.

(ii)   This was worth up to three marks for understanding this to be attracting new customers. Full marks were awarded to those who confidently grasped this and also at times gave reasons how eg. the DS Lite appealing more to a female audience.

2   (a)   Most candidates attempted this well by paying close attention to the passage and understanding it meant that companies' strategies were likely to cancel each other out. Those that received full marks were able to state reasons why.

(b)   The key to this question was a range of examples that reflected on wider knowledge and gave examples of specific industries. Nintendo Vs Sony was a popular example as was Virgin Vs Sky. Top level responses were able to respond to the 'impact' aspect of the question and also consider the positive impact of competition in the industry, eg. innovation cycle and driving the companies forward. Weaker responses didn't give specific examples and/or relied too heavily on the passage.

3   This question was answered by most candidates attempting Section B, with top answers using specific examples and reflecting on relevant issues. Apple was a popular example with strong candidates discussing why they were keen to develop their products from phones to iPods. Many suggested this was for reasons such as cross media promotion and to expand to appeal to wider audiences. Disney, Sony and Viacom were other effective examples that were offered. Weak responses were general in their discussion and were simplistic focusing entirely on making money but didn't discuss how this could be achieved.

4   Few candidates attempted this question and those that did struggled to use relevant examples to support their points. Discussion was often general and didn't seem to be focused. Some useful examples were touched on including convergence, portability and whether they were driven by audience demand or industry desire to reinvent existing products.

Advice

- Ensure candidates have a range of examples prepared in order to adapt to the questions
- Give candidates plenty of exam practice so that they are able to manage time effectively
- Remind candidates that q.2b needs to be answered with reference to examples from outside the passage

2733 Advanced Production

This was the ninth session for this unit and the third session for the Revised edition of the Specification. There were 1878 candidates, the majority of whom produced effective and informed work. As in every previous session, the moderation team noted that moving image work was by far the most popular option, especially music videos, although again there were a number of short films, film trailers and TV documentaries. There were a few cross media packages, often including web sites, but very little print-based work or radio production.

Assignments

The vast majority of candidates presented work that reflected the open nature of this unit, creating work around appropriate centre-devised briefs, built on the centre's strengths in terms of skills and resources. The range of briefs appeared to provide a raft of opportunities for candidates to explore a wide variety of interests. Notably, those candidates who were encouraged to work with or learn from real media producers and institutions demonstrated a real enthusiasm and engagement and, as a result, produced excellent products that were a pleasure to moderate. Moderators noted that there was clear evidence of some excellent teaching, particularly in editing. As always, close supervision throughout all stages led to the strongest work. Those centres that set a series of deadlines, one for each stage of planning, production and evaluation (including various drafting deadlines) ensured candidates were able to produce work comfortably by their final deadline. Several centres had followed previous advice by encouraging candidates to construct blogs with URLs as they went along and these candidates clearly found this an effective and relevant way of progressing, whilst evidencing their research, planning stage and construction phases and helping them in structuring their final evaluation. (As noted last session, blogs can include storyboards, location shots, working links to other videos by the same artist etc – and, as they will be dated, they can provide clear indication of time management.)

There was still a problem with some inappropriate material this session, especially in terms of health and safety. Centres should ensure that all work is closely supervised in the planning stages – and such planning should include a risk assessment procedure to prevent candidate undertaking such dangerous activities when filming offsite.
There was still some ill-advised use of found material which should be kept to an absolute minimum – a small amount of library footage in a documentary may be acceptable, for example, or an 'explosion' in a film trailer might be used – but generally secondary material should be avoided (and will not be accepted in the new Spec).

Video
As with all previous sessions, video was clearly the most popular medium and was dominated by the production of music videos. At the top end there was some excellent work: technically (and creatively) accomplished; underpinned by an understanding of genre and audience; thoroughly planned, with attention to detail both in the construction of mise-en-scène and narrative. At the other end a few centres seemed to think that poor framing, over use of sped-up footage and carelessly constructed mise en scène were acceptable in the context of music videos. A large number of videos fell into the 'walking in the park to music' format; others were wholly narrative and were difficult to read as music videos, feeling more like short films set to a music track! Abstract approaches could be effective but sometimes fell into the trap of repetition. Videos with a strong performance element generally worked best.

Film

As with previous sessions, there were examples of trailers. These were more successful when they had a fast cut rate, 'non-narrative' approach and an effective use of v/o etc. Too many were rather close to the AS thriller brief – although generally described as horror. There were a few successful short films, although sound is sometimes an issue in this form. One centre produced public information films.

Television

As in previous sessions, most Television work took the form of documentaries. Where these were 'real', incorporating unscripted interviews, actuality, voice-overs etc, these were highly successful. Those which were fictional in their choice of topic (or in the methods of construction employed) hampered candidates and the resultant artefacts were far less successful: it is generally easier, more satisfying and more effective to really make a documentary (or an extract) rather than to take the approach of inventing so many aspects – and scripted interviews are particularly painful to watch.

Print

Very little print work was seen this session.

ICT/New Media

Although there were few examples, mainly limited to web page construction, there was some evidence of improved work in this medium, with considerable understanding of both process and production

Radio

Yet again, very little use has been made of this cheap and effective medium.

Cross Media

There were some quite informed cross media productions seen but centres need to ensure that the quality of each component is equally high as, by its very nature, this brief requires centres to support their candidates in being able to use a *range* of technologies.

Critical Evaluations

Whilst some Evaluations still followed the format of the AS Production Report, and therefore did not allow for the development of discussion expected at A2, Moderators also saw some very good written work, with evidence of research into existing media; a stronger sense of evaluating success in terms of target audience and meaning created; a discussion of institutional context and increased reference to relevant theory and concepts. The three part approach is by far the most effective and can usefully be thought of as follows: (a) process; (b) form and style analysis; (c) evaluation, audience feedback and institutional context

Assessment

Assessment was generally accurate, although Construction marks still tended to be the most generously marked element. The centres that marked most accurately tended to be those that used the wording of the Specification level descriptors in their assessment comments and which had provided detailed comments in relation to each of the three elements. Those centres which made clear the individual contributions to a group production made moderation far easier, especially where there were differences in the marks awarded; where the Planning marks did not seem to include the vital teacher observation component, it was far more difficult to support centres' marks; indeed this usually seemed to lead to Planning being marked too harshly – candidates who have produced a product deemed worthy of an upper level 4 might reasonably expect to be rewarded with excellent planning marks (or at least level 3 planning marks!).

Critical evaluations were still over-marked by some centres, especially where the institutional aspects were underdeveloped by candidates or where there was little or no reference to audience feedback. Centres should annotate the Evaluations, a practice that also enables centres to mark this element more accurately.

There were several merit order issues this session, suggesting that internal moderation procedures were not as rigorous as they might have been.

Administration and presentation of work for moderation

Whilst administrative procedures were generally in order, a handful of centres created difficulties by failing to send the appropriate work and/or paperwork. A few centres did not even send MS1s. The majority of Centres sent the mandatory CCS160 Authentication Forms but an unacceptably large number of centres were still late in sending MS1s or samples which meant they ran the risk of work not being moderated in time for the Awarding process. 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. A large number of centres entered candidates who subsequently produced no work, but no indication was given to the moderator; 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. Missing coursework should be dealt with through the appropriate procedures – and before the sample is sent for. Yet again this session a few centres sent work or mark sheets with insufficient postage.

Work for Foundation Production and Advanced Production should be sent in separate parcels. Bulky, weighty files remain an issue in a few cases – one example of a questionnaire together with the summary of its findings, screen dumps incorporated in the evaluation, animatics of the DVD are all good practices – reams of internet printouts and lots of pages cut out of magazines are not. The folder needs to contain just enough planning materials to evidence the planning process (eg treatments, storyboards, layout design, shooting schedules, risk assessments, pre-manipulated original images). Secondary material should be limited to a discussion in its rightful place – the evaluation.

Most centres have embraced the production of well-made DVDs and this has made moderation a smoother process, but a handful of centres still failed to present work in the appropriate format, for example submitting moving image work on CD-R instead of DVD or VHS (which usually means that work is presented in too low a resolution to do any favours to the work anyway!) or not putting work online for the duration of the moderation period and providing the moderator with a URL (again preventing the work from being assessed to its best advantage. One centre sent work on a flash drive! The only acceptable formats are outlined in the Specification (Revised Edition p60); centres need to ensure that they are equipped to present their chosen medium in the required format.

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.

Best practice was seen where centres indicated names of candidates who worked together on a group production both on each cover sheet and on the artefacts. It is worth repeating that all artefacts need to be labelled with the centre number and candidate's name; DVDs need to be chaptered and the on-screen menu on DVDs must be in a legible font size. Alternatively each video may be on a separate DVD. Print outs of print work should be placed immediately after the cover sheet at the front of the candidate's portfolio, not spread throughout the file(s).

As always, moderation of production work remains a privilege: the range of work bears testament to hard work by centres and candidates - the best is inspiring and exciting and clearly the work of young people destined for a future in the media industry.

Advice to teachers

- Centres should create tasks that make optimum use of their skills and resources.
- No AS briefs or variations of AS briefs may be used at A2
- Ensure risk assessments are carried out in order to encourage safe working practices; work closely with candidates to ensure no inappropriate material is filmed, photographed, written or recorded.
- Critical Evaluations should include:
  o a systematic account of the stages of planning and production
  o detailed reference to relevant real generic examples, indicating evidence of independent research
  o detailed reference to the relevant areas of institutional context and clear understanding of where the candidate's own production would sit within this
  o 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.

- When giving differing marks to group members make clear the reasons for the differentiation

- 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.

- Websites must have a working URL – a disc is not an acceptable alternative.
- Moving image work may only be submitted on DVD or VHS – **not** CD-R, mini DV etc
- 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.
- All 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

Administration Issues

There is 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 student or teacher.

The cover sheets <u>must</u> 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.

Ion this session there was a significant increase in examples of the use of inappropriate notes: there were some examples of typewritten notes and notes that were complete answers that were then directly 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 must be forwarded with the cover sheet and script to the examiner.

Overall Performance of Candidates

Fewer candidates appear to be failing this paper but few also seem to be achieving at the top end of the mark range.

It is apparent that centres are guiding students more fully in basic research methods. Question One responses have improved and there were fewer examples of confusion between the two questions. However, many candidates do not apply their reflection or evaluation fully to the research they had themselves undertaken. Many students could have achieved higher marks if they had evaluated their methods and sources retrospectively. There were far too many candidates that did reflect upon methods in general but failed to discuss how it informed their own progress and research. At times, it seemed as if they had rote learned the advantages and disadvantages of research methods but when applying this knowledge to their own research they failed to take any of it into account. This is against the spirit of the paper and the skills students are expected to develop and means that able candidates are not fulfilling their potential. Other difficulties included over reliance on outdated inappropriate theory or anecdotal evidence and conjecture.

It was disappointing to see that a large proportion of candidates were not carrying out actual case study analysis but instead sticking to a broad overview of the topic they had chosen, which in most cases was linked to an over-general hypothesis or statement that they then carried out research for. This is where teachers can play a huge part in guiding (not teaching) a candidate towards a valid and specific hypothesis that is neither too far-reaching nor too narrow.

It is unfortunately clear that too few candidates are given examination practice. In some centres candidates were unable to be specific about much of their own research and references were lacking where it was clear from Q2 responses that research had taken place.

General Issues

Some centres seem to be preparing their candidates over-zealously – one centre's candidates had all undertaken the same methods regardless of their relevance to the particular topic. This 'shoe-horning' approach does not benefit candidates, especially those who are more able.

Question 1

Most candidates are utilising some appropriate methods, however a range of secondary sources is not always evident. Candidates often cite a theorist or study without referencing the source – suggesting that the research is being taken from class-notes (often sociological/ psychological studies).

Primary research is still dominated by questionnaires and focus groups, with varying degrees of success. Social networking sites and internet forums are increasingly popular places on which to place survey questions and many candidates have set up their own blog. Some candidates are able to articulate the particular strengths and weaknesses of this method. Vox Pops also made an appearance in many candidates' work with varying degrees of appropriateness and success.

An increasing number of candidates are presenting a significant imbalance of primary and secondary research. Some present no primary research [or no secondary research] where it would be necessary to do so.

Question 2

Most candidates are able to discuss findings with some measure of success and to engage with some relevant issues. Many, however, simply describe/ present their findings with minimal discussion and argument. In such cases it is difficult to identify how much the candidate has actually assimilated. The best responses synthesise a range of primary and secondary findings to demonstrate real understanding and develop a strong argument.

Topic 1 Advertising

This is an increasingly popular topic that is addressed with varying degrees of success. Many candidates still focus on an effects debate type approach – the size zero debate and obesity being popular topics. Here candidates need to be mindful of the topic – many drift into a general discussion of a variety of media forms (especially magazines and TV) and few stop to consider the aims and purpose of advertising itself. Some strong responses focused on the representation of gender within advertising (eg of alcohol or confectionary products) and considered the historical perspective of a particular brand (eg Guinness or Cadbury's). Advertising on the internet was explored by a number of candidates, with some strong responses considering free and viral advertising.

Some interesting research focussed on coke and ideology and men's fragrance advertising and masculinity. There were a few answers that lost focus; one candidate analysing advertising in women's magazines and most of the response involved discussion of the front covers. Some other responses failed to achieve higher marks as they were more an investigation into celebrity and lifestyle magazines with little or no mention of advertising. There were a few questions that a rather narrow and inappropriate focus, for example; *Fragrance Advertising – The audience is encouraged to purchase the product – is this true?*

Topic 2 Children & the Media

This is still a popular topic with a very wide range of responses, many focussing on topics such as: the effects of violence in the media (particularly video games) on children, the educational purpose of TV, and the influence of the media on the development of eating disorders in young people. Many effects debate arguments were rather one-sided – candidates should be encouraged to consider a range of views and perspectives. A range of psychological studies were utilised and the Bobo Doll experiment was far less evident than in previous sessions. One original response considered the decline in popularity of children's comics and questioned whether TV was to blame. Centres should take care to observe the age limit as stated in the specification – 'children' are considered to be those up to the age of 15. Some candidates

carried out research on their peers and considered their relationship with the media. Those candidates that were objective managed to produce a comprehensive and reflective study. There was one interesting study looking at aspiration and representation in teen magazines and another discussed children's newspapers and news programmes.

Topic 3 Community Radio

Fewer than twenty candidates attempted this topic and most were handled reasonably well. One or two of the best discussed the rise in popularity of community radio accessed through the internet and how podcasts had enabled mainstream stations to develop a sense of community through radio.

Topic 4 Crime & the Media

This has become the most popular topic. Many candidates considered the effects of representations of crime in the media (especially violent video games) upon an audience. The Madeleine McCann case was researched by a significant number of candidates. This was a potentially appropriate topic with the best responses exploring the differing representations of the case in different newspapers and/ or other media texts. One highly original response considered the use of YouTube as a platform for encouraging criminal behaviour where gangs place, effectively, 'recruitment videos'. This candidate gave a sense of historical perspective, considering moral panics and drew parallels with events from the past.

Some candidates were able to discuss Moral Panics in the media connected with the representation of gun crime. One interesting response was able to discuss stereotyping, social class and gun crime. Overall the representation of gun crime proved difficult for many candidates – either due to a lack of objectivity or an over reliance on discussing music effects on young people. Some candidates discussed violent computer games and its effects on children. This focus would have been more appropriate to Topic 2. Candidates who looked at computer games failed, in the main, to discuss representation of the crime – although this was implicit in places. Some good responses included public perception of crime.

Topic 5 Politics & the Media

There were very few responses to this topic, but most were handled very well. A few candidates considered the cult of celebrity in the representation of politicians by the media: some including references to the US Primaries. Other good examples considered the question of UK bias in reporting on the Palestine/Israel conflict and whether social satire undermines politicians, including *Have I Got News for You* and Boris Johnson as case studies. An over-general example of response to this topic was "How does the media affect government?"

Topic 6 Sport & the Media

This was a less popular topic than in previous sessions. Many candidates researched the impact of TV on football, particularly lower league clubs. There were some strong discussions of advertising and sponsorship. One interesting response researched the coverage of the African Cup of Nations, comparing this year's event with coverage from the past and considered the representation of Africa by the BBC and whether this might help to shape audience perceptions of the continent. The candidate also compared the role of sport as a unifying force in Africa with the more commercially motivated relationship that Europe has with sport.

There are still too many responses looking at the use technology in sport and the effect on the game. The better candidates were able to discuss interactive technology and audience pleasures. These were appropriate responses that encompassed full discussion of the key media concepts. Some weaker candidates simply discussed the effect of goal-line technology such as Hawkeye on the game: this is not an appropriate focus. Likewise, one candidate posed

the question *Do men receive more media coverage than women in sport?* This question prevented the candidate from discussion of *Why?* and forced them into a limited argument of counting column inches of newspapers.

Topic 7 Television Drama

This is an increasingly popular topic. Many candidates studied soap operas, crime and hospital dramas; the best of these exploring some form of debate eg a British v US institutional context or differing representations of a particular social group. One of the very best responses had researched the historical development of the Police drama, addressing representations of the police over time and linking these to social issues and attitudes to law and order in society. Detailed analysis of texts from *Dixon of Dock Green* to *Cops* and *Life on Mars* aided the discussion of ideology (for example whether the text was intended to comfort and reassure the audience or encourage them to question/ criticise the role of policing in society). This candidate had fully embraced a full range of research methodologies, including travelling some distance to the National Media Museum to view episodes of past texts that were not available on DVD. This was particularly refreshing as many candidates now seem to access their texts through clips on YouTube.

Topic 8 Women & Film

This was less popular this session but there was a range of focuses as in the past – some studies of directors and actors and many representational studies. Some candidates considered the effects of thin/ attractive actresses on audiences with little focus on film. There were a few weak responses on romantic comedies. These mainly failed due to an over generalisation and potted history approach.

Topic 9 World Cinema

More candidates attempting this topic than in previous sessions – with varying degrees of success. It is really important to ensure a clear hypothesis/ area for investigation and debate. Some candidates researched interesting options such as Nigerian or Chinese cinema but unfortunately did not move beyond basic description of some films. More successful candidates explored topics such as the emergence of New German Cinema and the ways in which it represents the past, drawing some comparison with Hollywood. Other areas of study were Japanese cinema: Manga/Anime and Horror. There was one excellent focus looking at feminism across Chinese cinema. This candidate had been able to access appropriate academic theory and was able to discuss social issues and historical context with reference and application to an appropriate filmography. There were also many effective studies of Bollywood and Asian cinema although these are rarely linked to national identity or auteur theories and primarily focus on representational issues. 'Urban Realism' of texts such as *City of God* and *La Haine* was the successful focus of one candidate who was able to make a contrast between this and the US gangster genre. There were many responses offering comparative analysis to western cinema and Centres should be advised to guide candidates carefully when choosing a suitable focus, because candidates often lose focus on the topic and refer almost exclusively to the western films to which they compare their chosen texts. This has been a common weakness in these responses. Examples such as the 'comparison of Studio Ghibli to Disney films' or 'how martial arts films have influenced western film' often discuss Disney, Tarantino or The Matrix at the expense of their chosen focus. There is a lot of scope within this topic to discuss the wider context but candidates must not lose sight of the main issues.

Advice to Teachers

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

The cover sheets <u>must</u> be signed by both the candidate and the supervising teacher.

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

Do not leave students to their own devices when developing their original ideas.

Give substantial assistance to students in choosing specific areas of study and formulating a problematic or hypothesis.

Where possible avoid students addressing identical specific areas of study and choosing exactly the same texts as case studies.

Teach the methodologies of research the basics of research,

Support students 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 students 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

This was a slightly larger January entry than in previous sessions. Most centres have adapted well to the two question format. There were very few rubric errors. Candidates generally seemed well prepared for this examination. Successful candidates use the time to explore case studies in depth to answer the specific question. Weaker candidates often failed to address the question adequately, or found it difficult to illustrate their answer with evidence from their case studies. Candidates who used recent or current case studies were better equipped to answer questions.

Generally, candidates used the time well and completed two well-planned responses of an appropriate length.

Individual Questions

SECTION A BROADCASTING

Music Programmes on television
Questions asked candidates to consider how well music lovers are served by television, or to consider whether music programmes offer anything ore than light entertainment.

Question 1 was more popular than question 2. Most candidates were able to demonstrate the range of music provision on television. One examiner observed: "Answers tended to cite the range of different niche music video channels and discuss populist shows like *X factor* and *Pop idol* contrasting them with promotional documentaries (The Spice Girls) and the seemingly less manufactured representation of indie music on shows like *Jools Holland*. Very few candidates were able to look at the presentation of indie music on TV from a critical stance."

There is a strong reliance on textual analysis for this topic. More perspective on media institutions would be an insightful way forward. More students are now discussing competition from the web . Generally, responses to this topic seemed of a higher standard than in previous sessions, though the topic is not as popular as the 'soaps' topic that it replaced – its newness, and the difference in taste between teachers and students may be keeping some centres away.

Broadcast News and Current Affairs
Broadcast News and current affairs is now the most popular topic in this section.

The impartiality of broadcast news was the focus of one question; scheduling issues were the focus of the other. Question 3 was by far the more popular. There tends to be a tacit assumption amongst candidates that ITV, as a commercial network is free from the obligations of public service broadcasting and is at liberty to be partial.

Generally, Question three was answered in a much stronger fashion than Question 4 – Some students fund it difficult to apply case studies, other than to offer fairly basic semiological deconstruction of studio sets. When stories were offered, only a very few candidates compared different treatments.

Many candidates used very recent case studies, such as the Madeline McCann kidnapping, and referred at times to specific news programmes, including the re-launched ITV News at Ten.

Several candidates did not understand what "impartial" meant, and tried to compensate by writing down everything they knew about news values and presentation. Most, however, understood and could give examples of impartial reporting. There is still a significant minority who believe the BBC (newsroom) is run by, or is beholden to, the government. Those who had studied the coverage of the BBC and their "Queen in a huff" tape generally used it well, but some seem to think the BBC has some official relationship with royalty.

Contemporary British Broadcasting
The questions focused on progress and success in broadcasting in recent years. There were very few takers for these questions.

SECTION B FILM

Contemporary British Cinema
The influence of the USA on British films and the 'watchability' of British films were the topics under consideration this session.

Q8 tended to be more popular and was better answered than question 7. Candidates seemed to have a more rounded perception of British Cinema than in previous sessions. Social realist films such as Bullet Boy, Kidulthood and Vera Drake were frequently contrasted with Train Spotting and Four Weddings. There was some purposeful discussion of the role that British film makers have played in the Bond and Harry Potter franchises.

Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the debates, and referenced Working Title as a production company clearly influenced by America. Case studies included Hot Fuzz and This Is England, and were generally used appropriately.

The Concept of Genre in Film

Generic boundary breaking and risk-taking occupied the thoughts of students in this theme.

Both questions where popular. The Horror genre was frequently used to demonstrate how genres develop, *Shaun of the Dead, Scream, Ring* and *Saw* being used to establish how boundaries are eroded and broken down.

In Question 10 the rote learning of pre-prepared answers was often apparent. Many candidates manage to give a detailed account of how genres have evolved without accounting for the industry's reliance on genre films. Some good answers focussed on "huge risk with money" and explored the low budget / B picture origins of some of the genres which have become blockbuster staples in recent years. Other good answers considered the diminishing returns of the superhero bandwagon.

Horror, particularly the zombie subgenre and science fiction remain popular genres for 9 and 10, but consideration of the Western has increased, fuelled by the recent releases of "Jesse James...", "3.10 To Yuma" and "The Proposition." An opportunity was missed by some who had been taught "The Proposition." Just why was an Australian story marketed as being in the Western genre? On the other hand, some mentioned how much better native Americans were represented in it.

Censorship and Film

Candidates were asked to consider a quote from the BBFC code, or to discus the factors that should influence regulatory decisions. One examiner noted that in the main candidates are getting to grips with questions of protection and 'who decides'- this question seemed to focus minds more sharply on this debate.

Q11 was far and away the more popular question in this section. Most students could present the arguments for and against censorship, but really struggled to get to grips with the concept of social harm. There was a tendency to use case studies to show the development of different forms of censorship historically (Clockwork Orange, Platoon). More recent examples of where BBFC has imposed cuts or banned texts citing social harm as the reason were lacking.

For Q12, sufficient knowledge of the BBFC guidelines was often wanting. Many candidates struggled to isolate specific factors that they could discuss.

A number of examiners suggested that Centres would be well advised to make better use of the BBFC's student website.

SECTION C PRINT

The Magazine Industry

One question asked about magazine content and representation, the other about the magazine industry's contribution to society. The majority of candidates were able to use textual analysis of titles such Zoo, Nuts, Glamour and Cosmo to establish the industry's obsession with sex and celebrity. Such representations were often contrasted with those found in niche, hobby titles. Many recognised that falling circulation figures may trigger more explicit representations of sex and reliance on celebrity. One centre focused on the re branding of Bliss as it attempted to communicate with a more savvy, sexually aware teenage readership. Generally candidates found it much more difficult to address the point that this creates a distorted representation of society.

An examiner noted: "For both questions, candidates should be encouraged to research a wider variety of magazines. Generalising from (the front covers of) just two individual magazines sometimes leads to some strange conclusions. "

Local Newspapers

Questions asked to students to consider how local newspapers are coping with declining circulation, and their usefulness to their community. The best answers studied a number of local newspapers, often serving different geographical areas and with different publishing schedules. The weakest candidates made sweeping generalisations on the basis of having studied perhaps one or two editions of the same newspaper. A local weekly newspaper will have a very different set of news values from a local daily newspaper. Their value to their community, and their strategies for coping with decline, will vary accordingly.

Freedom, Regulation and Control in the British Press.

How, and how well the press is regulated was the thrust of the first question; journalistic ethics that of the second.
A good number of candidates attempted this topic and were generally well prepared, with a range of recent case studies employed. This topic is yielding a better quality of answer than in previous years. Most well prepared students seem to understand the difference between self regulation and statutory regulation, and are aware of the role and structure of the PCC, and can cite landmark cases and refer to current and recent relevant cases.

General Advice to teachers:

- Two questions must be answered in two hours. Students should spend an equal amount of time on each.
- Encourage students to apply their knowledge and case studies to the set question that they are addressing.
- 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 students ought to be encouraged to investigate the audiences who consume and the industries that create them.
- Students 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 students to explore the concepts via their case studies; be aware that some students, during the examination, will offer a confused and unconvincing essay if they rely on half-understood theory. Conceptual understanding serves students 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 students outdated, often erroneous information. Whereas the study of media history, and of media artefacts from previous generations is often helpful to contextualize the current situation, students who use current and recent case studies are usually better equipped to answer questions than students who rely solely on outdated case studies.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE (Subject) (Aggregation Code(s))
January 2008 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
2730	Raw	120	98	88	79	70	61	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2731	Raw	90	69	62	55	49	43	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2732	Raw	90	71	64	57	50	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	69	62	55	48	41	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2735	Raw	90	70	62	55	48	41	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
	UMS							

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	9.8	34.4	66.8	90.5	100.0	100.0	415
7860	7.8	39.0	71.4	97.4	100.0	100.0	96

512 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.