GCE

Media Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 H540**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H140**

Reports on the Units

January 2010

H140/H540/R/10J

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Advanced GCE Media Studies (H540)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Media Studies (H140)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

G321 Foundation portfolio Report Jan 2010

Introduction

There were 1300 candidates from around 140 centres entered this session. Many of the entries were re-submissions from the summer, with nearly 70% of centres completing the Print brief and 30% the video brief. Only a couple of examples of web work and audio productions were seen by moderators.

Many centres have now embraced the demands of the new specification, particularly building on lessons learned from the first year and taking advice from last summer's report and INSET and are to be congratulated for this. However, a significant proportion have not yet adapted tasks or ways of working to the new portfolio and a very high number still had to have marks adjusted as part of moderation in order to set a common standard.

Many of the re-submissions seemed to have been barely altered since the summer and it is worth centres considering the value of a re-sit if next to nothing has been improved. In order to make a significant difference, work is likely to be needed on all three elements of a submission; in most cases, there was little evidence of anything more than slight tweaking, which in a few instances had actually made the work worse!

Administration

Though the bad weather disrupted the start of term for many schools and colleges, for which due allowance was made regarding submission of material to moderators, there were still too many centres which had to be chased for work for a long time after the Jan 10 deadline. In some cases, it was evident that candidates were still working on projects up to and even beyond the deadline (according to blog entries), which is unacceptable. It is advised that for January entries, an internal deadline is set so that work is finished before the Christmas break to allow time for marking.

Centres should also expect to send all candidate work as a matter of course where the entry is fewer than 10; this includes consortia, where all work from all centres involved should be sent when numbers are so small. Larger centres will receive a request for the sample via email from OCR which is likely to be received by the Examinations Officer. If marks are submitted on time, this request should come within a couple of days and the sample should be despatched swiftly thereafter.

There were a few instances of wrongly transcribed marks and work which was inadequately labelled. These were often from centres where other problems were evident, such as serious over-marking. It is essential that all administration is done accurately or the whole process becomes unnecessarily time-consuming.

Where blogs are used, most centres now provide a central hub with hyperlinks; these should be clearly labelled, preferably with candidate name and number. Where moderators had to type the URL of each blog into a browser, this often led to mistakes (especially where the candidate had spelled something wrong in their blogname!). Blog addresses can be supplied to the moderator as hyperlinks on a Word document (which can be burned to a CD). This avoids any errors of mis-typing addresses or incorrect addresses being written onto the coursework cover sheet.

Centres have mainly taken advice about reducing packaging and moving to more online formats, which will help with candidates' A2 productions which all have to be submitted electronically (although there were still a few hefty scrapbooks in evidence). It is pleasing to report that preliminary tasks were almost always submitted, which is of course obligatory for this unit; 15 marks should be deducted where a preliminary task has not been completed.

Attention is also drawn to formats of work- jpeg or pdf should be used for print work and videos should be playable on DVD. In both cases, work may be embedded on a blog, but centres should ensure that it will play or display in good quality if no hard copy is provided. Under no circumstances should work be sent on USB sticks.

Paper coversheets with teacher comments are still required- please do not simply send only as a pdf on a CD. The detail of these comments is essential to support the marks, including differentiating the work of individual candidates within a group.

Many centres are beginning to see the potential of new forms that planning and evaluation can take. Centres are encouraged to adopt the blog format across categories where possible so as to explore the possibilities offered by a range of media within them, eg presentations, podcasts, video pieces and links. It is vital however, that the blogs are accessible to moderators; a labyrinth of passwords for access or poorly organised material makes the process very difficult so that it is not clear which elements are research, which the products and which evaluation.

Despite the preliminary task, there was still evidence that some candidates lacked training on the software and the hardware. At A level some evidence of expertise is essential. Some products still look as if they were created the first time the candidate used the equipment.

Research and Planning

Centres still tended to focus on providing evidence of research and less on planning and organisation of the production process. Often there was a lot of material to indicate that music magazines had been analysed in some depth, but very little evidence to suggest that it had had much bearing on the production and scant consideration of the process which led to the finished product. The best work showed a real sense of progression from preliminary task and early analysis of 'real' media through the process to a finished product. Blogging was undoubtedly the best mode for the display of such work.

Research into similar products should be relevant. Looking at music magazine websites can be useful for consideration of mode of address, language and register and content but confusing regarding conventions of layout. Where films are analysed, they should have some relevance to the genre chosen and the style used by candidates in their own production. There was very little evidence of research into how titles are used in film openings; given that this is half of the task for the video brief, it is recommended that very close attention is given to this element; an excellent online resource for this purpose: 'artofthetitle.com' is linked from the 'getahead' blog (http://getaheadocrmedia.blogspot.com/) and was demonstrated at the INSET days.

Where candidates carry out quantitative audience research, they should draw conclusions from their pie charts to be implemented in the planning of their products rather than just leaving the data to speak for itself. Unfortunately, there were still lots of examples of questionnaires and bar charts which usually had little relevance. Different forms of audience feedback should be considered to make this element more relevant and focussed. Equally, the choice of audience needs to be appropriate; where candidates refer to testing their product on 'everyone' this seems to indicate a lack of grasp of media targeting.

There was considerable variation in the volume of work produced as evidence of research and planning; some individual candidates had as many as seventy posts on their blogs, where others had as few as seven. Where work on planning documents was sparse it was hard to agree very high marks ; planning and organisation must be strongly evident and meaningful to access level 4 for this category. Some of the best evidence of the production process came through screengrabs to illustrate image manipulation and drafts of products with commentary and often peer feedback.

Construction

Most centres chose to offer a common task for all candidates, which works well for the management of resources and assessment. Once again, the main problem with assessment was over-marking of construction, placing products in level 4, which did not demonstrate excellence to any degree, or in level 3 when they clearly lacked evidence of proficiency. There is still a tendency for centres to over-reward candidates rather than to look closely at the work. Spelling and punctuation should also be accurate, for example, on magazine front covers or in film titling as this reflects professional practice.

Print

The three sub-tasks here varied in quality on the whole, with covers usually being done best but insufficient attention often paid to the contents page and double page spread. The task needs adequate DTP to be done effectively; it is very difficult to produce excellent work for this task using Publisher or Paint.

Where photographs are well planned, varied and carefully manipulated, the magazine can work well; the main problems with images tend to be lack of attention to misè-en-scene, lack of variety (eg most or all are of the same person), lack of evidence of how the image was taken and manipulated, which can give rise to suspicion that the image is 'found' and random snapshots rather than carefully constructed 'shoots'. There were a significant number of out of focus or stretched images used which made the work look very poor.

There were problems with contents pages that contained too little information and lots of space and with double page spreads consisting of two articles or an imbalanced layout. The more successful double page spreads comprised an interview with a dominant image of the interviewee. Examples of practices to avoid included fonts that were chosen that were either so fancy that they became unreadable or so big that they looked like the magazine was designed for small children learning to read.

The best work had a clear sense of genre and audience and a clear grasp of conventions and technology, coupled with some imaginative planning for the images.

In a few cases, it appeared that the text was lifted from existing interviews and even that the actors were named as well known pop stars. This is counter-productive as it would be much better for the candidates to construct their own fictional star images for their performers so that they are not constrained by existing personas.

These issues were often compounded in the centre assessment of the work. Sometimes assessor comments referred to the spec but were inaccurate, for instance describing work as excellent when key elements of conventions were missing. At other times there was little or no reference to the specification, levels or assessment criteria.

Video work

There was less work from this brief in evidence than in the summer, with many of the submissions representing re-sits. Overwhelmingly the choice of genre was horror/thriller, with the hooded stalker and the POV shot dominating. Despite the demands of the preliminary task, there was an over-emphasis on the long take and use of long shots, with insufficient attention paid to framing and the language of continuity editing. Titles remain one of the weakest areas; candidates cannot score level 4 for this option without proper attention to the conventions of titling.

Setting was often far too limited to the school corridor; if it is not possible to let candidates film elsewhere, some careful choices about the environment to be used must be made. Although acting is not a skill to be assessed, it would be worth candidates finding actors who are prepared to look convincing for their projects, and particularly to dress them up.

Evaluation

Centres have now had time to fully consider the demands of the evaluation in the new specification, which are totally different from the old specification. To achieve level 4, the format used must be fully exploited and must be electronic/digital. There were many examples which used blogs, director commentaries and video presentations very imaginatively in this regard; however, there were still far too many which comprised a written essay placed on a blog or on PowerPoint slides. This is not within the spirit of the specification and will not be eligible for the higher levels. In some cases, centres have continued to use their own questions or the format of the old spec writing. Again, this leads to heavy cuts in the marking as it is not addressing the task set. Candidates must address the seven questions- not necessarily in equal measure, but nonetheless must cover them.

A few centres recorded presentations. The best of these involved Q&A with the audience and often probing questions from the teacher. Others just showed the student reading out their slides, which is pointless; likewise, podcasts or video voiceovers which simply involve reading out a script should not be marked highly. Some video evaluations consisted of lengthy pieces to camera and missed out on the opportunity to provide cutaways to visual material to support what was being said

Some creative tasks which allow for more interesting evaluations are linked from the 'getahead' blog - http://getaheadocrmedia.blogspot.com/.

Audience feedback must have been collected and can be incorporated into the question about addressing/attracting the target audience and considering how successful intentions were.

The institution and representation questions led to some misunderstandings. Many candidates looked just at distribution outlets for their products (eg WH Smith or Tesco), rather than considering who might produce them or looking at the links between institutions and distributors. As for representation, representing social groups is not just about attracting the target audience but looking at how particular groups are being re-presented to the target audience. Both of these questions can be linked to learning for unit G322/3. Progression from the preliminary task to full task is an important aspect of the evaluation as it has a whole assessment criterion to itself! Sometimes this was dismissed too easily.

There were excellent examples of blogs evaluating in a variety of ways, using text, images, and video pieces. More use of links for evaluations (eg linking to other products when considering use of codes and conventions) would also be expected in the higher mark bands. Where the evaluation is placed on a blog alongside research and planning evidence, centres should advise their candidates to make the distinction between the two categories very clear as it was often hard to find the evaluation responses.

Summary

- The expectations of the unit are greater than for the old 2730 and this needs to be reflected in the marking.

- Centres need to ensure that research on 'real' media is reflected and linked into the planning and construction of candidates' own products.

- Candidates should be given more opportunities to use the equipment in order to become more confident with it

- Centres need to read the specification carefully to ensure they are meeting the criteria

- The marking scheme needs to be used in conjunction with exemplar materials in arriving at judgments about the levels and marks for each category (construction exemplar material is available on the OCR website and on the OCR e-community - http://community.ocr.org.uk/community_data/docs?community_id=51)

- Centres should ensure that their candidates are given full opportunities to use digital technology for planning, research and evaluation.

G322 Key Media Concepts (TV Drama)

G323 Key Media Concepts (Radio Drama)

The entry for the January series was 6,010 candidates for G322, including a pleasing but small number of entrants for G323. There were no reported problems, with either of the extracts, (for TV drama: **Hotel Babylon** and Radio Drama: **Fear on Four: Playing God**).

These extracts enabled differentiation through the examination of the key concept of the representation of ethnicity and social class and status respectively. Given the small but pleasing number of entries for Radio drama this report focuses on the unit G322 Television Drama, and contains a small section for the exam paper G323 (headed below), which also shares the same section B.

In this report, there is reference to and repeated advice from the 2009 Principal examiner reports.

Overall this examination series evidenced a wide range of candidate responses and evidenced examples of some excellent analysis and understanding of the question set in response to ethnicity and television drama and for question two, on global production and national audiences.

The candidates appeared to have enjoyed responding to the TV drama extract, however at times there was evidence of candidates failing to address the key issue of ethnicity, which is a concern given the specification clearly indicates that this address, is one focus of the concept of representation. Indeed, examiners noted candidates' responses were at times very good on gender and class and status, but lacked an understanding of ethnicity. It may be a possibility that some centres did not fully prepare their candidates for the exam and there was some evidence of this.

For question one, the majority of candidates addressed the technical features of camera shot, angle and composition and mise en scène well, with some fluency at times. There was also plenty of evidence of students being able to reach the higher end of the marks available. However, the address of the technical features of sound and editing needs to be developed further by candidates. Only a handful of centres had really prepared candidates to address these technical features of television drama. Examiners would really like to see a concerted effort by centres in preparing candidates to address this issue for the summer's series.

Question two, enabled suitable differentiation of candidates' responses and some excellent responses were seen in relation to the media areas studied, in particular for film and music areas. However, film case studies were sometimes dominated by institutional biographies and a failure to really get to grips with the question set*: "Media production is dominated by global institutions, which sell their products and services to national audiences" To what extent do you agree with this statement?*

Candidates who had been well prepared with specific case study material and well rehearsed in the key conceptual areas of Institution and Audiences could offer sustained, excellent arguments that enabled them to interpret and the address the issues set in the question.

On the other hand, there was evidence of some candidates who struggled to understand *how* to apply their found case studies, for example, candidates' responses on magazines, often lacked any institutional discussion of ownership. It is quite frustrating to see that candidates are still being prepared textual analysis for the address of question two. Centres also need to be

reminded that Television and Broadcasting are <u>not</u> amongst the six media areas identified for study in the specification (this includes topics such as an investigation into the X Factor as a global media institution).

Overall, the paper achieved a good level of differentiation within the cohort, being accessible enough, as well as adequately stretching. There was some evidence of improvement in the time management of the exam paper. Centres do need to ensure that candidates spend an appropriate amount of time on each question and this needs to be addressed given the equal weighting of marks (50) to each question.

Finally, as indicated by the mark scheme for this exam paper, the use of media vocabulary is a very important part of the exam at AS level. The mark scheme and syllabi clearly stipulate that a number of marks are available for the use of terminology. Good practice suggests that candidates should be keeping a vocabulary list of technical language for both questions. On page eighteen of the specification there is a list of the key terminology used in relation to analysis of the technical features of television drama (page twenty four for radio drama).

Comments on candidates' responses to Question 1 – Television drama

There was plenty of evidence that the question set on ethnicity and representation and the extract **Hotel Babylon** achieved the desired differentiation of candidate responses. The extract was approximately five minutes in length and enabled the candidates to engage with the key skill of textual analysis of the four technical features: Camera shot, angle and composition, mise en scène, editing and sound. Examiners appeared in agreement that this was an excellent extract because it provided candidates with the opportunity to *negotiate* their own reading which they could justify through analysis of the four technical codes. There were a number of different interpretations provided by candidates; most of these were entirely valid. There was a wealth of technical examples for candidates to analyse.

It is also important that candidates move from description of key technical areas to analysis of *how* representations are constructed. This will enable candidates to achieve higher notional marks for their responses. Of these technical areas, camera work and mise en scène were by far the most comfortable concepts the candidates addressed, with editing and sound the least, despite improved attempts to address these technical features. Candidate responses which did not link technical analysis to representation often lacked focus in their answers on how ethnicity was constructed through the technical features of the extract.

Candidates structured their responses in a one of two ways for question one. Some began by addressing the concept of representation in the extract and a discussion of the representational differences between the white authority of the police in contrast to the representation of the ethnicity and status of the illegal migrant workers. Candidates would then analyse chosen examples of representation in a chronological address of the extract, whilst integrating different technical aspects, for example, combining the analysis of camera composition with sound.

On the other hand, and a slightly more popular approach, would see the candidates address the technical areas one by one. Stronger candidates could provide an integrated analysis of the extract through analysis of key examples identified. These candidates explored *how* the technical features could be applied using a combination of the technical features. Weaker candidates could list many technical aspects, with varying degrees of accuracy, but struggle to say anything meaningful about the representation of ethnicity.

Both of these approaches to the structure of question 1 are valid and centres need to plan and help structure candidate responses in the classroom. It is advised against preparing candidates to word a long and lengthy introduction about what they are going to answer, or give theoretical introductions and/ or historical contexts to television drama. It is good advice for centres to

practice with candidates to start the written response with analysis. On occasion in this series, candidates offered quite general textual analysis and these candidates' responses lacked a focused discussion of ethnicity and thus penalized themselves from gaining a level three or four mark for EAA.

The mark scheme enables credit to be awarded to students at three different levels: Explanation, Analysis and Argument (20 Marks); Use of Examples (20 Marks) and; Use of Terminology (10 Marks). Under the use of examples, the mark scheme does not credit a notional level four (16-20) when only three technical areas are discussed, therefore making it less likely that a candidate can be awarded the highest possible marks.

On the whole the use of media vocabulary was very good, but could centres please note that there are up to 10 marks available for the use of media terminology – hence the previous recommendation that students should be encouraged to use the appropriate media terminology and good advice for centres is to encourage candidates to keep vocabulary lists.

There were a significant number of candidates who still adopted an overly simplistic approach in terms of media vocabulary. Centres need to encourage students to use appropriate technical language for precision in analysis and to make sure that they avoid superficial terms like cameras 'switching' or 'jumping', know the difference between zooms and tracking or avoid describing characters as 'goodies' and 'baddies'.

This mark scheme is more able to credit answers, which have different strengths, and this series, the marking of candidates' papers revealed the flexibility in its application, according to the standards set. It is advisable that centres make the mark scheme available to candidates for the summer series so that they are aware of how the work is assessed. This could also be used for the marking of timed assignments in the classroom and for the marking of mock exam papers.

Finally it is important that candidates address a balance in their responses to all the technical features used in the extract to construct meaning, at times some candidates would focus too much on specific 'micro' aspect of the television drama, for example writing a whole side on the use of mise en scène.

Comments on the 'micro' aspects of Question one on Television Drama

The following comments are selected example points to assist centres with the delivery of the topic and to help advise on candidate answers, it is by no means an exhaustive list.

Representation

The sequence offered plenty of opportunities to discuss the representations of ethnicity. Most candidates were able to discuss differences in the status of various ethnicities within the sequence, though only a very small number of candidates were able to develop their answer further by showing how the audience were positioned in relation to these representations. For example, the police clearly have more status than the immigrant workers, but the audience are encouraged to identify with the workers by putting more emphasis on their points of view.

More confident candidates were able to analyse the ways in which the extract attempted to position the audience in relation to the immigration officials and the immigrants. Many identified the construction of the lead immigration officer as antagonist and argued that the extract positioned the audience to be sympathetic to the plight of the immigrants. A smaller number of more able candidates went further by exploring either the apparent contradiction of an antagonist acting within the law or commenting on the way that the extract challenged typical representations of illegal immigrants in the media.

The majority of candidates attempted to formulate an argument about the representation of ethnicity in the extract with the vast majority moving beyond the minimal descriptor for EAA. Candidates that scored less well tended to make points about the representation of ethnicity in an isolated fashion rather than linking their points as part of a coherent analysis or argument.

Camera Shot, Angle and Composition

This technical feature was overall, well addressed by the candidates. Most candidates had a media vocabulary, which addressed the technical features of television drama. Where candidates used the correct terminology and could describe shot composition, this on the whole, was well done. Stronger responses considered a wide range of shots as well as camera movement and the use of framing and composition to further reinforce representation, for example, the framing of all the characters together in hiding and later through panning in the canteen creating a sense of community. Some candidates confuse the meaning of low and high angles and are reminded to be careful when discussing the connotations of these shot types.

Weaker candidates were able to describe key shots used in exemplification, but would often lack explicit links to how these shots assisted in the construction of the representation of ethnicity. These candidates would also tend to focus on just identifying the narrative flow of the extract through the naming of the shots. As with the past two exam series, please be aware that 'insert' shots and 'wide' shots and the 'tilt' shot and 'jump' shot are common misconceptions/ vocabulary used by candidates.

It would be useful to see a wider range of examples of shot sizes and camera movement referenced in relation to a sequence's representations, for example very few candidates were able to recognise the focus pull, for example, when Ibrahim was arrested, or could recognise how it reflected his sudden awareness of danger.

Mise en scène

The majority of candidates discussed this area with confidence. The extract itself was rich in mise en scène that contributed to representation. The contrast of the luxury hotel with the cramped storage room in which the immigrants were hiding was mentioned by many candidates, as were the costume of suits for some characters and cleaners and maid uniforms for others. It was pleasing to see many students making reference to lighting with more able candidates confident in using terms such as high key, artificial and low key.   The use of colour with the white suit of the receptionist juxtaposed with the dark suit of other the female character was also well linked to representation. Most candidates were able to talk about the contrasting uniforms and the messages and values implied. Most candidates focused on the clothing as denoting power and where they fitted into the hierarchy.

More able candidates would be able to contrast the ethnic representation of different characters through the mise en scène and how power and status is defined by ethnic relations, the most able could reflect on the cleaner who used to be a doctor and explore the nuances of ethnicity and status through the use of the character of Jackie as a supervisor and carer of the immigrant workers. Candidates are also advised to look for the range of representations within the extract with more able candidates commenting on the characters of ethnic minority that held some status within the scene, for example the well dressed black male employee Ben and in the final scenes the wealthy African couple with the female in traditional dress at the reception.

Weaker candidates are still wedded to simplistic colour analysis and ignore all contradictory evidence to claim that characters dressed in white must be 'pure and innocent' while characters dressed in red are either 'passionate' or 'in danger'. This 'binary' approach needs refining by centres in relation to debating how meaning is constructed in an extract and it is suggested that

to compare and contrast different elements of representation does involve more examination in the classroom. In addition, too many candidates are still being encouraged to consider the acting/body language/non-verbal communication as part of the mise-en-scène. This leads to candidates spending far too long discussing the acting at the expense of the technical elements, which are constructing representations.   Weaker candidates' responses could identify key aspects of the mise en scène but not always explicitly link this to ethnicity and tended to 'demonise' the white characters and over simplify the portrayal of the immigrants.

Sound

The analysis of sound in analysis of the TV drama was satisfactory. Those candidates that could offer a balanced approach to the analysis of the extract did so with a degree of proficiency in relation to identifying the use of diegetic and non-diegetic sound (as opposed to televisual terminology of synchronous and asynchronous sound). Again the analysis of sound was used in contrast to the characters' different roles in the drama, with more candidates steering away from a reliance of an examination of the dialogue used in the drama; centres seem to be heeding the advice that an analysis of the dialogue in the drama is not sufficient technical analysis.

Most candidates were able to use terminology confidently and could describe the tempo and use of music in relation to the representation of characters. Most made reference to the use of foreign languages and accents to reinforce representation of the characters as different or other. Key dialogue was also referred to such as the line 'I wasn't always a cleaner' and many candidates examined the significance of this statement.

Often weaker candidates showed confusion with technical terminology, referring to ambient sound where there was none in the part of the sequence they referred to, or simply getting diegetic and non-diegetic sound the wrong way round. The analysis of sound is more than just dialogue and weaker candidate responses may interpret the soundtrack/ use of music in too general analysis. It is advised that centres do cover the technical features of sound thoroughly in order to give candidates an opportunity to fully engage with the analysis of the extract.

Editing

As with the January and June 2009 series, this technical area proved to be the most problematic for candidates and the one technical area of analysis that was often omitted in candidates' answers.

Many candidates ignored editing altogether and only a few of those that did cover it were able to make meaningful links to representations by, for example, showing how the editing created particular viewpoints which we are encouraged to identify with or how screen time indicated the shifting relationship between characters in the sequence, for example through the discussion of the rule of thirds.

Most candidates made reference to the pace of editing to reflect the frantic situation and emotions of the immigrant characters. The use of shot reverse shot and cuts to aid continuity were mentioned by many candidates, as was the use of cross cutting between the two situations to enhance tension. More able candidates demonstrated the ability to link the use of editing to the representation of characters, such as the use of long and short takes to represent power and the use of eye line matches to reinforce a sense of dominance. Most candidates who addressed editing were able to address the type of transitions used and could comment on the pace of the editing. There was evidence on occasion where students engaged with the rule of thirds and juxtaposition of characters in the narrative using editing devices, which is very encouraging.

However, many candidates' responses seem to be very limited in address of the issues of editing and all too frequently it was absent from their responses – which does not enable candidates to reach a level four on the marking criteria for the use of examples. Weaker candidates often omitted any discussion of editing or offered quite simplistic accounts of how editing was used, for example in the use the shot reverse shot sequence between characters. A common error in the terminology of editing continues to be with the use of jump cuts.

With the right preparation, candidates can engage with the nuances of editing under exam conditions, with evidence that they could discuss crosscutting, eye line match and ellipsis in the extract. As in the previous report, the advice offered to centres is to encourage as much practice on the concept of editing as possible and how this assists in the construction of representation. Again begin with identifying the techniques and encourage students to apply these to a range of examples in class and importantly, test them on this. A balanced and high level notional mark requires all the technical features to be addressed in a candidate's answer.

Radio Drama

The extract used was **Fear on Four: Playing God**. This was an extract that was five minutes in length. The number of candidates who took this unit was nominal. Of those candidates who answered the question well, there was a clear link between the analysis of technical aspects of radio drama and the key media concept of representation, class and social status. Most candidates dealt with the issue of speech and sound competently, for example in relation to class accents, location, character status (middle class well spoken doctor in opposition to working class homeless man). The major omission from candidate answers was the analysis of editing in the construction of the radio drama. The introduction of the analysis of radio has worked well, but the number of centre taking this option is currently very small.

General Comments on Question 2

The question provided suitable differentiation of candidate responses. There was plenty of evidence of well prepared answers and candidates who had clearly been well prepared to tackle the possible issues that emerge with a discussion of Institutions and Audiences, particularly with improved performances on film and music areas. Those candidates who fared less well, would only produce a response which either focused on a singular case study and struggled to address the question set in terms of global production and national audiences or on the other hand would often write 'all I know about' the media area that they studied. There was also evidence amongst answers of some candidates being only taught textual analysis, which is not a requirement for question two on this paper. Where centres had sought institutional evidence and documents, such a business or institutional profile, they had been used in such a way that candidates simply repeated information learnt from 'press packs' and subsequently ignored addressing the academic demands and rigor of the paper in the light of media debates that are raised. Centres are reminded that Television and Broadcasting are <u>not</u> amongst the media areas covered as a topic on question two, (including studies of ITV's the X-Factor), nor does a study of the 'internet' fall within the remit or rubric of the specification for question two.

As stated in the previous PE report, the advice that can be offered to centres is to refer to and use the bullet points in the syllabi on page nineteen and ensure coverage of key institutional concepts such as digital media, synergy, cross media, convergence, media technologies and audience consumption. This will aid the candidates' conceptual understanding of institutions and audiences. It is also necessary for candidates to address the question set, rather than offer a general address of institutional practices across the board and centres should teach at least two specific case studies for question two in the media area that they teach. The most popular media areas studied were film and music, the least were newspapers and radio. Below are selected comments and examples of candidate performances for question two topics.

Film Industry

This was by far the most popular media area addressed by candidates, with a significant number of candidates using Working Title & Universal as a case study. This case study had a varying degree of success, for example, weaker arguments used a case study of Working Title films in 1994 with almost no reference to contemporary issues of production, distribution or exhibition. Candidates seem to have far more knowledge of marketing than any other phase of film production, but at times this led to naive answers, which ignored the role of non-theatrical exhibition in generating revenue for film companies or drew simplistic conclusions about independent company's lack of marketing expertise compared to those of major studios. The most common approach was to compare the production processes of major studies with those of smaller UK companies. In particular, Universal and Warner Bros were common case studies, in comparison with Working Title, Film Four and Warp Films. More able candidates looked at the success of big US studios and their blockbusters (like Avatar), compared them to Universal backed Working Title and its output of hit formula rom-coms like 'Love Actually' and independent productions like 'This is England'.

The better responses were focused on the question set and discussed the ways in which the majors dominate film production and distribution with case studies of Avatar, The Dark Knight and Harry Potter. Candidates referred to Paramount and Universal, and the issues of horizontal integration and synergy were cited as key reasons for the dominance of the majors. Those that were equipped with a comparative study of an independent company were able to really engage with the question and consider an element of debate. 'Slumdog Millionaire' was a popular example of a small film reaching a global audience through differing factors rather than expensive marketing and synergy. Small British films such as 'This is England' were also referred to as films that fail to reach a global audience and meant that the question was well addressed.

Candidates who only looked at one media producer were often disadvantaged. Having a detailed comparison between US Major/ UK Minor (for example), often helped candidates see a bigger picture, which was not always the case with very in depth case studies, where candidates often repeated historical context data. Some candidates were clearly prepared with the case study that they presented, but they did not fully engage with the question set.

Do note that the use of factual information and statistics helped illustrate answers; however, there were instances of obviously false or incorrect data, which detracted from the answers. There was plenty of evidence that showed candidates who reproduced learnt answers could show great recall of factual material from their case studies but failed to address and apply this knowledge to the set question. This led to a number of candidates achieving much lower marks than they were certainly capable of.

Centres must teach students the skills needed to adapt their case study knowledge and understanding to the demands of a specific question. Simply knowing the history of an institution and understanding its current position within a particular industry is not enough to meet the marking criteria at the highest levels.

The logical step for this question and which worked well in answers was to agree with the statement and use a large institution and example to prove this, in conjunction with an independent institution or one which is not global plus an example to show that the statement is not the whole truth. The approach of contrasting two institutions led to some very good responses. This is to be encouraged as it provides candidates with more options to formulate a response to the set question. Only a few answers then went on to mention 'guerrilla film making' outside the domination of global institutions.

Music Industry

This was another area that was handled well by candidates where most were able to engage with the issues in the question. Sony and Universal were popular case studies of major labels that have dominance of the music market and the best answers were well supported with contemporary evidence. Again discussions of synergy, horizontal integration and vertical integration were popular and the cross platform nature of music promotion was well referred to. Independent labels and the rise in choice and diversity was also well explored with labels such as Ghost Box, Domino Records and Aardvark popular choices. The role of audiences and web 2.0 as breaking the dominant hold of the majors was also explored by more able candidates as well as the rise in production software and distribution methods via My Space and YouTube. Good use of contemporary evidence in stronger candidate responses considered the recent Rage Against the Machine/ Facebook campaign to break the dominance of the X Factor Christmas number one. Some considered this as an example of active/ empowered audiences whilst more able candidates acknowledged that this was an illusion of power and shrewd marketing to support a band signed to a subsidiary of the Sony Label.

Weaker candidate responses were unable to respond to the question set and merely recited pre prepared case studies. Many candidates made reference to Apple as an institution that is dominant in the industry, but failed to explore a record label that targets a British/global audience which is required for the question. One centre had provided a case study of the rise on N'Dubz from the underground grime scene to mainstream recording artists, although many candidates failed to link the material closely enough to institutional contexts to answer the question, despite a good understanding of the music style/youth culture. Candidate responses to the music industry were well done overall, with the obvious advantages of the Majors being contrasted with the success of 'indie' acts like the Arctic Monkeys.

Newspaper Industry

There were few responses to the Newspaper Industry. Newspapers elicited a mixed bag of candidate responses with some of the better candidate answers comparing NewsCorp and The Guardian Media Group and their respective online presence and policies. Some of the stronger candidates could comment on how a small number of newspaper titles dominate British news consumption. Weaker candidates who tackled the newspaper industry tried to draw comparison between the Guardian and the Sun without bringing ownership or globalisation into their answers. Candidates needed more knowledge of companies such as News Corporation in addition to individual newspapers such as the Sun. At times candidates lacked a wider perspective on global news production and the weakest of candidates would make assumptions about the all-powerful media moguls who own and control news, without any version of institution and or audience. There was little evidence of news reporting as an empowering and disseminating media and an absence of the role of news agencies and online news. Centres that are teaching the news should consider the role of the internet for news delivery and the role that institutional bodies such as news agencies have in the production of news.

Magazine Industry

For this media area Kerrang music magazine seemed to be a popular case study. Some candidates offered a complete history of the brand, which was unnecessarily detailed in a number of cases as it left too little time for the candidate to address the contemporary. It was a successful case study when candidates focused on the ways in which the magazine had been broadened across a variety of mediums and platforms to target new audiences, such as the use of its online editions and fans forum. In this instance, discussion of global ownership was tied to identifying a national publication and its audience.

However there was plenty of evidence of teaching of case studies of magazines, like Cosmopolitan (and their online presence), which lacked institutional knowledge and understanding. Responses to this question were often the most problematic for examiners to mark because candidates would rewrite a biographical profile of the institution or simply discussed advertising revenue and offered textual analysis of magazines. On occasion, more able candidates were able to get to grips with a discussion of the globalisation of this media area. All too often candidates did not actually grasp the question and tried to compare two magazines such as Cosmopolitan and Tatler without placing them within the demands of the question.   Bauer was a popular example of an institution and discussion of Grazia was a popular choice, the challenges of the industry were examined in some better responses where they considered the growth of celebrity gossip blogs and twitter etc as a challenge to gossip magazines. Online magazines and subscription model were also worth exploring but very few candidates discussed smaller companies such as online Monkey who encourage UGC and use blogging etc to engage audiences. In teaching the magazine industry centres need to think carefully about the choice of text they use and use a wide enough range of examples.

Radio Industry

There were few responses to question two on the media area of radio. There were few good candidate responses to the question set because of the narrowness of case studies examined. It is quite limiting for candidates to simply compare two BBC radio stations, be it local or national. Indeed there was very limited discussion and argument around global radio production, leaving examiners with the feeling that candidates had not been taught appropriately the institutional demands of ownership, public service broadcasting, the role of independent radio nor, the impact and expansion of digital radio. The majority of candidates focused on the BBC and local radio stations as their case studies, the majority of candidates offering pre-prepared answers that had little bearing on the question asked, for example in comparison of Radio Five live and Radio Five live extra. There was also little evident knowledge of the products and services that the BBC offers via its worldwide service or its more commercial publishing conduits. Most candidate responses seem to outline a general knowledge approach and at times focused on the analysis of presenter styles!

Video Games Industry

There were a much smaller number of responses to video games compared to the summer series. More able candidates could explore this area fully. Video games case studies performed better this series as most candidates appeared to have studied the area from an institutional perspective and recognised the benefits of big corporations, franchises and high quality AI, CGI & saturation marketing. Frequent examples of games like GTA IV, COD, Halo 3, Beatles Rockstar & Wii Sports helped anchor these responses. Like film, candidates who were limited to one text/platform were often unable to respond to the question. Overall, there was also an absence of getting to grips with the institutional context of gaming in relation to global dominance and national audiences. Weaker candidates offered textual analysis on video games or just knew one game, or a little better, one company.

Advice offered for the summer's exam series:

<u>For question 1:</u>

- Do encourage students to link analysis of the technical features of television and radio drama to the key representation being examined
- Ensure that all the technical elements are covered and that a discussion of the key representation takes place
- Provide plenty of discussion and application of analysis to sound and editing
- Avoid lengthy contextual introductions
- Assist candidates with the structure of their note making
- Candidates should time manage responses carefully to avoid brief answers.

<u>For question two:</u>

- Candidates need to address the question set and apply their case study knowledge to this – not just recite case studies they have learned
- Encourage candidates to use a wide range of contemporary examples
- Do cover all the possible issues of an institution and its audience
- Encourage candidates to use plenty of contemporary exemplification
- Candidates should time manage responses carefully to avoid brief answers, particularly for question two.

G324 Advanced Portfolio In Media

Introduction

There were 1624 entries from 72 centres for this first session and moderators were pleased to note that the majority of these had both understood and relished the demands of the new specification, resulting in work that was often exciting and thought provoking.

Centre administration

The Interchange mark entry system appeared to work well on the whole, with most Centres submitting marks and work by the required deadline. However there was a significant minority of Centres that failed to meet the deadline for the submission of work. In a number of cases this was because the email address held by OCR Interchange was incorrect or because centres did not recognise the significance of the emailed sample requests when they arrived. The inclement weather also created delays but if Centres were to set themselves an internal deadline for work to be completed before the Christmas holidays, this would give sufficient time for them to mark and submit those marks before the 10 January deadline; as it was, some candidates seemed to be working right up to (and indeed beyond) the external deadline. Late work is liable not to be moderated in time for marks to be issued in time for results day – and this, of course, would be a particular issue for the summer session.

A few Centres, with entries of fewer than 10, did not send all work to the moderator by the deadline. Only where a Centre has an entry of greater that 10 should they wait for the request for the sample by email, as mentioned above.

Most Centres did send the mandatory Centre Authentication Form CCS160.

Many Centres have fully embraced new technology in the administration of this unit; best practice had Centres creating a blog hub with links to individual candidate blogs, a clearly-menued DVD (as back up) and fully-completed coursework coversheets (with the central hub address written on the sheets. In such cases, the moderation process was far more straightforward. Unfortunately this good practice was not seen in all centres; the administration of some Centres was less supportive of the moderation process, with numerous blog addresses (some of which having been mis-spelt by the candidates made work more difficult to find!) and numerous DVDs which weren't labelled fully. Centres occasionally missed vital data from their paper-based cover sheets, but coversheets on disks were also awkward, as the moderator was often moving between four windows at once. In the case of problems with format, accessing blogs or websites, identifying work or other queries, it proved extremely useful to have the teacher/head of department's email address on the coversheets (the space on the coversheet is not for candidates to put their emails!).

Occasionally it was difficult to work out group membership from coversheets, and it was often the case that either a candidate's name or number was missing. This did make it difficult to identify work. In a few cases marks had been added up incorrectly or transcribed inaccurately from the coversheet onto the marksheet, which gave rise to amendment procedures.

As with G321, attention is drawn to formats of work – JPEG or PDF should be used for print work and video should be playable on a standard domestic DVD player. In both cases, work may be embedded on a blog, but centres should ensure that it will play or display in good quality if no hard copy is provided. Under no circumstances should work be sent on USB sticks.

Many Centres used blogs with embedded video, audio, images and presentations, making for a very efficient and dynamic experience for the moderator as well as the candidates. Some Centres used the DVD format to present the production tasks and evaluation in imaginative ways. Many candidates were free to use the disc to present supplementary videos, images and audio as DVD 'extras', often forming part of the evaluation. More Centres than ever have devised their own coversheets, which can be helpful, although with more than one centre this resulted in missing information. In the case of one Centre it resulted in candidates being assessed incorrectly.

Assessment

A significant number of Centres were over-generous in the awarding of marks, particularly for Construction and Evaluation. This was especially true of work awarded Level 4, where Centres' application of the assessment criteria in this band sometimes showed a disparity between what they and the Board consider 'excellence'. It was also noticeable that those Centres that were most over-generous also provided comments on the coursework coversheets that hardly referred to the wording of the Specification's assessment criteria, tending instead either to make somewhat subjective judgements or to provide comments that lacked sufficient detail.

In terms of construction, the marking of ancillary tasks was the most inconsistent in some Centres; and, in the few cases where found material was used, this was ignored by Centres. At least one centre did not realise that there were 10 marks available for each of the ancillary tasks and 40 for the main task. This meant a lengthy remark by the centre before the work could be moderated.

The biggest problem was in the marking of evaluations and in particular what constitutes excellence in the use of digital technology and ICT. Some Centres were awarding 18 or more marks for evaluations which were just essay answers written on a blog or on PowerPoint slides; so the full assessment criteria were not being applied appropriately.

Those Centres which only followed one of the set briefs produced the most consistent marking. Those Centres that submitted work in answer to three or more briefs were those where there was the most inconsistent marking. It is clear some Centres needed to undertake more rigorous internal standardisation before agreeing the final marks for candidates.

Research and Planning

Research and planning has to be presented electronically at A2. There were a number of ways of submitting this but those candidates who created blogs at the start of the coursework and who used them through the entire production process tended to submit the most detailed work, with integrated evidence such as links to sources used, embedded videos they had analysed, scans of storyboards, recce shots and scripts, original photos taken for magazines or websites, or draft layouts. Again, blogs were usually a truly dynamic means of studying and provided ample opportunity to show thorough evidence of research and detailed planning; when blogs were used methodically it helped candidates to chart the progress they made and emphasized the relationship between research, planning and main and ancillary tasks. Some candidates produced PowerPoints and, often, these were really lacking, with some not including any evidence of research into target audience in particular and limited research into existing media products. In a few cases these were detailed but this meant extremely long PowerPoint presentations (the longest being 164 slides). In terms of hours spent on the work it was clear that it took a great deal longer to produce the detailed PowerPoint presentations than keeping a regular blog. Centres are strongly advised, where possible to create blogs or to use VLEs which they can add to regularly as their work progresses throughout the unit; if Powerpoints are used, then they could have an audio commentary, embedded video and live links, for example, so as to use the best of the ICT available.

Most candidates conducted target audience research as well as analysis of existing practice. A few centres encouraged their candidates to investigate and analyse relevant media theories/theorists, applying them later in their work

In terms of planning, this tended to be quite detailed for the main task but in a number of cases there was little, if any, planning provided of the ancillary tasks, or no evidence provided of drafting of products or creation of original images.

Word processed documents were against the spirit of the Specification. Print based Planning and Evaluation, as provided by a small number of Centres, was against the letter of the Specification and was not accepted. Research and Planning must be presented electronically at A2 and to reach the higher assessment levels the candidate is awarded marks for *'skill in the use of digital technology or ICT in the presentation'*.

Construction

Whilst the increased amount of production work could be seen as a problem, there was plentiful evidence that with the appropriate guidance and support, candidates were able to produce high quality work. Most centres had ensured that their candidates were well-prepared for the main task but, in some cases, ancillary texts appeared to be something of an afterthought, with little attention to their planning or construction and without the requisite skill being taught. Many Centres focused on ancillary tasks that required similar production skills (such as print), although a few challenged their candidates to work in three different mediums. In a small number of cases, almost too much emphasis was placed on the ancillary tasks so that insufficient time was devoted to the main task. In the Centres that employed best practice, there was a strong sense of cohesion between the three tasks.

The most popular briefs were the Music videos/digipak cover/magazine advertisement option followed not very closely by the film trailer/poster/magazine front cover brief. These briefs had some candidates who also opted for the website ancillary option, although many only provided *designs* for web pages, rather than pages that functioned in a web browser. This needs to be addressed by centres working on briefs that have web-based options – it is expected that these will <u>operate</u>, rather than just being layout designs in DTP software for example.

There were some Centres who submitted very short music videos, as well as some who submitted teaser trailers that were lacking in technical depth, both resulting in candidates being unable to fully demonstrate the skills required of high-level work. Many Centres appear to be making much stronger efforts with sound than in the past, from the sourcing of music from unsigned acts for the music promotion brief to the manipulation of music and sound effects for the film- and TV-based briefs. Print-based ancillary tasks generally made strong use of original photography, often created at the same time as filming to create a cohesive feel to the final pieces.

Music videos on the whole combined narrative and performance and it was extremely clear which productions had been planned thoroughly as mise-en-scene and camera work were extremely creative. Editing was the main problem area. In some productions editing was a real strength but in a significant number the lack of synchronicity between visuals and sound was a real weakness. This is an extremely important aspect of this type of production yet in many cases where this was a weakness the Centre did not recognise this as an issue and so marks awarded were considerably over-generous.

Some candidates' understanding of what a digipak is proved a real problem, yet the shops are full of them and there are a number of useful websites explaining what these are, why they are useful value-added products, what their dimensions are, etc. Some productions also failed to read the brief properly and produced texts for the release of a new single rather than album.

Some work consisted solely of the front pane which was inadequate and rarely gave the opportunity to demonstrate institutional understanding; the best productions presented four panes.

Magazine advertisements varied in quality and again some candidates did not appear to have an appreciation of the conventions of the genre. Those that did produced extremely strong texts which included the digipak cover, which is conventional for a new album release and created a clearly coherent package across all three texts.

The best film trailers did not attempt to tell the plot of the film in narrative order and included a great variety of shots, using fast cuts to create an effective and atmospheric trailer. However the majority followed the narrative of the film and were overlong and would have benefited from a greater variety of shots and tighter editing. Some of the weakest looked more like submissions for the short film brief!

Film posters were the most successful aspect of the ancillary tasks submitted and showed good understanding of conventions. Magazine front covers were the most inconsistent. The weakest showed little understanding of generic conventions.

There were some informed and effective TV documentaries, that demonstrated understanding of the appropriate conventions, explored with technical skill and which had succeeded largely because they had been built on genuine stories and featured real interviewees and mise en scene and used thoughtful cutaways, relevant to what was being talked about. These productions also clearly demonstrated a detailed level of planning. Some Centres submitted much weaker TV documentary productions, where candidates had clearly fabricated the content of their documentaries using people to play characters in the documentary who were clearly reading a script when being 'interviewed'. Sound was a real problem with a large number of productions, with inconsistent sound levels and background noise under the voiceover. The ancillaries for this brief were met with different levels of success: newspaper adverts were generally well produced but a number of candidates used found images in their construction. Double page spreads of listings magazines were the weakest element, with most of the DPS being taken up with listings for TV channels and only a small amount of space being used for the original production. The best created a full DPS about the programme with still images from the programme and detailed and creative text. Few candidates produced radio adverts and those that did tended to be weak with just a voiceover outlining the programme and little variety of content, such as clips from the programme. The best productions had clearly been planned with consideration of the channel it was to be broadcast on and target audience. This was evident in the style and content of the programme and the ancillary texts with clear channel identity and scheduling. There was only one candidate who appeared 'confused' producing a documentary extract with the Channel 4 ident before the production started then producing ancillary texts indicating the programme was to be broadcast on BBC1.

A few candidates worked to the short film brief and these were largely successful with clear narrative and characterisation, careful construction of mise en scene, titling and camerawork. Centres need to be more careful about originality in soundtracks, however. The posters for these films were generally effective although the film magazine review pages were less successful. There were very few radio trailers for the films.

A couple of Centres submitted work for the new local newspaper brief. These tended to be less successful, with overuse of inappropriate software, such as Publisher, which tended to create a 'newsletter' look with lack of consideration of layout, proportion or typography. The news values were generally well considered, however. The poster ancillaries tended to be very thin, resembling the sort of advertising sheet one sees on 'A boards' outside newsagents, with a just masthead and headline. The two hyperlinked pages from the paper's website was also rather thin and tended to have little other than a couple of stories taken from the paper, ignoring all the other expected elements, such as advertising.

There were very few examples of the brief for TV advertisements for a new product or service; the TV trailer for a new soap opera; a title sequence for a children's programme; a website for a new TV channel; the extract from a local news television programme or of the radio play. Some of these few examples were effective and informed, however, and indicate that these options could work well in other centres.

Moderators saw just a couple of examples of TV advertisements for a new computer game - one of them, while being extremely accomplished did use some found imagery, although it was limited. The candidate had produced part of the game, which was well produced, and then created the adverts from this. However, in some respects it was almost a combination of the two computer game briefs

There were no examples of the first level of a new computer game

Evaluation

The best Evaluations took a multi-media approach. Whether as a presentation, a blog entry, or as a DVD extra, an effective evaluation used clips and stills from the production work, feedback from the audience - often as video or audio clips - and reflective analysis. Of particular note are those candidates who created video-based evaluations which included talking heads, clips from production work (often paused and annotated), and interviews with the audience. The direct addressing of the four set questions was also a characteristic of a focused evaluation.

However, the Evaluation more generally tended to be the weakest element of candidates' work and the most over-marked. The worst evaluations were those on blogs or presentations that consisted entirely of text, especially when responses to the set questions were either very short or difficult to find amongst the rest of the material in a largely unstructured piece of writing. A small number of candidates made the mistake of answering the set questions for Foundation Portfolio, which was not acknowledged by the Centre. Most candidates did address the required questions but in many cases their answers tended to be descriptive. Many evaluations took the form of largely text-based essay-style answers on blogs or on numerous PowerPoint slides, which many Centres then inappropriately rewarded as being excellent use of digital technology and ICT. In one case a candidate was filmed reading her answers, which does not constitute excellent use of digital technology. A number of Centres submitted DVDs of candidates either being interviewed by a teacher answering the questions or delivering a presentation of their evaluation to a class using a PowerPoint presentation. Some of these were extremely overlong, in one Centre averaging 20 minutes per presentation. One centre filmed their presentations with very faint audio, the candidates standing in front of the classroom door (which was opened in the middle of presentations by other members of the Centre!) and with the view of the PowerPoint on the screen being partially obscured by a desk top fan. This was not a very useful experience and perhaps the sound and 'mise en scene' of this could be reconsidered for future submissions.

<u>Advice</u>
- The expectations of the unit are greater than for the old 2733 and this needs to be reflected in the marking
- The best submissions were those making the most of the electronic basis of the new spec, thoroughly integrating audio, video, image and web links to the written word during the planning and research stages and the evaluation
- Encourage candidates to blog or use VLEs where possible, on an ongoing basis; this will prove especially useful in preparing for G325
- Ensure candidates answer the four questions in their Evaluation
- Teach the skills for the ancillary tasks not just the main tasks
- Set an internal deadline well in advance of the Board's deadline
- Complete print-based coversheets, filling in all sections accurately
- Where there are fewer than 10 candidates send all work to the moderators without waiting for a sample request

G325 Critical Perspectives in Media

General Comments

The level of difficulty was appropriate but the majority of candidates were not well prepared to answer all three questions and this was not surprising considering the holistic, synoptic nature of this question paper. There were some notable exceptions but even in the strongest cases, it was difficult for candidates to sustain the required level of theoretical engagement for level 4 marks over the three sections. I expect the average level of response to be markedly higher in June because candidates will have had the full length of their courses from which to select material for section A. In some cases candidates attempted to predict future outcomes for production work, which was disregarded. A small number of candidates answered two questions from section B so centres are encouraged to check the specification carefully. Exemplar material will be selected from this session to represent the full range of responses and a variety of approaches to section B. Crucially, candidates must be prepared to demonstrate their ability to engage with contemporary theoretical approaches to media, both in relation to 'real' media and their own production work. As there is now one examination only, and a part of that is related to coursework, the level of expectation from examiners is higher in relation to theoretical conviction than was the case for 2735 and so a level 4 candidate will need to sustain this conviction over the span of the three responses – theorising their own production processes, analysing their own outcomes using key concepts and discussing a contemporary media issue with the use of a range of theoretical arguments.

Time management was an issue for some candidates and in some of the higher marked papers, candidates answered section B first, which may be sound advice as it carries equal marks to section A which consists of two questions, so if candidates run out of time damage is limited by them so doing during an answer that carries 25 marks rather than 50.

Section A

Stronger answers to 1a managed to select a range of relevant examples of creative decision making informed by research and planning. Weaker answers offered a basic narrative of the process. It is best practice to prepare examples that demonstrate more or less successful decisions as this gives scope for higher levels of critical reflection. Centres are advised to prepare candidates to reflect on processes, logistics and the mechanics of production – research and planning cannot be reduced entirely to looking at real media texts or discussing audience needs. Better answers offered a broader range of pre-production activities and decisions arising with a clear sense of how the more 'glamorous' idea of creativity is often a product of serious 'nuts and bolts' operational care in the process.

1b was generally the weakest area and this appeared to be largely due to the difficulties candidates faced in adapting their material to the concept identified. Representation was, by many, described only in terms of conventions or simply what was produced, as though 'representing the school in a positive way' (with regard to a preliminary task) is demonstrative of an A2 level of understanding of a complex idea. What was required (and managed by single figures of respondents in this session) was a robust discussion of how the media product selected can be analysed as representational – candidates can discuss whether or not this is straightforward or more complex but they MUST engage with the theoretical concept either way and reference reading they have undertaken on this area in relation to specific examples from their product. Of more concern was the fact that some candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with the concept of representation entirely. Further problems arose from some candidates referring to more than one production item (one was disregarded in this case) and from too much overlap with 1(a). There may be some common ground between the two answers – for example, if a part

of the research and planning involved a consideration of how representing a social group in one may might alienate potential audience members or even lead to ethical and legal issues, but in some cases genre dominated both answers to the extent that 1(a) was a list of decisions in relation to the observation through research of genre conventions and 1(b) was a similar list of how the product 'represented the genre'. It appeared that in these cases candidates had entered too early and only had one area of expertise to adapt to whatever the questions required. Centres are advised to prepare candidates to write about all of the concepts.

Section B

Section B was broken down as follows in this first sitting. Media and Collective Identity and Regulation were the most popular, followed by Postmodernism and then Online Age (only a small number). A few centres offered candidates a choice across the themes and this worked well in the main, as the themes are so convergent.

Media and Collective Identity

One very strong centre facilitated rich learning where candidates were able to utilise the ideas of Gauntlett on identity along with Judith Butler and a range of others very well in relation to film and magazines (with the exception of Lacan whose 'mirror stage' was usually misunderstood). There did tend to be an overwhelming sense of a prepared answer with almost all candidates beginning with 'Gauntlett says 'identity is complicated') but whilst this may have been dull for the examiner after a while, candidates are not penalised for this approach. Other candidates considered the representation of youth and urban communities in music and other media and answers varied from sensitive and informed negotiations of the nature of subculture in 2010 whilst weaker candidates set up unhelpful and crude binary oppositions and crass generalisations about whole swathes of young people, ironically perhaps. Most pleasing was the ability of some candidates to take highly contemporary examples – eg the music of Dizzee Rascal and discuss them in theoretical contexts such as hegemony, democracy and representation and, again through Gauntlett, negotiated 'self-help' gender representation. A key piece of advice for centres is to move candidates away from generalised ideas of how 'the media' represent people and ideas and towards more 'micro' level discussions of how people give meaning to particular kinds of media in relation to their identities.

Postmodern Media

Stronger answers demonstrated an informed and intelligent understanding of the concept, and supported their answers with well researched case studies. But it seemed that many students had learned by rote some phrases that they repeated 'parrot fashion' and this rarely worked. One centre had clearly urged its students to remember the term 'immersion' as a feature of postmodernist texts. One candidate must have mis-heard and repeatedly referred to 'emulsion'. Lyotard and Baudrillard were often referenced (perhaps due to their prominence in the Hodder A2 textbook) and on one level this was impressive but this was accompanied by varying degrees of understanding so centres are encouraged to be more strategic in differentiating the material they work with. The candidates who had understood and engaged with the concepts and the debates surrounding postmodernism had clearly benefited from the course, and offered some very interesting answers.

Regulation

The questions were not always directly answered, and this will be penalised in the marking as adapting understanding to a specific question features in the marking criteria at levels 3 and 4. Equally, candidates need to make connections and synthesise between their case studies and examples of reading, rather than treating things as discrete. There was a strong bias towards film and the BBFC with, sadly, some rather old case studies dominating such as Natural Born Killers and Child's Play which can hardly be relevant in candidates' lives other than as historical examples. However, when games were used for contrast, GTA and PEGI made the answers more contemporary. It is very important that candidates a) get their facts right about case studies and b) contextualise them in theoretical debates, such as the effects debate and notions of protection and the balance of rights and responsibilities for citizens.

Most candidates managed to comply with the obligation to make at least one reference to the past and one prediction for the future and all managed to discuss more than one medium. However, if anything, the past is TOO prominent and centres are reminded that examiners will be expecting the majority of answers in section B to be dealing with media from the last five years, hence 'Contemporary Media Issues'.

Overall this report should be received in the context that most candidates were under-prepared for this examination given its synoptic demands but my primary objective for future sessions is to remind centres that the theoretical requirements for this sole A2 exam are considerable and that candidates will need a range of skills across the three sections with the common requirement being a strong, referenced and substantiated understanding of a range of theoretical ideas about the relationship between people, media and life.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Media Studies H140 H540
January 2010 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
G321	Raw	100	79	69	59	49	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
G322	Raw	100	75	67	59	52	45	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
G323	Raw	100	75	67	59	52	45	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
G324	Raw	100	82	71	61	51	41	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
G325	Raw	100	78	68	59	50	41	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	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
H140	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

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

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H140	6.3	26.5	58.1	85.8	97.7	100	807

Aggregation for A2 H540 was not available in the first series.

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

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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