



Support Materials

**AS/A2 Level Media Studies
(H140/H540):**

Teacher Support Booklet

AS/A Level Media Studies

GCE Media Studies

OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Media Studies H140

OCR Advanced GCE in Media Studies H540

This Teacher Support is designed to accompany the OCR Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced GCE specifications in Media Studies for teaching from September 2008.

This Teacher Support Booklet has been written by practising teachers and the recommendations concerning equipment and software are those of these practising teachers who have found them useful in their teaching of Media Studies. This booklet attempts to give advice about the practicalities of teaching the subject.

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to address teachers' questions arising from the new specifications and to advise teachers new to the subject and to the specification, of how best to organise and run the course.

This booklet adopts a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) format. If some of the questions seem too obvious to ask, then apologies, but most have been asked at some time or another by teachers contributing to OCR's Media Studies E Community.

Throughout the booklet, the term student has been used rather than candidate in order to distinguish the support and guidance function of this booklet as opposed to the more formal purpose of the specification for assessment.

The booklet is divided into sections. Sections 1, 2 and 3 comprise general questions about the specification, timing of courses and resources and the fourth relates to the units of the specification in the order G321, G322, G323, G324 and G325.

If you are seeking guidance about a particular unit, you can go straight to the relevant section.

Possible routes for each unit are suggested in the relevant sections, but these should not be taken as absolute fixed ways of delivering the course.

This booklet should be used in conjunction with the updated specification.

Further resources are available via the OCR Media Studies E Community and at INSET days as advertised by OCR.

Section 1 General Questions

Why are there changes?

Media Studies, along with most other A-level courses, has been redesigned in line with QCA subject criteria, for first teaching from September 2008. The main reasons for the changes include: simplifying the system by reducing the burden of examinations on students, teachers and institutions, and ensuring that the most able students are intellectually stretched. The concept of coursework came in for considerable scrutiny during the QCA review, and will now only be included in practical or expressive subjects. Media Studies falls into both of these camps, and accordingly OCR Media Studies has retained a significant coursework component at AS and A2 level.

Changes and similarities

The most fundamental change is the move from a six-unit to a four-unit A-level. AS and A2 will now consist of two units each, all of equal weighting.

Another key change across subjects and across all examination boards is the inclusion of an A* grade (to be confirmed by QCA) at the top end, as part of the 'stretch and challenge' agenda.

The OCR Media Studies A-level includes many components that will be familiar to teachers of the 'legacy' specification. There will be a practical coursework component at AS and at A2. Both coursework components will be worth 50% of the year's work. The increased emphasis on coursework is reflected in the requirement for students to produce a preliminary exercise and a main product. This will enable students to demonstrate their developing practical and technological skills.

At AS level, there will be two units from which Centres choose one (G322 and G323) that focuses on textual analysis, as with the legacy specification (Unit 2731). This will examine a student's ability to analyse a short moving image sequence or a short radio/audio sequence, from a technical and a conceptual perspective. The second half of this unit will involve a study of Audiences and Institutions (along similar lines to the legacy unit 2732).

At A2 level the coursework component (G324) will invite students to produce a portfolio of practical work as opposed to a single piece of practical work.

The most significant change to the specifications is the Critical Perspectives paper, which is examination based and in two parts. The first part invites students to review their practical work from a critical perspective; the second examines their understanding of current media perspectives, where there will be a choice of question from six broad issues-based topics. The

theory-based topics focus in particular, though not exclusively, on new media and on recent and current developments, locally, nationally and globally.

One of the main aims of the new specification is to enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the link between their practical work and media concepts, theories and perspectives. There are plenty of opportunities for the students to be creative; and there is plenty of scope for teachers regarding choice of materials, texts and areas of study in the theory-based units.

What grades can students get?

Both AS GCE and Advanced GCE results are awarded on the scale A-E. Units are awarded A to E. Grades are awarded on certificates. However, results for candidates who fail to achieve the minimum grade (E) will be recorded as unclassified (U) and this is not certificated.

A Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) enables comparison of candidates' performance across units and across series. The two-unit AS GCE has a total of 200 uniform marks and the four-unit Advanced GCE has a total of 400 uniform marks.

Will there be more help and training available?

Yes, as stated in the introduction, OCR's Media Studies E Community is a constant source of ongoing information and useful discussion, and the annual round of INSET (details on the OCR website) provides the opportunity for face- to- face contact with OCR's senior examiners. There is the intention of having training in the use of technology with demonstrations in future, if the demand is there.

Is it possible to take this subject alongside Film Studies?

Yes. Many Centres offer both Film and Media and have a number of students doing both.

Candidates who enter for the OCR GCE specifications may not also enter for any other GCE specification with the certification title Media Studies in the same examination series. Every specification is assigned to a national classification code indicating the subject area to which it belongs. Centres should be aware that candidates who enter for more than one GCE qualification with the same classification code will have only one grade (the highest) counted for the purpose of the School and College Performance Tables. The classification code for these specifications is 5350.

Section 2 Timing of the Course

When are the examinations?

There are two examination series each year, in January and June. In 2009, only AS units will be assessed. From 2010 onwards, both AS units and A2 units will be assessed.

How much time do we need on the timetable to teach the course?

The same as for any other A level at your Centre. Most teachers have between four and five hours per week to deliver A levels. It is hard to see how it could be delivered in less time than this, unless with a small group of mature students.

AS GCE Media Studies requires 180 guided learning hours in total. Advanced GCE Media Studies requires 360 guided learning hours in total.

In what order should units be taught?

The normal order in which the unit assessments could be taken is AS Units G321 and G322 or G323 in the first year of study, leading to an AS GCE award, then A2 Units G324 and G325 leading to the Advanced GCE award. However, the unit assessments may be taken in any order.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of January entries?

With the AS and A2 being split into two units each, as opposed to the previous three units each, it is now more feasible to split the course into January/Summer examination series. It is entirely up to individual centres whether or not they choose to focus students' attention on one of the two units for the autumn term, in preparation for the January exam, thereby enabling a focus on the other unit for the rest of the spring and early summer term. Nevertheless, it is likely that Unit G 325 will be seen as the culmination of the Course and will be sat in the summer series.

Bear in mind that the demands of coursework are now higher than in previous years - students need to produce more than one piece. But many centres will regard the new four - unit A level format as an ideal opportunity to take advantage of the January/Summer sittings.

When is it worth advising a re-sit?

There is no restriction on the number of times a candidate may re-sit each unit before entering for certification for an AS GCE or Advanced GCE.

Should one unit be taught at a time or is it possible to teach two in parallel?

Again this is up to you, depending upon your staffing, your students and your resources. It is possible for alternate lessons to be used for examination and production work, perhaps by two different teachers; however, students are often better focussing on one unit at a time.

For example, when undertaking a video production for coursework, it is difficult for students to transfer their energies to examination-based work as they are always itching to get back on with the editing. There is also the disadvantage that units can outstay their welcome if they last for months. There is much to be said for short - term bursts and goals so that students remain on task. There is lots of evidence too that it leads to better practical work, born out of a sense of urgency.

Can the whole A level be delivered in one year?

Only if you have plenty of contact time and incredibly committed and well-organised students! Most experienced media teachers would advise against this.

What should the teacher-student ratio be?

No higher than any other subject at your Centre and given the practical nature of much of the course, ideally lower. As an example, in one large Sixth Form College, ICT has a maximum set size of 18; in Media at AS there is a ceiling of 22, but most subjects have to accept 24. Set sizes of more than 22 in Media are really not ideal at AS level and would be very hard to teach effectively. At A2 the average set size should be smaller.

Should I take students who have not done GCSE Media?

You will probably have to! If the class is a mixture, it really does not hurt to start everyone from scratch on the key concepts and with skills for the equipment. They will have forgotten plenty since their GCSEs anyway. The OCR GCSE Media Studies specification is designed to provide clear progression through to the OCR AS/A level. The conceptual framework which underpins the GCSE is essentially the same as the framework for AS/A level. The moving image examination option at GCSE for example offers excellent preparation for the AS Textual Analysis unit.

What should be the minimum qualification to embark on this course?

It will depend upon your centre's entry requirements, but in general 5 GCSEs at A-C is accepted as the minimum for doing AS levels. There will always be exceptions, however and it is important to remember that many Media students starting from a low general base on qualifications, perform exceptionally well on this course because it is able to capture their interest in totally new ways.

When should I start teaching the A2?

Ideally the period after AS examinations should be used to start the A2 course. There is little point in starting it before the AS ends as students are likely to become confused about what they have to do in the examinations. If you leave it to September, without any kind of A2 preparation, students may not be ready soon enough for the higher standard of work expected.

What are the coursework deadlines and examination dates and where do I find the various cover sheets?

These are available from the OCR website and should be obtainable from your centre's Examinations Officer.

Should there be an induction course and if so, what should it comprise?

Even on a course as short as AS level (two and a half terms or about 32 weeks), it makes sense to have an induction course. If you have students who have done GCSE Media then revision of key concepts and skills will be necessary. If they have not done Media, they will need a crash course to familiarise them with the concepts, the vocabulary, the subject matter and the skills needed to use the equipment. If they have moved from school to a new environment or sixth form, they may well be working with entirely new people which will mean the need for settling in to working with one another.

What you do for induction may be related specifically to material from one of the AS units or it may be freestanding and more generalised. It should include activities which allow for group work, research, practical skills, equipment access, discussion and writing and analysis of media texts so that they can get the idea of the range of activities involved in Media Studies A level. Some centres spend the whole of the first half term on induction activities, building the skills needed in an atmosphere where getting things wrong doesn't matter so long as students learn from the experience for future practice. This should be seen as a positive use of time which will sow the seeds for the rest of the course, rather than as treading water before the real course starts. It does, however, need to be planned sequentially and move at a good pace so that students feel they are learning and can see the point of what they are doing.

Is the quality of written language an important factor in this subject?

It is a factor. Quality of written communication is assessed in specifically in the examinable units and credit may be restricted if communication is unclear.

Section 3 Resources

What equipment is needed to run this course?

It depends upon which options you will offer at AS and A2 for production. Some Centres want to offer students the choice of different kinds of production, which will need more resourcing and training. Others specialise in one or two media and therefore fewer options from among the set briefs, which gives a greater degree of focus.

For **video work**, there is no need to invest in professional standard cameras and edit suites costing several thousands of pounds each. It is better to have more equipment to give greater access for all students than to have a few very costly setups with only limited access. Cameras with external mics are highly recommended. Many camcorders have a small mini-jack socket that enables an external microphone to be attached by a long lead. These are the cameras to go for. Students will need to work in pairs, at least, – one working the camera, the other directing/holding the microphone.

Domestic camcorders can now be purchased for less than £300 (the cheapest camcorder is now less than £150) and a computer with sufficient hard drive space and RAM including appropriate software for less than £500. A start-up of four computers and camera for the first twenty students is recommended, but the ratio could be much larger once you have more students as you can spread its use across groups at different times. Final copies of video work must be presented to the external moderator on DVD, playable on a domestic DVD player.

It is worth noting that **sound** on the cheapest cameras does not tend to be very good and you need to invest in cameras which can take external microphones if you are planning on a lot of dialogue-based work. Sound acquisition is an often neglected feature of student video work. The best can be brilliant – but so much of it is done badly. The problem with using the microphones that are inbuilt into the camera is that they pick up just about every sound except the one they are meant to. A good team will have one person operating the camera, and another holding the microphone which is attached to the camera by a lead. There are obvious resourcing implications here.

If the budget allows a tripod is a good investment. Students are assessed on technical competences, one of which is holding a shot steady. Close-up shots are difficult to hold steady without a tripod. And framing (another technical competence) is also made far easier by using a tripod.

For **audio work**, computer based audio-editing is now essential. Some centres have persisted in using very limited and cheap tape recorders and microphones with their students but this is difficult for A level work which is worth 50% of the marks. Most centres that choose to specialize in audio work tend to use Adobe Audition software (this used to be called Cool Edit Pro). There are a number of similar, relatively inexpensive packages available for Mac and PC use. There is no need to buy the latest update – basic digital audio editing provides the best results for A

level. At the high end of the commercial market is the very expensive Pro Tools – but there is no need for centres to be investing in top-end software.

Tape recorders for sound acquisition are generally regarded as antiques nowadays. Many centres have invested in minidisc recorders. They are good, but also are quickly going out of date. Hard disc recorders are generally used in the industry now by broadcast journalists in the field. They are like mini disc recorders without the minidisks. They are very portable, and can record plenty of sound on their hard drive ready to be transferred to the computer for editing, before being wiped clean for the next user. Decent quality hard drive audio recorders can be had for about £200. Edirol produce a good model as do M Audio. As an indication of how quickly modern technology dates and devalues, it is possible to purchase minidisc recorders on E-bay for less than £20.

Final copies for moderation must be presented on audio CD, playable on a domestic CD player.

One of the problems that often arises with the best all-singing-all-dancing software is that students feel the urge to make use of every facility and gadget. Over-edited work saturated with special effects to the point of near drowning should be discouraged. It usually is, in the professional sphere.

Good editing does the basics exceptionally well. It does not overindulge itself. It is worth remembering the title of an excellent book on page design and layout: *'Are you communicating, or just making pretty shapes?'* (Colin Wheildon, Worsley Press).

For **print work**, programmes such as In Design and Photoshop need to be used in tandem. It is not possible to simulate professional layout with word processing software, so it is vital to invest in proper DTP software. In Design is made by Adobe. The industry standard page layout software has, for some years, been QUARK. It was very expensive. But, since the arrival of Indesign, and its subsequent adoption by many companies who liked the ease with which it could transfer its files to pdf format, the price of QUARK has plummeted.

QUARK and Indesign are very similar in principle. They see a page as a collection of boxes – either text boxes or picture boxes. They are versatile, and produce good results. There are discounts available for educational institutions. They can be used for page design and web page design.

Digital cameras are now so ubiquitous and so good that you should be able to shop around to get something which will suit your needs for a decent price. Centres that bought digital cameras five years ago will probably find that their students have higher spec cameras installed in their mobile phones; such is the pace of technological change, particularly in the realm of photography.

For web work it is possible to get good instant results with online resources such as 'Blogger'. In order to demonstrate the requisite technical expertise and to produce truly multimedia sites, centres could invest in programs such as Dreamweaver and Fireworks. Digital cameras and scanners are also useful for such projects.

The principles outlined above hold true for all media. To offer this course and run it properly, money needs to be invested and both teachers and students need to learn how to use it, Heads

of Media need to balance the need to provide decent hardware (including cameras, audio recorders, microphones, tripods, etc) and software, with the understanding that the equipment may well get a bit of a hammering from some heavy-handed students, and will anyway be out of date within a few years.

Mac or PC - which is best?

This debate is as old as the two systems and the range of opinions on the relative advantages and disadvantages of each one have been much rehearsed on the OCR E community. (It is well worth trawling through the archives of community messages for advice from teachers at Centres who have actually addressed these questions in relation to their own students).

Some points worth considering when making your decision are:

Many Centres use PCs and so the technical support is already on hand. However, technicians may not be familiar with the programs which you'll be using and you'll be subject to the Centre's policy on computer support generally (which may be inadequate for your needs). You will need support from technicians who are familiar with and understand the software which you're running.

The flexibility of PCs means that they are able to run a variety of software programmes and serve the needs of many departments. Such sharing has implications for availability of the machines for Media students.

Macs do not usually need any configuration before you can start using them but you may need some time to train yourself on how to use the machine and the software.

Editing software comes as standard on Macs (and it's quite a sophisticated package in terms of what it can do) whereas PCs may need extras fitted before they are able to run editing software.

Whether you go for Mac or PC, networking of video production is not recommended. For print and audio where the file sizes are relatively small, networks may be fine, but you are much better off storing video on portable hard drives or insisting that students always work on the same machine, as loading time can be lengthy and there is a real danger of clogging up or crashing school networks.

The most important thing is to plan ahead and test out every operation you are likely to need well ahead of giving students projects to do. In particular, ensure from the outset that you can get finished video off the machine onto DVD as well as import footage in the first place. It is disheartening to hear of the number of Centres which allow their students to work through productions all year and then can't export the finished projects at the end because nobody thought ahead.

What about playback facilities?

DVD has long replaced VHS. DVDs are relatively cheap nowadays. For cinema-screen presentation in class, a good projector, linked to a DVD, laptop or computer is a boon.

How much of a budget do I need?

Depends on what you are going to offer for practical work and how many students you have. After start-up costs, an annual budget of £20 per student is not unreasonable, provided you are not buying sets of textbooks. Your main expenses are likely to be photocopying, software, including blank disks and equipment replacement over time, which would have to come from central funding.

Is internet access essential?

There are some problems in Centres concerning the barring of access to various websites and blogs. Internet access is essential to this course and you should argue for the removal of 'net nanny' style software and offer a supervised environment instead, as access to so many relevant websites is denied by the heavy-handed nature of such software. Though many students will have access at home, it is an equal opportunities issue, as it is with production work. If this proves difficult there are other possibilities such as the use of a Virtual Learning Environment for blogging, an offline format like a DVD commentary, a centre intranet site or website.

May 18 certificate films be shown to classes?

Yes, as schools or colleges are not subject to the same certification as a cinema. However, you should be sure of your own position within the institution. You may find it necessary to do a blanket letter home for permission or you may need to consult with senior staff. Often segments of films can be viewed without showing the controversial aspects.

Most 18 films will not raise any eyebrows, but more controversial well known choices should be considered carefully. Common sense is the best option!

Inappropriate material

Teachers need to use common sense and decent judgment in selection of material to be shown to students, not least in the hope that the students will follow the same example in their production work. There have been some examples of production work that have raised eyebrows, and in some cases, been referred to the exam board and back to the Centres themselves as 'inappropriate material.' Rather than list examples of offensive or inappropriate material here, suffice it to say that teachers need to 'supervise' and ultimately be responsible for artefacts that are sent to the exam board as students' work. This includes being responsible for **health and safety** issues. Media Studies departments should have a health and safety policy, and should make sure that their students are aware of it, and keep to it. For example, students need to be aware whose permission they need to film in private and public places, and they need to be aware of the dangers and risks that filming can pose to themselves and to members of the public. Awareness of the law, application of common sense, and consideration for others are important factors. Written permission should be acquired by Centres, from those individuals whose pictures are taken; this can be achieved through a Model Release Form. An example of such a form can be requested from the Subject Officer at OCR.

Can material recorded 'off air' be shown to classes?

Yes provided your institution holds the relevant licence.

Is there any way of getting hold of old TV programmes which are not commercially available?

Yes. Richmond College provides this service to Centres which hold an off-air licence.

Section 4 The Units

(A) Foundation Portfolio in Media

This is a coursework unit, internally assessed and externally moderated. Candidates produce two paired media artefacts in response to briefs set by OCR plus some appropriate evidence of research and planning. Set briefs are paired in order to provide progression from a pre-production, preliminary exercise to a more fully realised piece and will be in the same medium. This offers the opportunity for skills development to be assessed, as well as a final finished piece.

Why are there set tasks?

To make the work common for all candidates as far as possible whilst still providing some flexibility for Centres in terms of media to use and materials to study.

How will the candidates' practical work be assessed?

In two ways:

First: the practical work will be assessed by the teacher, and internally standardized by the centre or consortia before external moderation.

Second: the students will be assessed by individual presentation on their ability to reflect on the creative process and their experience of it. OCR will give a series of questions to act as guidelines for this assessment, the format of which has some flexibility. Details on this follow on later in this booklet.

G321 is marked and internally standardised by the centre and marks are submitted to OCR by a specified date, a sample is then selected for external moderation.

The unit is marked out of a total of 100 marks: 20 marks for the presentation of the planning and research; 60 marks for the construction; 20 marks for the evaluation.

What is the deadline date for coursework?

Deadline for the receipt of coursework marks are: 10 January for the January series and 15 May for the June series. Centres will need to keep copies of all their coursework portfolios and consequently it can be used for revision purposes for Part A of Unit G325.

Should all students do the same task for G321?

They can but they don't have to. Experience suggests that Centres which offer the options of the full menu of tasks often do their students a disservice as a consequence, since they have not got the time to teach students to use the equipment properly nor to analyse examples of real media texts from all the genres on offer with the class. You are advised, therefore, to stick to one or two tasks from the same medium.

What is the reason for having two paired tasks?

There is a preliminary exercise and a main task. This will enable students to demonstrate their pre-production as well as their production skills. The preliminary task will enable them to demonstrate an understanding of the genre and the medium; the main task will expect students to demonstrate that they have sufficient technological skills to create a polished product.

How important is the preliminary exercise compared with the main task?

A candidate's contribution to the main, finished and polished task is the more important. The final mark should be given for the contribution to the main task only. But, candidates who do not undertake the preliminary task will automatically lose 15 marks from their possible total of 60. The preliminary task is important as a way of inducting students effectively into the practical components of the course.

Can the students work in groups?

Yes, in any number up to a maximum of four. Note the minimum requirements for individual members of a group. For example, group members working on a website construction must produce four pages each.

How much of the material should be original?

There is an increased emphasis on original material, particularly as the digital age has made the construction of print/photo/image and sound much easier to produce and manipulate. For video, all video and audio material must be original, produced by the student, with the exception of music or audio effects from a copyright-free source. Limited amounts of found video material may be used as part of greenscreen projects or in instances where it would be unwise to shoot original footage such as an explosion. In such cases the advice of the Subject Officer should be sought in advance. For print, no found images are allowed. For audio, only copyright free effects and music. For the website, only copyright free musical audio effects are allowed.

What is meant by 'original material'?

Material created by the students from scratch. Photos they have taken for the project, video they have shot, audio they have recorded. The exception with found material is music, as students are not expected for example, to make their own music soundtracks for their thrillers or music videos (though they may if they wish!)

Should students do non-assessed practical work as well as the coursework?

Yes, without a doubt. Just as they would not be expected to go into an examination without any practice at timed essays, the same is true for practical work.

How much should teachers intervene on coursework?

Though coursework is the work of the student, it would be a dereliction of the teacher's duty to simply leave them to it. Clear advice on expectations should be given from the outset and students should be supervised and advised throughout in whatever ways you, as the professional teacher, feel are appropriate. Teachers should be used as a source of advice, to allow students to think through issues and suggest improvements wherever applicable.

Do the media students have to 'perform' in their own work?

As acting is not a skill which is assessed in Media Studies, but the quality of finished work is quite clearly affected by the quality of acting, groups may use personnel external to the group to appear in their productions in photos, video or audio.

Can someone else do the practical for the students, from their ideas?

No. In group work, particular tasks may be shared so that someone else holds the camera while someone acts, but overall, candidates are expected to plan and execute ideas themselves. There is little opportunity for learning if the plans are simply handed over to someone else to make the product. In the event of candidates with severe disabilities who are physically unable to use particular equipment, direct contact with the OCR Subject Officer or the Special Considerations Department is advised.

How much time should be allocated to coursework?

In contrast to the legacy specifications, this course demands that students undertake a preliminary, as well as a main task. The former should be practice and preparation for the latter. Consequently, there is now a greater focus on pre-production than there used to be, and this should be reflected in the time allocated for the practical component.

Nevertheless, it is usually true to say that tight deadlines adhered to by all work wonders for motivation and achievement! Students should not need longer than a term to complete practical tasks.

What if a candidate does no coursework?

If a candidate submits no work for a unit, then the candidate should be indicated as being absent from that unit on the coursework mark sheets submitted to OCR. If a candidate completes any work at all for that unit then the work should be assessed according to the criteria and marking instructions and the appropriate mark awarded, which may be zero.

How do I interpret the assessment criteria for G321?

Overall, moderators are looking for 'best fit' with the criteria set out in the specification, so it is possible for work to fall within a particular level without necessarily achieving every single aspect in full. However, the levels are broad so there is scope for differentiation between top level 3 and the bottom for instance.

How should I mark the preliminary task?

A mark should be awarded for the individual's contribution to the main task only. The aim of the two linked tasks is to give a sense of progression and to prepare candidates for more full-scale production work with self-contained exercises, so the preliminary task need not have a high degree of 'finish' nor should it detract from the overall mark. However, in the event of the preliminary task not having been undertaken, candidates should be marked out of 60 using the criteria and then have 15 marks deducted as a penalty. The preliminary task is sent to the Moderator if that candidate's work is part of the sample.

The centre will be expected to allocate marks according to four levels for each of three categories:

- Research and Planning (max: 20 marks)
- Construction (max: 60 marks)
- Evaluation (max: 20 marks)

In arriving at a level for each category, teachers are advised to look for evidence of 'best fit'. It is possible both for a candidate to be placed in different levels for each of the three categories and to receive quite different marks from other members of the same group responsible for producing an artefact, according to his/her contribution. Teachers are asked to support marks with written comments under the three categories on the assessment sheet. In centres where there is more than one teacher involved in the marking, there must be evidence that internal standardisation has taken place.

Student Evaluation

Students need to address the seven questions provided by OCR in their evaluation of their production work at AS and the four questions at A2. These questions can be found in the specification. The evaluation must be presented and available to the exam board in electronic format. The evaluation may be done individually or in groups of up to four people. There are a variety of options in terms of presentation of the work. A PowerPoint presentation to the rest of the class, analysing the various strengths and weaknesses and the context of the media artefact is one possibility. Some students will be interested in a DVD extra. Another alternative is a blog. These are simple to construct, free, very adaptable and can allow sharing of ideas, photos, video clips and allow feedback and comments from restricted or global audiences and

can be updated. Many students are likely to favour this option, partly because it will be so familiar to them. www.wordpress.com or www.blogspot.com are two websites worth visiting for this option.

OCR will send out further details to Centres on the presentation of work for the Moderator and the formats to be used.

(B) Key Media Concepts- TV Drama

The purpose of this unit is firstly to assess candidates' media textual analysis skills and their understanding of the concept of representation using a short unseen moving image extract (AO1, AO2); secondly to assess candidates' knowledge and understanding of media institutions and their production processes, distribution strategies, use of technologies and related issues concerning audience reception and consumption of media texts.

How much teaching time should be dedicated to this unit?

It is up to you, but there is some virtue in moving at the appropriate pace to keep students focused. For Television Drama, extracts only are needed, with a variety of activities recommended to keep students interested and active. For the second section, whichever topic students undertake, it is sensible to offer a range of introductory activities before working in detail on the texts for the examination itself.

How is Television Drama defined and what could be used for extracts for the first question in the examination?

The sequence will be taken from a contemporary British one-off or series or serial drama programme. Co Productions such as Rome could be included. Soaps are included in this category, sitcoms are not. There are countless examples that could be used for examination practice. Television Drama will be the topic for the examination in 2009, 2010 and 2011. Some examples of suitable TV Dramas to study are: Skins, Eastenders, The Chase. There are several other case studies in the textbook and the Teacher Support Material which Centres may wish to use.

What facilities are needed for the examination?

It must be possible for all students to see and hear the extract properly. The extract will be provided on DVD. It is possible to show it on a large TV for small cohorts or using projection for larger cohorts. It is important that teachers carry out a confidential check of the disc in advance of the examination and ensure that screening conditions are adequate.

What is the best way of teaching for Section A of this exam?

Students need to have some knowledge of techniques, and some medium - specific terminology would almost certainly help them. A word of warning though, sometimes there is a tendency to overdo the technical language. It is far more important that students are able to see how the technique is being used in the representation of individuals, groups, events or places, what atmosphere is created, how the text is working and so on. The equivalent in, for example, the analysis of a poem, would be for a student to recognize that a figure of speech is, in a particular case, a metaphor, but much more importantly, that the student can comment on and evaluate the effectiveness of the metaphor within that text. Many students, in this type of exam, get bogged down with describing what they can see. The best answers are those that analyse and evaluate how the text is working on the audience. Students will not be short of things to write about in this exam. The successful students will be those who recognize the technical codes and strategies, and can provide an intelligent analysis of their contribution to representation in the text.

Will all of the technical areas be apparent in each text chosen by the exam board?

Not to the same extent, no. Some extracts may make more imaginative use of sound than others, for example. But on the whole, students ought to be prepared to comment on the four main technical areas: camera shots, angle, movement and composition; editing; sound; mise en scene.

What is meant by the term: representation?

'Representation' is one of the key media concepts. There are varying levels of interpretation. Here is one suggestion relating to the sub-genre of TV crime dramas:

A number of television dramas deal with the topic of crime. In order to attract an audience, many of these deal with violent crime. Students might like to consider how crime, and the people involved, are represented by the drama. For example, many television dramas conclude with the solving of the crime, the arrest of the criminal – that is the common denouement, and is

designed to satisfy the audience. Does this represent society accurately? In fact, the number of unsolved murders in the UK doubled between 1997 and 2007. Can students reconcile the difference between the reality, and the representation of the real world in TV drama? How different is it, and why is it represented differently?

Very frequently, crime dramas have relied on a single 'genius', 'superhero' figure (sometimes accompanied by a sidekick whose role is to help interpret the narrative for the audience) to solve the crime, restore equilibrium and deliver moral justice. What are the common features of such characters? How society's guardians are represented, and how does this compare with the real world? Perhaps consider the representation of victims, or of perpetrators? How is television drama re-presenting the real world to its audience?

(C) Key Media Concepts- Radio Drama

As an alternative to the G322 paper that focuses on visual media, students are offered Unit G323 that requires them to analyse a previously unheard audio/radio text. As with the TV drama piece, the extract will be between four and five minutes long, and will be heard four times in examination conditions. Students will be asked to analyse technical details of speech, music, sound effects and editing in relation to an aspect of representation in the sequence. The extract will be taken from a contemporary British one-off play or series or serial programme. Many of the comments above on areas such as teaching time, ways of teaching and representation are relevant to this section as well. Centres can opt to take either G322/G323 and within a Centre both options could be taken, although at least two examination rooms would be needed for the administration of the exam. **Section B of G322 and G323 will be common.**

For the second question, do all students have to study the same Media area?

No. Centres are free to decide. For a large cohort it would make sense to have some variety.

What is the purpose of this section of the exam?

Media Studies tends towards a three-cornered understanding of the world. At one corner is the text, the subject of section A. The other two corners are, respectively, a consideration of the audiences who consume the texts, and the institutions who produce them. This second section looks at Audiences and Institutions.

What do students need to do to prepare for Section B?

Students should undertake a case study of **one** of the six areas (film, music, newspapers, radio, magazines, video games) with a view to considering their production, distribution and consumption. In other words, they are not focussing on aspects of textual analysis dealt with in section A; they are looking at institutional processes and audience consumption. There should be some focus on the student's experience of being a consumer of a particular medium.

What do students need to know for Section B?

They need to have a good up-to-date working knowledge of the key issues involved in production, marketing, distribution and consumption of media artefacts (or texts). They need to be able to refer to actual examples to support their points. They also need practice at the format of the examination in order to hone their skills.

What sort of questions will be asked in Section B?

Students will be expected to answer the question using the examples from their case study material to support points made in the answer. The questions might ask students to consider, for example, how media industries are making use of advantages in digital technology; how audiences consume/receive a particular medium/artefact; how and why changes in consumption and production are happening; the extent to which media audiences are the agents, beneficiaries or victims of change; the means of distribution/exhibition for their particular case study.

How long should students spend on each question?

The examination lasts for two hours including 30 minutes viewing time. After the viewing time, they should spend 45 minutes on each question.

How can teachers keep up with changes and developments in the media industry for this unit?

The web is undoubtedly the best source of material. Sites such as the BBC and The Guardian are both excellent for their coverage of media industry issues. Text books are likely to be good for the concepts and examination practice.

There are plenty of industry websites that give up to date information for media workers about this very fast changing industry. One of the best is Brand Republic, which is easy to find on Google. Brand Republic will require you to register, but it's free and harmless.

(D) Advanced Production in Media

Can there be overlap with G321 tasks?

No. They must work to one of the G324 set briefs.

Can the student use the same medium for G324 as for G321?

Yes. But whereas students could work in one medium for AS level, they need to use at least two for unit G324.

How much flexibility is there in designing the briefs?

Centres must set the brief from the given menu and then define more precise details in negotiation with candidates.

What must the students produce?

Candidates need to produce a media portfolio, comprising a main and ancillary texts and a presentation of their research, planning and evaluation in electronic format.

How many texts should the students produce for their portfolio?

Three. One of them should be the major piece, and two should be ancillary products.

What should the students bear in mind when choosing the set brief?

Their own preference is important. But it should be guided by the teacher who will be aware of the centre's strengths in terms of resources, technical expertise and teaching expertise.

What about the choice of ancillary tasks?

Students choose two from three ancillary tasks. A centre's resources and expertise, as well as their own preference, will be guiding influences in this choice. The ancillary tasks give students opportunities to work in a variety of media.

How many different media should be used?

A least two. Three if the students wish.

What format should the presentation take?

It must be in electronic format, using one or more of: slideshow software such as PowerPoint, a blog or website, a podcast or a DVD with extras. Advice will be given on the comparability between these different forms of presentation or advice can be sought from the Subject Officer. A Word Document does not constitute an electronic presentation.

Can the students work in groups?

Yes; maximum group size is four. Candidates must be assessed individually, for both their production work, and for the presentation of their research, planning and evaluation.

How is the work for G324 marked?

As with G321, internally, before being externally moderated. The unit is marked out of 100, with 60 marks being allocated for construction, 20 for planning, and 20 for evaluation. Like with the AS, there are a set of evaluation questions (four at A2) which must be answered. The instructions are the same as at AS and tips on Electronic Evaluation can be found in this section.

Do students need to do any written evaluation of their practical work?

Yes. But not for this unit. This is required as the first section of Unit G325 and will be done under examination conditions. So some practice in this area would benefit students.

OCR will send out further details to Centres on the presentation of work for the Moderator and the formats to be used.

(E) Critical Perspectives in Media.

How is this unit assessed?

By a two hour exam.

What do students need to do in the exam?

Answer three questions in all. Two from Section A, where they will need to evaluate their production work. These questions are worth 25 marks each.

One question from section B, on contemporary media issues, worth 50 marks.

What sort of questions will be in Section A?

The first question will ask students to focus on their skills development in relation to **one** of the following production practices: digital technology; creativity; research and planning; and using conventions from real media texts. Question 1(a) asks students to describe their skills development and will consequently need discussion of at least two productions. Question 1(b) is specific to one production piece. The second question will require students to evaluate their work in relation to one of the following concepts- genre, narrative, representation, audience and media language.

Will they need to refer to Foundation or Advanced production work in this?

Either or both. They may refer to their main task, or their preliminary/ancillary tasks. And in addition, they can refer to production work that they have done outside their A- level course. Note, though, that this is 'in addition' and that the work must be relevant.

How many of the concepts will be referred to in the second question?

One

How do the topics for Contemporary Media Issues differ from those in the old 2735 Media issues and Debates Unit?

They are quite different.

- The topics specify themes, rather than media and texts.
- The new topics are current, interesting, and allow plenty of flexibility for teachers to construct schemes of work with relevant and illuminating case studies.
- Some media specialism will be required to teach this unit effectively.
- There will be plenty of INSET support and support material available for this unit.
- The critical perspectives will also give a good grounding for students who wish to pursue the subject at a Higher Education level.
- There are some echoes of the legacy specifications (for example, the topic on Contemporary Media Regulation).

What texts could be used, for example, with the topic of Media in the Online Age?

A centre might consider how the online age has influenced the production and consumption of news. Most newspapers now have an online format. Some magazines only have an online format. Students might consider whether or not hard copies of news products have a future. Note: the historical, current and future situation is relevant to this Unit.

Students may then consider the problems and advantages that the online age has produced for them in this respect. Many have taken advantage of the potential role of citizen journalists for eye-witness reports and on-the-spot photos and amateur video footage. This in itself has implications regarding news values and news selection, as well as ethical considerations.

Other problems that the industry has faced are more basic: reduction of revenue from sales of hard copies and an unwillingness of consumers to subscribe to websites, coupled with difficulties in persuading advertisers that web-based ads actually work. The Online Age is in its infancy in this respect.

There is a multitude of texts, and approaches to each topic.

Do students have to focus exclusively on current issues?

No. They ought not to. A focus on the 'now' will limit understanding of the issues. Students should be encouraged to consider the historical perspective, and also be able to engage with the possible future media forms and issues in the given topic.

Do students need to study the work of academic theorists?

In general candidates will have to understand the theory. So the study of academic theorists will benefit candidates and may well interest them. For example, students investigating the topic: 'We Media and Democracy' might well enjoy the book: "We the Media" by Dan Gillmor. He is one of the leading authorities in this field, and the book itself is illuminating and not too heavy going. One of its weaknesses, however, is that it is already out of date...

The most important factors are that students understand the concepts and the issues, that they are aware of some historical context, and can speculate from an informed position about possible future developments. If studying the work of established academics in the field will aid that process, then fine. But do not lead students into the trap of thinking that they will do well by name-dropping a few of the academic greats in the subject.

How many questions will there be on each of the topic areas?

Two

How many topic areas should students prepare for?

One would be risky. Two would be better. Doing too many too thinly is unwise.

Link

OCR Media Studies E Community, for up to date advice from practitioners, teachers, experts and academics:

<http://community.ocr.org.uk/lists/listinfo/mediastudies-a>

Appendix: Model One: Suggested parallel teaching of topics

Year One Sept/Oct	Unit G321 preliminary tasks for coursework
Nov Dec	Main task for coursework
Jan	Presentation work for Unit G321 Foundation Portfolio presented for external moderation
Feb –April	Unit G322 or G323 textual analysis and representation
May	Unit G322/ G323 Institutions and Audiences
June	G322/ G323examination
Late June- July	Ancillary task for G324
Year Two- September/ December	Ancillary task for G324 Main task for G324
January	Research and evaluation for Unit G324 G324 Advanced portfolio presented for external moderation
Feb-May	Unit G325 Critical perspectives two topics from six to be studied
June	Unit G325 examination

Appendix Model Two: Suggested Linear Teaching of Units

Year One Autumn Sept -Oct	Preliminary task for G321
Nov-Dec	Textual analysis and representation for G322/G323
Jan-	Main task for G321, including presentation
Feb-April	Institutions and audiences for G322/G323
May	Coursework portfolio Unit G321
June	Examination Unit G322/G323
Late June July	Review of media concepts for G324 (genre, narrative, media language, audience, representation)
Year Two- Sept/ Dec	Two Topics for Critical perspectives (Contemporary Media Issues)
Jan	Ancillary tasks for G324
Feb-May	Main task for G324 including research and evaluation May- coursework portfolio Unit G324
June	Examination Unit G325

Each model has its advantages and disadvantages. Consideration of resources, cohort and institutional demands will enable teachers to decide how to organise courses.