

1a) Explain how far your understanding of the conventions of existing media influenced the way you created your own media products. Refer to a range of examples in your answer to show

how this understanding developed over time. By researching the conventions of existing media I was able to understand how real media texts target specific audiences and stick to genre, narrative and other conventions. For the Foundation Portfolio I created a thriller opening sequence titled 'Dark Summer' which was aimed at a young audience and followed the plot of a babysitter who discovers that the child she is looking after has disappeared. At the Advanced Portfolio stage I created a music video for debut artist 'Lexi Grace' to her new song 'Meddle'.

The first project required me to focus on specific conventions which I did through research and development and the use of digital technology. Together with my group we watched films like *Scream* (1996, Craven) which follows a similar storyline. I noticed that thrillers tend to use dark lighting to connote secrecy or colours such as red to represent danger and blood. We used these conventions to keep to the thriller genre. Todorov noticed a narrative convention of starting with equilibrium, then disruption and finally a new equilibrium. This is clear in films like *Prom Night* (2008) and again *Scream*.

However, the music video was less about conforming to rigid conventions and more focussed on less serious ones like Mulvey's theory of 'locking' and the 'male gaze'. By having Lexi look at the camera and close-ups of her lips and legs, for example, it conformed to the notion of looking as she was treated voyeuristically. The advanced portfolio had less rigid conventions, as the music video was to establish an image and I used conventions subtly, to construct a brand rather than a genre.

In creating the music video, my group had access to a HD digital camera, so we were able to shoot higher quality footage. Since the video is non-linear, the focus was less on continuity (as opposed to the thriller) and we were able to use much more footage as less was wasted. Furthermore, I created an album cover and website so I used iWix to create Lexi's homepage. Inspired by sites like Pixie Lott's, I used pages that audiences could recognise such as 'live dates' and 'merchandise'. Looking at other existing media I was able to create a professional looking site that audiences could use. Also, by researching artists in general such as Eliza Doolittle, I could see how she sold her image to a similar target audience. The thriller, however, was focussed more on conventions of the thriller genre and continuity so I didn't research other areas as much. By looking online at other artists, CD covers, websites and videos, I was able to get a more in-depth look at this aspect of media.

The main theme of 'Meddle' was the reverse technique. Lyrics allow for different interpretations, such as Goodwin's theory of amplification and illustration, so my group decide to interpret the song as meddling with the audience and Lexi's past experiences. Therefore, by having reverse footage, she was meddling literally. By using Adobe Premier Pro, I was able to reverse footage, change speeds, edit contrasts and split screens. I didn't do most of this in the foundation portfolio since the aim was to adhere continuity but I did have knowledge of the software. I learnt new techniques

at the advanced stage and they added to the quirky image of Lexi. I watched videos like The Pharcyde's 'Drop' and Coldplay's 'The Scientist' which were great inspirations as they used the reverse editing so differently.

Furthermore, Lexi wore a Rolling Stones vest which integrated intertextuality which is a common convention in a lot of music. I also shot test footage and created mood boards of London as this was key in Lexi's British image.

Overall, both projects were influenced by conventions of existing media but to different extents. While the foundation portfolio focussed on rigid conventions, the advanced one was more towards using subtle ones to construct an image and brand. Technically, my knowledge has improved as I researched music more thoroughly and learnt a lot in doing so.

This is a level 4 response. The answer clearly describes, and evaluates progression over the course (from following rigid conventions to using more subtle techniques) and combines a theoretical language (intertextuality, connotation) with specific details of creative choices made and how these were informed by conventions. A range of examples of both decisions made and existing media texts provide conviction and substance and the question is answered throughout the response.

1b) Analyse one of your coursework productions in relation to the concept of audience.

The target audience of my music video for debut artist 'Lexi Grace' was a huge consideration as it was important to construct a music video that would entice and excite them. Lexi is an androgynous artist as she is feminine and can attract male audiences, yet has short hair and can wear biker boots to represent a 'girl power' image.

David Gauntlett addresses 'fluidity' in media and Lexi is a prime example of this as she drifts between sexy red lipstick and girly dresses and yet directly addresses the camera, subverting traditional stereotypes of passive women which shows her diversity and appeal to many people. Her target audience is young people of both genders and her Britishness is a key factor. The video is set in London, with Lexi walking around different iconic scenes such as Trafalgar Square and Covent Garden. My aim was that by associating Lexi with iconic places, audiences would associate her as an icon as well. Also, by incorporating post-modern ideas through intertextuality as Lexi wears a Rolling Stones vest, audiences would recognise this, gratifying their needs as they would associate Lexi with the band and legendary music in general.

Furthermore, Lexi can be a role model to young people as she is a young person herself, at 19 years old and audiences can familiarise with her. Laura Mulvey's idea on the action of 'looking' was an inspiration as Lexi is objectified in some ways, for example through ECUs on her lips or pans across her legs as she walks, yet she directly addresses the camera and subverts this 'passive' role as she almost objectifies

those looking at her. This ability to be diverse is key to Lexi's audience appeal and again, her fluidity.

Through camerawork, editing, mise en scene and sound I was able to create a brand image for Lexi to appeal to her audience. Editing was used to emphasise sounds, for example, jump cuts on lyrics like "things that are inside" to emphasise the importance of them. The message of the song was important as Lexi needed to attract viewers to watch repeatedly. The majority of shots were very short and Lexi wore many outfits and appeared in different locations ranging from central London to North London. During the audience screening I noticed people talking about places they recognised and Lexi's clothes, so this was a positive point as it provided a 'basis for social interaction' which gratifies the needs of the audience.

Moreover Lexi appeals to her audience because she is unlike any other artist. Singers like Pink and Robyn have similar styles but seem very edgy and artists like Pixie Lott are extremely feminine and overtly sexualised. Lexi has the right balance, which is why she can appeal to both males and females. She can embody Winship's theory of girl power, but also appeal to males through subtle sexuality through costume and styling (using dresses and high heels). She is the ultimate icon of post modernism as she has feminine qualities but isn't overtly sexualised and subverts stereotypical roles.

This is a level 3 response. The question is answered directly and theories of audience / reception are coherently and intelligently applied to one chosen text. There are flaws - Winship's theories do not relate to 'girl power' in this simplistic sense and at times 'audience theory' is reduced to 'appealing to the audience' and these shortcomings prevent the script from accessing the level 4 mark range.

2) To what extent are contemporary media regulated adequately?

There are many arguments from the public, psychologists and the media industry itself as to whether contemporary media is being regulated adequately. Changes in technology, social values and legislation has affected both film and press regulation, but overall I believe that both areas are being regulated well.

The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) regulates DVDs, cinema releases and video games, although soon they will not be classifying the latter. As an independent body made up of laymen from different backgrounds they represent society and therefore current values and beliefs. The BBFC publish their guidelines every five years, making amends as necessary. Recently the 'discrimination' area was added, improving the ability of the BBFC to adapt to current beliefs. The 'C' in BBFC used to stand for Censorship, so in moving to Classification, this represents a more liberal approach than in recent times. The BBFC acknowledges overriding principals of context, time, and release format. *Tangled* (2010, Greno) was rated PG since the BBGC realised that although there was fighting, the fantasy setting would be obvious to children as a prince was fighting a nurse, which is unrealistic. However, new technology like CGI and 3G animation blurs the lines between fantasy and reality so maybe the principle will not be withheld in the future.

Negative effects research treats children as vulnerable, which isn't necessarily the case. In 1993 the murder of James Bulger was linked to *Child's Play 3* (Bender, 1991) as psychologists like Elizabeth Newson inferred that violent murder was a direct result of the film. The BBFC then updated the Video Recordings Act to include the 'harm test'. Martin Barker argues that films like *Child's Play 3* are often targeted because they 'address political issues' and David Gauntlett agrees, as negative effects research 'treat children as inadequate'. In 2008, *Batman* (Nolan) caused uproar as parents complained that it was rated at 12A when it should have been much higher. Obviously everyone has a different idea of what 'harm' is so the BBFC are not as effective as they could be if their guidelines are underpinned by flawed logic.

However, since the BBFC work with legislation, it could be seen that they are regulating adequately. *Hip Hip Hora* aka *The Ketchup Effect* (Fabik, 2004) was investigated for child nudity so that it didn't breach the Protection of Children Act. This shows effectiveness from the BBFC as legal matters are considered, so the government don't need to intervene. With that said, *Human Centipede 2* (2011, Tam Six) was banned this month due to 'sexual violence' as it breached the Obscene Publications Act. Director, Six, argued that the film is a work of art and merely actors playing roles – not real life, yet context isn't taken into account. Just because a film is creepy or distasteful doesn't mean that it should be banned. This begs to argue the issue of taste and decency as the BBFC are not being objective. Even though the film has been banned it is most likely that people will watch it online, since websites like magavideo and The PirateBay allow anyone to access anything online. Even many cinemas don't check for identification, yet providers like Sky TV require a password to watch rated films before the watershed. Perhaps regulation needs to be a two-way process; between individuals and regulators.

The PCC (Press Complaints Commission) is an independent regulatory body that was created to replace the the Press Council in regulating newspapers and magazines.

Previously the PCC were secretive and didn't put their code of conduct online, but now it is available to the public, which shows better communication. The Code of Conduct is drawn up by a board of editors made up of people from the press industry itself – so the experts from the industry are in control. The PCC is relatively new, so there are bound to be kinks in the system that need to be improved. In the 1990s the PCC was created to 'uphold standards' that had diminished during the use of the celebrity and death of Princess Diana. Furthermore, the issues with the McCann's prompted the formation of the Select Committee review which suggested tightening up the apology sanction. In the past, editors got away with tiny apologies on back pages but now, they must apologise properly, for example, on the front page. However since the PCC regulates post-publication, once something is printed, the whole world can see it so apologies don't always suffice.

Also, the issue of taste and decency is a grey area, which is difficult to regulate effectively. In 2009, Jan Moir wrote an inaccurate and offensive article about Stephen Gately. Twitter was ablaze with people angry at the situation, which caused a record number of complaints to the PCC. However, since Moir's comments were "opinions" complaints were not upheld. There are many loop holes in the PCC's system. Tesco successfully sued the Guardian over issues of tax avoidance which were accurate but since a few facts weren't right, the corporate giant won a huge amount. Furthermore, recently, celebrities like Ryan Giggs have been able to use superinjunctions to scapre articles being written about them. Giggs claimed that his children "would be bullied," and this is a common occurrence of the wealthy and powerful. The PCC need to address this issue of 'grey areas', which they probably will in the future.

The internet plays a huge role in regulation as it is outside of regulatory jurisdiction. Anonymous 'tweeters' reveal secrets about superinjunctions which get re-tweeted nationwide but the PCC cannot prevent this. However, the PCC's first blog ruling was of Rod Liddle who falsely claimed that the "overwhelming majority" of violence in London was committed by Afro-Caribbean males. Since this post breached the accuracy clause and was on the Spectator website, the PCC could uphold a complaint which shows that the regulatory body is adapting to the changing technology by regulating content online.

One may question why the BBFC and PCC have so many rules when unregulated sites online completely undermine them. A video of Neda Soldani, a young Iranian woman, being killed was posted online to YouTube. If this was on print, the PCC would have probably regulated this as it breaches privacy issues as well as 'intrusion to grief or shock'. The internet has resulted in citizen journalism, like that in the Free Tibet Movement in 2008. Here, the effects of web 2.0 were positive as bloggers were able to highlight problems on the trusted western news like the BBC. However, the BBFC faces bigger problems since piracy is rife online and people can watch whatever they like regardless of age.

I strongly believe that regulation benefits everyone. It protects the vulnerable (even if it can be patronising at times), but regulation at home and in the cinema needs to be stricter. I worked at a cinema where employees didn't check people's age, but the BBFC need to ensure this happens. Furthermore, the introduction of the Digital Economy Act should mean that there is less illegal file sharing online, protecting the industries and individuals from watching unsuitable content. In the future, there

should be raised awareness of the BBFC and PCC since many people don't know about them. Making the parents site (PBBFC) more known would help parents to make informed decisions. Both regulatory bodies are working to the best of their abilities, especially in difficult times where there are grey areas, issues with subjectiveness and rising accessibility to technology like the internet.

This is a level 4 response. Its main strength is the range of rich, contemporary and relevant examples and how well they are utilised. These examples are discussed in dialogue with industry practice / regulatory frameworks and effects theories and in such a way that the critical perspective in hand is constantly foregrounded. The candidate understands, and articulates very well, the complexity of the debate. Terminology is the area that could be developed further, as there is room for more theoretical perspectives (eg Gillmor could be cited with regard to citizen journalism). As required in the specification, the majority of the answer deals with contemporary examples.