Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Media: Communication and Production (Single Award: 8771)

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Unit 1: Industries, Texts and Audiences (6973)

This unit requires candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the macro-organisation in an area of the media industry. There is still some confusion in centres about what constitutes an area of the media industry. It may be inappropriate to simply use an example of a media company such as Disney and suggest that this is the macro-organisation of one area of the industry. The candidates should be looking at a wider picture and using comparisons of companies within this media sector. For example, a study of the BBC could then compare the broadcasting sector with reference to commercial broadcasters. The use of a single company within a media sector may not provide sufficient material for candidates. Using the BBC and other UK commercial broadcasters does provide readily available material from which candidates can demonstrate understanding and knowledge.

This may be particularly relevant where the traditional media industry is shrinking and profits are falling. Students should be aware of the volatile nature of the media industries and be kept up to date with current trends in the industry. The growth of digital technology and social networking should engage the candidates and would provide valuable material for a wide ranging discussion.

It may be relevant to use a media sector such as radio, newspapers or magazines, as information can be easily accessed and examples found easily. These media forms could also provide a starting point for AO1 (b), where candidates have to study a media company (micro-organisation).

It is not sufficient to simply identify a company and then compare this with a company from another media sector. Equally, it is not appropriate for a candidate to choose a sector, for example broadcasting, and provide limited comments on the broadcasting industry and then focus on one company that is used as the example for AO1 (b). This provides little evidence of understanding the nature of an industry that covers many media sectors. Candidates should be commenting on the range of traditional and digital techniques used in the industry, with examples of companies using them.

The understanding of the micro-organisation of a sector must come from the candidate's research into a media company. This research must inform their understanding of the nature of the company, the job roles and career paths in the company and the conditions of employment relevant to the job roles in the company. It is not appropriate to simply produce evidence that details the job roles available in, for example, the film industry with no reference to a film production company.

Centres are urged to establish links with a local media company, such as a local newspaper, radio station or interactive producer. This link will provide learners with the information they need to understand the organisation of the

chosen media company and how this might link to the wider picture of the media industry. It may also provide them with work experience that links seamlessly to their research for this criterion.

Candidates must be guided clearly to an area of the media that the teacher has clear knowledge and understanding of, not simply what might be the most glamorous. Candidates need to be engaged by this work and should have an opportunity to pick from a list and not simply be given a topic. It may be relevant to provide a list and ask individuals or groups of candidates to research and come up with a report or presentation on that particular area of the media industry. These reports or presentations could be a good point of reference for all the candidates when trying to find material for AO1 (b) or when deciding on a project for Unit 3.

Whatever was chosen for the media industry, there appears to be only limited understanding of how this affects the industry's products. Candidates should engage with the chosen media sector and discuss how regulation, ownership and competition might affect the media products being produced. This would be an ideal opportunity to discuss public service broadcasting, globalisation of the media and multi-national media organisations. It would also provide a platform for the candidates to discuss how ownership effects production and distribution. Bearing in mind the recent developments in the newspaper industry, candidates could link this with their investigations of News International to discuss how a global company can influence viewing habits or voting patterns in different countries.

AO4 (c) was generally answered well, although some candidates provided only limited evidence of understanding of how the industry thinks about its audience. There was, generally, a lack of understanding of representation issues. The use of group activities to analyse and discuss audience and representation would provide a valuable resource for the whole cohort. There were some good examples of alternative assessment methods being employed, such as presentations and illustrated reports.

For criterion AO4 (d), some candidates only responded to a text rather to the texts as indicated in the criterion. This resulted in a lack of depth of understanding of how texts can be understood and interpreted. In some cases, extra evidence for this criterion was found in the research work undertaken for Unit 2. If this is the case, teachers should take this into account when marking work for this criterion. They should also make a note on the Unit Assessment Record to alert the moderator.

Unit 2: Skills for Media Production (6974)

Once again, this year candidates responded well to this unit. They were able to identify a range of research methods and then employ them in the planning of a media product. It is important for students to identify a range of research methods and techniques at the start of this unit. Without clear identification, students will not be able to demonstrate that they fully understand the range of research methods and techniques that they could use in their research work. Some students provided detailed descriptions of their research activities, but did not clearly demonstrate that they understood the range available to them. Teachers should provide candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding in an appropriate manner. This could be a simple exercise with a template for the candidates to complete. This could be the starting point for more in-depth discussion that leads to a higher mark. In many cases, the candidates have simply undertaken research without demonstrating understanding of the range of research methods they could use.

At the top of the mark band, the research work was evaluative, wide ranging and analytical. At the bottom end, there was an over reliance on class handouts and downloaded unannotated Internet material. Teachers must ensure that candidates understand primary and secondary research techniques and use them in an appropriate way. Research sources such as Wikipedia should be identified as unreliable sources, as they are subject to peer input, rather than academic rigour. Candidates should be encouraged to keep careful and well-collated records of their research.

Criterion AO2 (c) required the candidate to show understanding of production equipment and technology. There was, generally, a lack of rigorous mapping of candidate's achievement for this criterion. Teacher observations undertaken at various stages of this unit, and in Unit 3, would provide clear evidence of understanding and the level of support and guidance required. A skills audit would allow candidates to record their use of a range of equipment and a comments box would provide an opportunity for them to discuss any issues they have found. It is difficult to validate the marks awarded for this criterion where there was no teacher comment provided.

This would also have been good practice for AO2 (d), where the achievement of the candidate should be mapped across the course. It was difficult to make a judgement on accurate assessment when there are no teacher observations or records of the candidates developing skills. It would be useful to have a starting point for skill level by undertaking an initial skills audit. This could then be complemented by an on-going audit of skills, resulting in a clear picture of the candidate's progression throughout the qualification. This had, once again, been successfully undertaken by a number of centres and provided a real opportunity for learners to engage with the skill development process.

Unit 3: Media Production Brief (6975)

It was good to see the wide range of media products produced by candidates. It would appear that some candidates had not effectively interpreted the brief or asked for guidance from their teacher. However, it was clear that many candidates had fully engaged with this brief and had been given an opportunity to demonstrate their developing skills in media production.

If the product is a print-based product, then the candidate must ensure that it legible and that spelling is correct. A moving image or audio product must use appropriate techniques in order to engage an audience. Likewise, an interactive product must be functional in order to meets the needs of the audience. Teachers must ensure that the work produced meets the needs of the target audience, but also is within Ofcom guidelines. This would provide the candidates with a regulatory structure to consider when planning and producing their work. Candidates must read the brief carefully in order to discover the target audience and the message that needs to go out.

Some candidates demonstrated a lack of understanding of pre-production, production and post-production documentation. It is clear that some centres do not have an understanding of the paperwork documentation that is required for coverage of this criterion. The suggested paperwork would be as a minimum: a proposal, treatment, storyboard or mood-board, script, production schedule, budget and call sheets.

Generally, many candidates did provide a relevant media product that achieved its intention and demonstrated some imagination. Where candidates were given free reign to plan and produce their ideas, it was clear that they had fully engaged with the product.

Where candidates had produced a group product, there was, in some instances, little evidence of the candidate's contribution to the process. The unit specification should have alerted centres to the need for each candidate to produce a media product in order to meet the assessment criteria. If a group approach had been undertaken, each candidate must have contributed significantly to all areas of pre-production, production and post-production. A photocopied group logbook is not sufficient evidence for AO2 (a), AO3 (b) and AO3 (c).

Teachers must consider providing an appropriate opportunity for all candidates to produce sufficient evidence of their own understanding, knowledge and skills.

Candidates should be given every opportunity to build on the skills developed in Unit 1 and Unit 2. Their understanding of codes, conventions and genre should inform their planning for a media product. The skills developed in Unit 2 should provide an opportunity to prove that they have skills in pre-production, production and post-production.

The weakest area of this unit was AO4 (d), where some candidates failed to provide an evaluation of their work or the product's fitness for purpose.

Candidates should be encouraged to review their work and to ask others for their comments on their work and fitness for purpose of the product. All too often, the evaluation was historical and not evaluative. Candidates must move away from what they did, to how well it went and what they would do if they could tackle this again.

A group critique of work with constructive comments from peers is a useful tool, as is the showing of work to a focus group or small audience. Analysis of the results of this could provide valuable evidence for making changes to the product, resulting in a higher mark. In some instances, candidates asked their peers to comment on their work, but then failed to include these comments in their evaluation.

Centres should consider providing alternative methods of recording evaluation, such as a commentary track on a candidate's DVD programme or an on-going annotation of their work on a print product. This is an applied qualification and candidates should be encouraged to use the most appropriate way of demonstrating their skills.

General Comments

It was good to see such a range of achievement by AS candidates. If further guidance on delivery and assessment is required, the Pearson Edexcel website provides valuable support materials for teachers and students.

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Unit 4: Research and Development for Media Production (6976)

This unit builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills developed in Unit 2 of the AS qualification. It is the starting point for the holistic delivery and assessment of this qualification.

Generally, this unit was delivered and assessed in an appropriate manner. However, there were instances of over marking. Many candidates had thought of imaginative and creative ideas that could be taken through to a finished media product. However, once again this year some candidates failed to identify a wide range of ideas and this limited them to researching and developing one theme. This might also limit the production opportunities and the range of skills developed in their final media product. A range of well-developed and researched ideas will provide an opportunity to achieve high marks in this criterion. It is good practice for a candidate to consider four or more different ideas, mind map and research these and then come to a conclusion on which idea is commercially viable and achievable.

Candidates should produce their own ideas for products considering the commercial viability and target audience for their products. Only then should the candidate make a final choice of media product to carry through to completion in Unit 5.

AO2 (a)
In some cases, candidates thought of a range of ideas but failed to investigate each idea and concentrated on researching only their chosen idea. It would have been good to see, for each idea, the intensive research activity that then led to the selection of one idea for further development. In order to achieve Mark Band 1, candidates have to '*have produced conventional ideas, which have been the subject of limited research'*. Where candidates fail to identify really good ideas, the teacher should step in and provided the candidate with advice and support. A range of alternative topics could be produced by the teacher and held in reserve for cases where candidates find this work difficult. It is not the intention that candidates work to a teachers initiated media form or specific genre. This would limit the candidates ability to develop the skills they acquired in the AS qualification.

Candidates need to produce their own ideas, research and development. They should be pitching their own ideas to an audience or client. Learners must produce evidence of their own ideas and the ways in which they have developed them. This will be followed by a pitch and treatment to demonstrate that their final idea is both commercially viable and practicable.

AO2 (b)
Some candidates failed to provide evidence of the commercial viability of their proposed product. In many cases, this was addressed only superficially and candidates commented on where the product would be shown and how much this might cost. Many candidates thought that it was sufficient to identify where the product would be placed and the potential audience. Some candidates identified a slot on a broadcast channel or station without considering the commissioning process. It is unlikely that a broadcaster would allocate a slot in their schedules to a programme on the suggestion of the producer of the programme. It is also unlikely that a broadcaster would purchase a programme without clear evidence of the structure and format of the programme being agreed with the producer before production starts.

Candidates must be able to comment effectively on the commercial viability in terms of production costs verses distribution and marketing costs. There may be some mileage in candidates being able to produce a 'calling card' or self-promotional product, but this would still have to be identified in terms of cost and potential business development. Where it was addressed successfully, candidates indicated how their product would attract an audience and the financial implications of production costs versus revenue generated. Many teachers were over-generous in the marking of this criterion.

AO2 (c)
Many candidates provided a wide range of evidence to support the development of their ideas. It is not appropriate for candidates to simply find material on the internet and consider this to be appropriate research. The use of sites such as Wikipedia does not provide valid research tools as these are simply the opinions of the users without validation. Many candidates did provide evidence of research using books, magazines, contemporary material and research tools, such as questionnaires and focus groups. Candidates need to focus clearly on the development of one of their ideas and use their research to provide the evidence for the development process.

AO3 (d)
Many candidates produced an effective pitch using both written material and presentation techniques. However, some candidates failed to produce a confident or persuasive pitch. This may be due to their lack of preparation or practice in 'selling' their idea to a client or audience. Candidates should practice pitching techniques and produce presenter's notes to help them with their presentation. Candidates should provide the client or audience with handouts to help explain some of the finer points of the pitch. Teachers could elicit more information from candidates through a question and answer session at the end of the pitch. This may help provide evidence of the candidate's achievement of higher marks.

In order to validate the assessment of the pitch, the teacher should record this in an appropriate way. The teacher should also provide a teacher observation of the pitch with comments on the effectiveness of the pitch, the fluency of the pitch and their own responses to the candidate.

Some candidates failed to provide even an adequate treatment. The treatment is a development of the candidate's original idea and it should spell out to the client the details of the production. As such, it should contain details of budget, initial script, sample storyboard or mood board or layout and a production schedule. In order to achieve the highest marks the treatment will have to be thorough.

Where candidates produced a well laid out treatment it made clear their intentions. This would, of course, benefit them when writing about their intentions and the constraints on their work in Unit 6.

Teachers could provide the candidates with a pro-forma treatment template for them to complete. The treatment would be an ideal sign-off point for this unit with the candidate then progressing to the next stage only when the treatment is completed.

Unit 5: Media Production Project (6977)

This unit allows the candidate to demonstrate the skills they developed in the AS qualification, to produce a finished media product. They must have developed one final idea that has been produced as a treatment. In this unit, they will put their treatment into practice.

There were many examples of innovative media products produced across a wide range of media forms. Many candidates used their time to produce media products that ranged from magazines or music videos, to documentaries and web based or interactive products. Some candidates used animation techniques to produce short films, whilst some produced magazine articles on a variety of topics.

AO3 (a)
This criterion tended to be the weakest element of this unit. Some candidates failed to provide sufficient information about their planning and management abilities, whilst demonstrating good production skills. This often meant that a candidates overall mark was affected by the lack of documentation. Many candidates did not demonstrate monitoring of their work. There was a lack of evidence of candidates working with independence and initiative and using appropriate documentation.

Teachers must provide teacher observation records to support the awarding of marks for initiative and independent learning. It may be advisable to provide blank templates for candidates to complete, in order to demonstrate their use of documentation. Candidates could keep a personal diary, blog or video diary that demonstrates they have analysed what they are doing and have monitored activities in a realistic way.

The media products, in many cases, were imaginative and demonstrated a wide range of production skills. In this qualification, it is essential that candidates produce their own media products in order to demonstrate their production skills and not simply team skills. Teachers need to alert candidates to this when discussing the development of their ideas in Unit 4 through to the production process.

It is acceptable for a candidate to ask their peers for help in making a media product. However, the candidate must take responsibility for their media product and manage the team effectively. They might be able to claim some competencies in managing time and monitoring their work by helping someone else to make a media product.

In order to achieve the highest marks, the media products must successfully achieve the intentions set down in the treatment. It follows that the treatment must be effective and provides a basis for the finished product to have a clear relevance and appeal to an audience.

The finished product must show creativity and flair, with sophisticated and creative use of techniques and technology in order to achieve the highest marks. Candidates must be guided by the teacher in the pitching and treatment stages. This should then result in an appropriate media product being produced in Unit 5. In some instances the candidates seemed to have produced products that were remakes of contemporary media products. Candidates must be able to demonstrate creativity and flair and the re-iteration of existing media products may not provide this opportunity.

It cannot be stressed too highly the need for candidates to have sufficient time to think about and develop appropriate ideas for media products. They also need time to consider what they require for production and post-production. Candidates must use skills in media production that reflect professional standards.

All of this, of course, leads to the candidates review in Unit 6.

Unit 6: Professional Practice in the Media Industries (6978)

In this externally assessed unit, candidates have to review their work undertaken in Units 4 and 5. There is a prescribed structure that candidates must follow when completing work for this unit. This is given in Appendix E in the specification.

Many candidates did follow this structure and some candidates used a written report or essay as evidence for assessment. In some instances, it would be good practice for a candidate to produced supplementary evidence in the form of a video report or a director's commentary on a DVD product. In some instances, the lack of careful reading of the external requirements for this unit lead to a lack of coverage of the required assessment criteria.

Candidates should undertake their work for Unit 6, as they work through Units 4 and 5. It was clear from the work moderated that some candidates had left this work until all their production and post-production work was completed. Some candidates appeared to have rushed their work for Unit 6 and, as in the previous moderation series, completed their review in a sometimes arbitrary manner. Candidates should use this unit as an opportunity to monitor their work as they progress through the qualification rather than see it as a stand-alone exercise. They could then comment on how they made changes as they worked through Units 4 and 5.

The review of work linked to professional practice needs to be proactive rather than reactive. Historical comments on work suggest that the review has taken place sometime after the production work was completed. It is essential that candidates see this process as a continuous and on-going reflection.

Many candidates failed to take note of the comments of others. In some instances, the candidates did compile questionnaires and obtain feedback, but then failed to use this in their review.

Some learners combined AO1 (a) with AO1 (b). However, these two criteria must be addressed separately and marked accordingly.

AO4 (c)
This was the least well answered section of Unit 6. Candidates generally failed to compare their work with past practice. Many candidates did address current practice but could not achieve high marks because of their lack of reference to past practice. Candidates should look carefully at similar products produced by media practitioners and then compare this to their own work. This might be in terms of the content or style of their programme or product. It could also be a comparison of technical and aesthetic qualities of their own work compared to a professionally produced media product.

AO1 (d)
It is clear that candidates who failed to demonstrate management and monitoring techniques in Unit 5 were unable to comment on them in Unit 6. The holistic nature of this qualification requires candidates to link work across all the units in the qualification. A candidate undertaking an on-going review

of their management and monitoring skills for Unit 6 may have been able to address any shortfall in their evidence for Unit 5. This will apply to other areas of the qualification.

AO4 (e)
Many candidates were able to make judgements on their own work, but there was a lack of critical evaluation. Candidates must be able to compare and contrast what they have done with their intentions. They should use a range of well-chosen examples to illustrate their work and justify their decisions on content and style.

Candidates must take into account the opinions of others. This was missing from many candidates work. Candidates should show their work to other people and ask for their opinions and then use this in their work for this criterion. They may be able to elicit comments from a client or from a focus group. There should be some analytical work that demonstrates the results of their research.

Some candidates had not been given sufficient time to complete work on this unit. In some instances, it would appear that candidates had not been given clear guidance in completing their work to the prescribed structure provided in Appendix E.

Teachers should note that the evidence for this unit can be provided in a variety of ways. These might be written, oral, a programme on video or audio format etc. however, it must follow the prescribed structure.

General Comments

It was good, once again, to see candidates producing work across a range of media forms. Candidates have produced media products that cross the boundaries of media sectors.

It was noted in this moderation series that there had been some over marking of candidates work. Teachers must only award marks where there is evidence to support the awarding of these marks. Limited comments on candidate performance do not provide clear evidence of achievement. Candidates must be encouraged to provide clear evidence of their understanding and knowledge. They must also demonstrate clearly their use of the skills developed in the AS qualification with appropriate development of these skills in a professional context across the whole A2 qualification.

Teachers must provide authentic teacher observation records to validate assessment of ethereal candidate work.

Candidates must produce evidence of their own work in this qualification. The use of group work and the inherent photocopied production documentation can lead to issues of plagiarism.

It was good to see such a range of achievement by A2 candidates. If further guidance on delivery and assessment is required the Pearson Edexcel website provides valuable support materials for teachers and students.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx