**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

**Media Studies** **48103**

**(Specification 4810)**

**Unit 3: Exploring Media Industries**

# *Report on the Examination*

# General

It was pleasing to see students continue to engage well with the Unit 3 examination paper. There were, however, a number of issues which centres need to address if their students are to achieve their full potential in this unit. This report is intended to highlight strengths and weaknesses in the coverage of the 2012 examination paper and offer some suggestions for future delivery of Unit 3 content.

# Section A
# Introduction

In general it seems most centres are teaching at least two industries, however, sometimes students' work focused too closely on a specific organisation at the expense of a broader understanding of how it operated within the wider industry. Teachers need to ensure that they are unambiguous about the two (or more) media industries they are studying so that their students do not make this error. The most popular industries were television and film, followed by print (magazines), advertising and popular music. Radio and web-based technologies (aside from computer gaming) rarely featured in students' responses.

Although centres had generally covered the ground needed for students to address the specification content, it seemed that some had taught to last year's paper, with some students answering Q3 and 4 in particular as if they were last year's questions.

There was far less confusion about 'industry' and 'companies' this year, with most students understanding which two media industries they had studied. It was clear that most centres had taught two specific industries, though in one case it seemed that students had all been taught one, and then had used the same approach to investigate a second industry for themselves, as each answered using different media case studies. In this instance they did so very successfully. The least successful 'industry' studied by centres seemed to be advertising, as some students struggled to fit their knowledge and understanding of this industry to the questions set.

There are still students writing more than they need to in order to get the marks they deserve: in some cases additional booklets were used because students had changed their minds about the answer they had given, but often the additional content contributed little to what had already been said.  Students were often not indicating this additional work in their papers and often didn't put the answers in the additional booklets/sheets in question order which made them tricky to follow.

Most centres  had clearly encouraged their students to 'have a go' at every question, but there was a significant number of students who failed to address Section A questions or when they did offered a response that made little sense and betrayed a complete lack of understanding. Questions 2, 3, and 5 seemed to be problematic and yet they were focused on 'core' content.

As with last year, the best responses for the 4-mark questions showed that those centres had used a case study approach with reference to real examples. This was particularly the case with question 4 (additional content) and 10 (social media). One excellent centre had clearly used two local media companies as case studies, and the confidence of the answers, across all students, particularly for Q6 (job roles) and Q8 (ethical issues) gave the impression that the centre had visited both of the organisations, or at least had media professionals speak to the students about their own and their companies' roles and working practices. Many students would have benefited from the same approach to the information for Q2 (Audiences and media products), where students often generalised and very few gave concrete examples which might have added clarity to their answers.

Q1 - Most students addressed the question well and referred to a range of research methods - surveys; focus groups; online polls; questionnaires - although a significant number did not name the industry. Some students referred to an organisation (eg the BBC) or gave an inappropriate method for the industry identified, eg RAJAR figures for television.

Q2 - Not well handled by many students as they did not discuss specific products or failed to explain their appeal to target audiences. Many students struggled to give named examples of media products; some suggested genres (eg rom coms, action films), while others went for complete media forms (eg newspapers, magazines or websites) and some talked about 'toys'(film) and 'perfume'(advertising). Quite a few merely identified that different audiences existed, while others tried to explain what those audiences were but not how the products were made to appeal to them. Some students tried to explain how an individual product was made to appeal to a range of different audiences.

Q3 - There were very few students who truly understood 'concentration of ownership'. Quite a number gained a mark by discussing ownership and conglomerates and being somewhere near the correct answer. Despite not understanding the question, almost all the students attempted an answer. When students knew the answer they were able to define the term in an articulate fashion and offer apposite examples.

Q4 - Very well handled with a variety of interesting and lively examples from the range of media industries. Students were particularly strong when dealing with film (DVD releases with additional/ special features) and television (pay per view channels).

Q5 - Generally well handled although some students rehashed the 'freelance' answer from last year. Although there were many excellent responses, there was also a great deal of confusion about 'fixed term contracts', with many students feeling they must imply the opposite to freelance working. A substantial number of students provided an accurate description of a 'fixed term contract' but struggled to articulate the benefits to employers. Many students did, however, discuss the benefits to employees.

Q6 – Students were generally secure with this question, but a significant number offered a 'production' job role rather than considering the wider hierarchy within a production. Students were more comfortable with 'management' as opposed to 'administration', with producer, director, location manager and editor popular choices. There was lots of 'general' comment about the importance of management and administration, without offering any actual examples.

Q7 – A strong response, with students accurately naming the correct regulatory body across the full range of media industries. Some students remembered the regulatory body, but forgot the industry and some students got the correct regulatory body but the wrong industry, eg Ofcom and the advertising industry or BBFC and the television industry. Some students hedged their bets and named one regulatory body and two industries.

Q8 – This question was problematic for many students. Although highlighted in the specification it was clear many centres had not taught the issue of media ethics and students often tended to fall back on legal and/ or regulatory issues or mistook the question to mean ethnicity. Where students understood the question they responded with well-chosen scenarios and choice examples from case studies.

Q9 - Well answered across the full range of industries, although, like Q1, some students named specific organisations such as the BBC rather than the industry. Students were very much aware of how industries had been changed by new technology and often cited more than one example.

Q10 – Another question where students offered a wide range of diverse responses from TV programme hash tags to online gaming forums. Students' intimate knowledge of how they themselves were encouraged to interact with media products was clearly evident in their answers.

# Section B
# Introduction

Students approached Section B with confidence and used the survey to good effect to develop and support their responses. The students who had missed questions out in Section A tended to have a go at every question in Section B, and it was very rare (but not unknown) for a student to get 0 if they had attempted a question in this section.

As with last year, those students who re-formatted the question into their answer took up part of their available space before they started to gain marks. The best answers pitched straight into a response without any preamble.

Many students seemed to answer the questions with a slant to young audiences, although this was not how the questions and the stimulus were worded. As last year's section B was about young audiences, this suggests that again they were perhaps taught to last year's exam.

Responses from individual students tended to be fairly consistent in quality across Section B, although on the whole students did slightly better on Q14, which concerned social networking. There were some misunderstandings about the nature of media platforms and products in the 1990s, with a number of students stating that TV was a new medium then, and others suggesting that MP3 players brought portability to music for the 'first time'. As with Section A, there are still students writing more than they need to in order to get the marks they deserve. The one exception to this was for Q15, where students often used an additional sheet to provide a 'conclusion' to the two arguments previously articulated.

Q11 - Well answered using survey as a starting point. A range of reasons were offered to explain the fall in television audiences: the internet; music downloads; social media; catch-up services such as iPlayer and 4OD; individual scheduling such as Sky+; changing work & leisure patterns; illegal streaming; games consoles and box sets were the most popular.

Q12 - Lots of examples of the impact of technology with the iPod, iPad, Pirate Bay, Spotify, iTunes, YouTube all being cited as reasons for changing media consumption. Ease, speed, access, choice, price and 'portability' were popular reasons. The more perceptive students discussed the 'implications' of these reasons and the wider impact on the music industry. Many students, however, just relied on 'free and easy' as their rationale.

Q13 – Less well answered by many students who stated the obvious without any real examination of the implications for the newspaper industry. The contradiction inherent in stating that everyone will in the future read newspapers on-line and yet newspapers will close did not appear to register with students. No explanation was offered as to how the content of these 'on-line newspapers' was going to be generated – particularly as all the journalists had lost their jobs. The more perceptive students made close reference to the survey and offered some interesting ideas about the future of newspapers such as competitive subscriptions, greater interactivity and personalised news.

Q14 - This question provoked probably the most comprehensive and detailed answers, with a lot of personal engagement.

The best answers went beyond what you can do with Facebook and twitter and explored lifestyles, business markets, career opportunities, self-expression (via User Generated Content) and the role of social networking on teenagers' personality and self-esteem. The vast majority of students, however, felt that only their own age group used the internet and social networking sites - although Facebook's current figures show that the largest US audience share is in the 26-34 year old age range and that all ages are well represented. Some students had a better understanding of the universal attraction of social networking and pointed out the appeal to all ages as part of their response.

Q15 - Many used the survey as a starting point and there was a range of interesting ideas for the future as well as the reality that it might be hard to predict the future given the developments over the last twenty years.

Many students repeated the points made in Qs11-13, about the future of the TV, Music and Newspaper industries. Better students were able to look at the direction of media technology as a whole, and the wider implications of this, while giving a range of examples.
The ubiquitous presence of 'the Internet' loomed large, but greater 'personalisation' of content was a popular theme. An interesting suggestion was the development of 'the electronic watch', where the convergence of technologies found a home in the humble wristwatch with functions which put the smartphone to shame.

In many cases, students could have better structured their responses to make explicit the 'two arguments': often two arguments were present but not clearly signposted. Centres are reminded that Q15 does carry CWE marks and students who had been taught how to structure answers in a clear and concise way that addressed the demands of this synoptic question were able to express their ideas more clearly.

## Conclusion

Finally, centres are reminded of the opportunity to seek advice and guidance on Unit 3 through their Double Award Controlled Assessment Adviser. Centres are encouraged to make use of this service to iron out any problems or issues. Centres can find contact details for their Adviser via the Media Subject Department at AQA Guildford (telephone 01483 477764 or email: mediastudies@aqa.org.uk)