Report on the Components

June 2006

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General Certificate of Secondary Education
GCSE Media Studies - 1918

REPORT ON THE COMPONENTS

Components 1, 2, 3 and 4 - Textual Analysis

General Comments

Responses to this paper are improving year on year. Most candidates seemed well prepared for the examination: they engaged with the texts, used media language terminology appropriately and produced detailed textual analyses. It is rare that a candidate does not attempt all four questions. Generic pleasures answers further improved this year, which was pleasing given that this has been a weakness in previous years.

The use of theory is not required for full marks in this paper and it can on occasion detract from specific textual analysis. There was evidence this year of some confident use of theory to enable textual analysis. For example: 'sitcoms have an equilibrium-disequilibrium-new equilibrium structure' is not, by itself, textual analysis, but the same statement followed by a specific example (analysing how one episode's disruption is resolved) is effective textual analysis.

Some general problems:

Many candidates still write too much for question 1 and not enough for question 4.

Unfortunately, a few candidates this year seemed to have been prepared for the wrong genre.

A few candidates, particularly at Foundation Tier, failed to separate their answers into different sub-sections of questions 1 and 2. These candidates could gain marks for the different sections if they clearly indicated which part of the question they were answering (by using key words from the question in their answer, for example) but a small number of candidates failed to do this and lost marks.

Some candidates were entered for the wrong tier of the examination. This occurs most commonly where a Centre has a lot of high ability candidates and enters its less competent candidates for Foundation Tier. Some Foundation candidates gained full marks and could have gained more than a grade C if entered for the Higher Tier.

Candidates using pre-prepared answers for question 4 often lost marks as they ignored the specific requirements of the question.

Comments on Individual Questions

Moving Image: Components 1 and 2

1   The format of question 1 was more prescriptive about which generic conventions the candidates should cover this year than previously. This was designed to encourage candidates to write shorter answers. Some candidates still wrote too much though, but most responded well to this question.

2   Most responses on soundtrack correctly identified the laughter track or studio audience laughter as a generic convention and some managed to make the use of music relevant by stressing its comedy element. These answers left the impression that the candidate was, as is common, conflating 'soundtrack' and 'music', thus giving them less to write about. A few answers described soundtrack elements that are not generically specific, e.g. 'there was diegetic sound' or 'heavenly music'.

| **Teachers' Tip** |
| Remind candidates of the range of elements covered by the term soundtrack. |

Foundation Tier candidates could score full marks on setting by simple description (so most were successful), but Higher Tier candidates needed to link the setting to generic conventions. Many did by stating the everyday nature or the work or home nature of the setting.

Foundation Tier candidates could score full marks on the number of main characters by stating that there were three of them, but Higher Tier candidates needed to link the number to generic conventions. Many did by stating that the small number of characters was typical. Some candidates did not notice the word 'number' and wrote about characterisation which was irrelevant.

Candidates could not score marks for narrative by simply describing what happened. Events had to be linked comedy. Some candidates understood the equlibrium-disequilibrium-new equilibrium structure of situation comedy narratives, but unfortunately some of these failed to apply this analysis to the extract (e.g. by stating one specific disequilibrium in the extract).

2 Question 2 asked candidates to analyse media language elements of the sequence in which Manny is excessively calm. Candidates confidently answered this question for soundtrack, acting and lighting, but very few could describe the dissolves used in the montage section. Some candidates successfully described the juxtaposition of hectic scenes with Manny's calm scenes, but left the impression that identifying the use of dissolves would have saved them a lot of time.

Teachers' Tip
Give candidates some camerawork and editing experience if they are entered for moving image textual analysis but don't produce moving image practical productions.

Some candidates gave a number of examples and explanations for each sub-question. This was to their benefit as long as the answer did not take up too much time as they often made relevant points towards the end of the answer.

3 Question 3 proved accessible and most candidates made use of the bullet points in their answers. Candidates who 'plodded' through the bullet points often repeated themselves.

Foundation candidates could often explicitly contrast the bookshop and the hospital and thus gained top band marks if they included enough analysis.
Better Higher candidates analysed the separate little world of the bookshop and how this contrasted to the outside world. For some candidates this was the best answer on their paper. Some candidates failed to make an explicit contrast with the 'outside world' and solely concentrated on the world of the bookshop, but still discussed a range of techniques used to create this world. Some candidates found the skinheads to be more interesting, normal and much smarter than the 'boring' bookshop. Such answers failed to reach the sophistication required for the top band.

4 **(a)** Question 4(a) was answered well.

Foundation candidates could enter the top mark band by listing three conventions and giving some exemplification from two texts. Many did this, but weaker candidates simply named two texts. The requirement for three conventions seemed to help most candidates

Some answers at Higher Tier were highly sophisticated, showing an excellent understanding of the genre and very high levels of preparation. Lower band answers tended to lack specific textual detail or to concentrate on the two examples at the expense of the genre as a whole.

A few candidates discussed texts such as 'Little Britain' that are not situation comedies.

More successful answers at Higher Tier often discussed three sitcoms running through similarities then differences in order to present an argument. Those who discussed two very similar texts were often less successful.

This question differentiates between candidates who expect to apply pre-learned points and those who know, and have analysed, their chosen texts well, so they can apply their knowledge flexibly.

Teachers' Tip
- Study two similar texts and one contrasting text and focus on exam techniques
- Prepare candidates to adapt their knowledge and understanding to the demands of the questions asked (not what they thought would come up).

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4 (b) This question asked for a specific number of pleasures (or 'reasons why') to try to get more focused answers at Foundation Tier and more textual exemplification at Higher Tier.

Foundation candidates sometimes struggled to give three separate pleasures, but the better answers succeeded in this and gave some textual exemplification.

Higher candidates had to give more textual exemplification to gain high marks as they were only asked to discuss two pleasures. This differentiated well between candidates who had simply learned a list of pleasures and those who could discuss and exemplify at greater length. Some very good answers linked together a number of audience pleasures into two categories.

Teachers' Tip
The mark scheme gives a list of possible pleasures that might prove useful. Candidates at foundation tier could probably get by with a list of three pleasures that they can exemplify. Higher tier candidates may be asked either to discuss a wide range of pleasures with some exemplification or to discuss a smaller number of pleasures with detailed exemplification.

PLEASE NOTE
There will be a slight change in the wording for question 4 at Foundation tier only from 2007 in order to reduce the length of the question and minimise misunderstandings. The question will tell the candidates not to use in their answers the text from which the extract was taken. So the equivalent question for this year would read: *'In this question you are asked to write about situation comedies you have studied. You may not use Black Books.'*

Print: Components 3 and 4

1   This question was generally accurately answered, though some Higher Tier candidates failed to make explicit points about how their chosen element was typical of music magazines.

2   Foundation candidates usually succeeded in identifying attractive elements in the magazine's media language. More candidates this year than last understood what is meant by 'layout' and 'fonts', though the latter is still a weakness.

Higher Tier candidates had a more evaluative task and, whilst most could identify examples successfully, some failed to analyse their examples in terms of the magazine's attitude to the music it covered.

3   This was an accessible question in that most candidates effectively contrasted the two images using some or all of the bullet points. There were some very good answers at Higher Tier that undertook a sophisticated connotative analysis, though very few answers discussed framing and composition.

Some answers analysed the wrong photographs. Credit was given for any media language analysis, but this was usually limited.

4   a)   Foundation candidates could enter the top mark band by listing three conventions and giving some exemplification from two texts. Many did this, but weaker candidates simply named two texts. The requirement for three conventions seemed to help most candidates.

The Higher Tier question encouraged candidates to consider the genre as a whole, which was required for top mark band. Weaker answers focused on contrasting the two examples that the question specifically required as a minimum.

Some candidates included *MOJO* magazine as one of their two examples or only discussed one magazine. There were few examples of candidates choosing the wrong genre of magazine. Some started their answer with 'I haven't studied music magazines but...'

4   b)   This question asked for a specific number of pleasures (or 'reasons why') to try to get more focused answers at Foundation Tier and more textual exemplification at Higher Tier.

Foundation candidates sometimes struggled to give three separate pleasures, many discussing three different types of free gift or information, but the better answers succeeded in this and gave some textual exemplification.

Higher candidates had to give more textual exemplification to gain high marks as they were only asked to discuss two pleasures. This differentiated well between candidates who had simply learned a list of pleasures and those who could discuss and exemplify at greater length. Some very good answers linked together a number of audience pleasures into two categories.

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Components 5 and 6 - Cross Media Topics

General Comments

It was pleasing to see an increase in the number of good responses from a significant number of candidates. A significant number of candidates achieved full marks this year, largely due to the degree of rigorous preparation that many candidates had been given. Such preparation is one of the characteristics that defines success within this paper and those who have been given very clear case studies prospered more than those who were left to their own devices. However, it is clear that with tight, appropriate guidance a *few* students flourished with a more autonomous approach. It is depressing however to see the handful of Centres characterised by candidates who had not been offered much in the way of guidance or case study and who responded by making reference to materials encountered in the news or on a billboard witnessed en route to the examination. Fortunately, this is an extremely small minority and there was ample evidence of good practice which allowed candidates to articulate adeptly.

Effective differentiation between tiers seemed readily apparent within most Centres but it is still disappointing to mark the work of a Foundation Tier candidate who clearly would have flourished in the Higher paper and vice versa. The importance of mock examinations and trial papers cannot be urged enough as a means of ensuring that candidates have access to the relevant tier and, therefore, grades.

Weaker candidates found it difficult to relate learning to the questions and, as a result, offered responses reliant on general knowledge and conjecture which failed to demonstrate any degree of specialist understanding. It is essential that candidates are appropriately prepared and briefed for the examination with case studies and not generalisations. It is strongly recommended that Centres use past papers as a basis for discussion during lessons as well as in mocks. It was similarly noted that, where candidates chose to use two examples in answer to a question, the focus tended to be better than when three were used. Four seemed to lead to superficiality or predominance on description over analysis or comparisons. Such responses tended to lack supporting exemplar material which ultimately limited the marks available. This was particularly notable at Foundation level but there were also notable instances of this within the Higher Tier.

It was pleasing to see that there were fewer pre-prepared answers this year with evidence that subject matter had been well taught in a way that would allow students to interpret and provide a sense of the personal engagement characteristic of better answers.

Once again there was some disappointment at the lack of use of media terminology, particularly at Foundation Tier, although when it was used it was used very well, particularly with reference to News. Some of the most able candidates offered interesting ideas and insights into complex media theories such as post modernism and gender debates. Some candidates were disadvantaged by poor literacy skills.

Candidates made good use of their time this year, giving equal time and consideration to both questions. There were a few, however, who spent too much time writing out unnecessary descriptions of texts without including much in the way of consideration of presentational devices. Only on rare occasions did candidates lose momentum after completing Section A.

Only a very small number of candidates did not follow the rubric of the paper and chose to complete questions 1 and 4 or 2 and 3 or attempted all four questions. Although not penalised by the examiner, the candidates in fact penalised themselves as their answers were not always completed in the depth required to offer sufficiently reflective responses. Candidates should answer two questions on the same subject matter.

Comments on Individual Questions

Foundation Tier

Section A

1   This question was answered by only a few candidates although there were some examples of good practice amongst those that did. The majority of candidates were able to use two or more media.

There was a tendency at this level for some candidates to rely on the general knowledge of recent news events as opposed to specific case studies, although it is pleasing to see that more and more Centres are teaching to such examples. Many candidates wrote about institutions without reference to specific news stories. This is perfectly acceptable within the context of the examination and such responses were awarded appropriately. However, the general feeling is that responses underpinned with direct textual evidence tended to achieve a higher level of competence. A list of observations about everything that the candidate knows about news ultimately limits that candidate's potential. The importance of specific closely analysed case studies is stressed. Consideration of target audience seemed to be better informed this year with more candidates having a clear idea of demographics as opposed to vague and abstract concepts, although there were still a significant number who took target audience as 'people who like the news'.

At the higher end of this level there were some skilled commentaries with genuine understanding of terms like gatekeeping, news values and agenda setting. It was pleasing to see a wide choice of texts that included *The Sun*, a number of news networks ranging from Sky to Channel 5 to the BBC, a variety of regional and national news programmes and a varied spread of radio stations and internet sites. Documentaries are not strictly classified as news although they do refer to newsworthy events. Candidates who refer to them will find their marks impeded.

2   As with previous years, candidates at Foundation level seemed better equipped to answer this question than question 1. There was clear evidence of effective use of case studies which showed preparation and planning. A number of candidates offered a degree of informed analysis which made appropriate reference to specific examples. As opposed to News, candidates found it far easier to access the questions by referring to specific examples from texts rather than institutions. Some Centres had referred to advertising agencies or personnel as a way of contextualising certain adverts. This is to be encouraged.

Comparisons of a particular institution's campaigns across different media, (for example the promotional campaign of certain films), once again proved effective. Indeed, with the increased access to such materials on DVD and the internet this can prove an appropriate way of engaging with texts for those Centres experiencing difficulties acquiring material. There were many successful analyses being offered on texts as diverse as *The Blair Witch Project*, *Gladiator*, *Shaun of the Dead* and *War of the Worlds*. Similarly, competent responses were offered with reference to Tango's print and internet campaign and Levi's television and magazine adverts. A number of candidates offered perceptive and cogent responses comparing different brands' use of media, e.g. John Smiths and Bacardi Breezer, Coca Cola and Virgin Cola and Levis and Benneton. Some Centres chose charity campaigns and although these provided the more able candidate with an excellent opportunity to analyse appeal, it posed an added difficulty to the weaker candidate who was first posed with the difficulty of actually working out what was being advertised.

On the whole candidates found it difficult to incorporate specific media terminology within their responses at this level.

Section B

3   This question tended to be answered less effectively than Question 1 largely owing to poor choice of examples to show understanding of changes in representation over time. For example, a comparison of the coverage of the sinking of the Titanic and Wayne Rooney's foot injury offers limited opportunity for discussion no matter how much the latter might have seemed a disaster to some. A significant number of candidates simply described how reporting the news had changed and/or stayed the same over time. For example, how the layout of a newspaper front page had changed or how a news anchor looked, without considering the inherent concept of messages and values associated with such changes. Similarly some candidates got carried away with socio-political issues underlying news stories rather than actually focussing on how events are represented. This should be discouraged whatever the political leanings of a candidate. Although significantly fewer than in previous years, some candidates compared news stories that were within a short period of one another, for example September 11th and last year's London bombings. This served only to limit the marks available. These candidates had not been appropriately briefed or prepared. As one of the objectives of the paper is to consider the similarities and differences in representations over time, Centres are advised to choose news events which will allow candidates to explore this fully.

As ever, candidates performed best when they chose similar subject matter, most notably the Royal Family, disasters or military events. Interesting and effective choices this year included George VI's funeral in comparison to Diana's, the Vietnam war in comparison to recent events in Iraq, Pathe newsreel of Kamikaze pilots during World War II in comparison to suicide bombers and comparisons between the media representations of England in the 1966 World Cup and Euro 2004. Centres who offered totally different subjects tended to produce weaker responses as this impeded their ability to develop an argument. It is advised to avoid giving potted histories of events and/or celebrities. Centres are reminded of the importance of focussing on how the media have influenced perception of such celebrities and/or events.

4   This was the more popular of the two questions in this section and was reasonably well answered, demonstrating effective preparation by Centres. Many candidates used the same case studies as those which had been used in Section A, more so than in question 3, which resulted in replication of subject matter. Some candidates viewed it as another opportunity to answer question 2. A large number of candidates at Foundation Level did not fully grasp the concept of representation and so reverted to discussing the roles of producers and audience or offering simplistic observations of messages and values, e.g. to buy the product or 'wear this and you will look like me' or 'you shouldn't smoke as it is bad for your health'. This served to limit certain candidates at this level.

The concept of ideology and messages and values can be a complex one and so students at this level should be encouraged to relate representation to social context in order to facilitate appropriate answers. There was a tendency to discuss historical developments of products rather than representational aspects. This led to repetitive and descriptive work that did little to engage the concepts behind the question.

A small number of candidates compared adverts that were within months of one another. Centres are advised to choose adverts from significantly different time periods which will allow candidates to fully engage with the spirit of the question; considering how messages and values have changed as well as if they have stayed the same.

Candidates performed best when they chose subject matter where there were clear enough similarities and differences. Those who chose totally different subjects, for example recent car adverts in comparison to the original Gibbs SR advert, tended to produce weaker responses as this impeded their ability to develop an argument. Popular choices at this level involved considerations of gender with reference to cleaning and cooking products, a study of ethnicity with reference to Pears soap ads and the Halifax building society as well as consideration of how campaigns for a variety of drinks including *Lucozade*, *Coke* and *Guinness* had changed over the years.

Higher Tier

Section A

1   This question was answered well by a number of candidates although there were significantly fewer answering this question than question 2. It was pleasing to see sophistication and maturity exhibited by a number of students in their discussions of how news is produced and the effect on audiences. There were some highly effective comparisons of different media. It was pleasing to see another year in which radio and the internet were being embraced by Centres, e.g. *News 24* and Yahoo News as examples of twenty-four hour news services*,* a variety of local radio and local television news programmes*, The Sun* and *Channel 5 News, BBC News* and *The Star.* Some of the more able candidates provided extremely broad and in depth analysis.

A few candidates failed to offer comparison, merely offering two stand alone descriptions of different media. This limited the potential of responses. Conversely, there were candidates who offered a consideration of four different media or case studies which tended to limit the level of focus and clarity of the response. There were a number, however, who proved capable of dealing with such a broad study and offered insightful and lucid responses.

There was a stronger degree of engagement with the roles of news personnel and the role of agencies than in previous years. Many candidates had a very strong grasp of news values, gatekeeping and agenda setting and media terminology was appropriately employed by a number, although not by a significant majority.

2   There was a lot of evidence of confident and sophisticated use of case studies which showed obvious preparation, allowing candidates to fully access the question and offer thorough and detailed responses with clear comparisons and detailed references to specific examples. It was noted that very few candidates failed to compare media in this question.

As with Foundation Tier, candidates approached this question from a variety of angles. For example, a consideration of one company's campaigns across a variety of media or comparable companies' different employment of different media. Most candidates effectively used specific examples although some, who had been well briefed as to the role a certain advertising agency might have played, wrote historical accounts about an individual or a company as opposed to a consideration of how their work made a product appealing. The better responses tended to focus on the advertising of one product or very similar products across two media. This gave an ideal opportunity to compare the way adverts had been constructed to appeal to an audience. The common product tended to strengthen, rather than impede, the development of an argument for the stronger candidate. Particularly popular choices included the *Lucozade* campaign, *Coca Cola*, various fragrances and car advertisements alongside a number of films referred to above.

On the whole, a number of candidates used media terminology to significant effect and many achieved very high marks in this question.

Section B

3   Many varied responses were offered to this question at this level. It was the less popular of the two options amongst Centres. It seemed candidates were well prepared for this question with many having varied subject matter to that of question 1.

There was some confusion over what constituted a past and recent example with some candidates using a past example from only six months ago. Similarly, some responses were impeded through a focus on inappropriate texts. Again, to avoid any compromising of candidates' grades, Centres are advised to choose news stories from at least two distinct eras. Most candidates explored effectively comparable news stories to fully develop responses to this question and some mature and sensitive discussions were offered: e.g. a comparison of the media treatment of Tony Blair and Winston Churchill, representations of World War II and the Falklands war and some informed, lucid discussions of Britishness and class in the coverage of the Titanic in comparison to the British response to the tsunami.

Although nowhere near as significant at Foundation level, there were candidates who did not fully grasp the concept of representation and so reverted to producing an answer more appropriate to Section A. Some candidates ended up describing representations of newsreaders as opposed to different news stories, which though is not strictly beyond the rubric of the question, only limits most candidates' responses. On occasion, although media representation was addressed, candidates failed to focus on particular examples and ended up giving a meandering account of the meaning of representation. The importance of rigorously preparing candidates for this key concept cannot be overemphasised.

Candidates performed best when they chose similar subject matter, most notably the Royal Family, disasters or military events. Candidates who chose totally different subjects tended to produce weaker responses as this impeded their ability to develop an argument.

4   This was a generally well answered question with appropriate examples used, demonstrating effective preparation by Centres. There were some issues regarding the concepts of different time periods. A few candidates compared adverts that were from the same year and Centres are advised to choose adverts from significantly different time periods which will allow candidates to fully explore the concepts of how things change and/or stay the same without any danger of marks being jeopardised.

Centres are reminded that only one medium needs to be used in this question (although of course more than one could be referred to should the candidate and Centre so choose. There were many proficient examples of responses which demonstrated this). Many responses showed an understanding of representation with some particularly effective pieces. Candidates were able to analyse changing values within society through their examples. They were able to justify changing representations through an analysis of the social context in which they appeared. A large number focussed on the changing representation of gender, social class and ethnicity in advertising with the more able candidates effectively substantiating responses with reference to clearly analysed case studies. For example, a consideration of changing gender ideologies with reference to *Shake & Vac* and *Flash*, a study of social class with regards to John Smiths and Baileys, the representation of women in the *Persil* campaigns from the 1950s and on the internet today. There were some particularly interesting, albeit familiar, comparisons of Daley Thompson and Lara Croft in the *Lucozade* campaigns. There were, however, a number of candidates who did not fully grasp the concept of representation and so offered responses which tended to the simplistic or more appropriate for Section A.

Candidates performed best when they chose subject matter where there were clear enough similarities, even if the products were radically different e.g. a consideration of ethnicity in Pears Soap adverts and the *Halifax*. Candidates who chose totally different subjects tended to produce weaker responses as this impeded their ability to develop an argument.

Component 7 - Media Portfolio (Coursework)

General Comments

Overall the standard of work submitted for the coursework portfolio this year was impressive, with the vast majority of Centres fulfilling the requirements of the specification. The majority of Centres are confidently setting a range of interesting, well-planned assignments that are well suited to their own particular candidates. It was rewarding for moderators to see the enthusiastic way in which the candidates, no matter what their level, tackled the set tasks.

There was generally very good evidence of knowledge and understanding of media concepts and much improved use of media terminology. The presentation of work was, in many cases, exemplary, with teachers taking enormous care to label videos, DVDs, magazine projects and websites. Most Centres are to be congratulated on their attention to detail, which was almost always positively reflected in their candidates' work. This precision made the moderators' task easier.

There were very few Centres where the assessment criteria had not been satisfactorily applied and adjustments were rarely necessary. Generally, it was easy to see how marks had been awarded, and the majority of Centres deserve praise for their application of the assessment criteria. However, there were a few Centres this year that presented completely 'clean' assignments, with no annotations and either a very brief summative comment or no comment at all on the Individual Assessment Task Form. This was very unhelpful to the moderator, as it was impossible to see how marks had been arrived at. Centres are reminded that work should always be annotated clearly.

An increasing number of Centres incorporated practical work into Assignments 1 and 2, enabling candidates to learn through practical work. These complementary practical exercises were well done and demonstrated the candidates' engagement with the texts and media concepts. Candidates in the lower levels were able to demonstrate a greater understanding through the practical tasks, together with written work split into separate sections. This good practice also allows some exploration of practical techniques, which helps to prepare candidates for Assignment 3. Suggestions for tasks for Assignments 1 and 2 are given on pages 36-38 of the specification and further suggestions are given in the Teachers' Guide. As before, Centres are free to set their own tasks, or adapt ideas from the specification.

There were still a few Centres that submitted trailers (the 'old' tasks for Assignment 3) rather than the opening sequence for a new film. Centres are reminded that the new briefs should be followed next year. They are published in the specification (pages 39-40) and are reprinted at the end of this report. Examples of these tasks are also accessible in the new Teachers' Guide (available on CDROM from OCR).

Video work for Assignment 3 continues to improve, with evidence of greater discipline and improved editing skills. The print production work continues to offers some outstanding results, demonstrating impressive creative and technical skills.

As last year, Centres varied in the amount of planning and research material included for Assignment 3. Centres are reminded that the purpose of the material is to offer clear evidence to the moderator of research and planning. It should also help candidates to reflect on the processes of production when writing the evaluation. There is no point in including teaching materials, nor every answer to a questionnaire. The amount of planning and research material that should be included in an appendix for each assignment is clarified in the specification (pages 42-44), whilst detailed instructions for candidates on what to include are given in the Teachers' Guide.

Centres are reminded that duplication of the exact area of study chosen for the Textual Analysis paper and the Cross-Media paper is not permitted for Coursework Assignments 1 and 2 (pages 29, 31 and 33 of the specification). However, it is acceptable for candidates to use the same area of study selected for the examination papers for Coursework Assignment 3. For example, candidates could study sitcoms for the Textual Analysis paper and also produce a sequence from a sitcom for Set Brief 1 as Assignment 3.

In order to ensure the study of a range of media texts, Assignments 1 and 2 should focus on different media. It is not appropriate for a Centre to make all three coursework tasks film based as this is too narrow a focus and goes against the spirit of the specification.

Administration

The majority of Centres are to be congratulated for sending the MS1 forms punctually to the moderators. Centres are reminded of the importance of making the forms legible. Some Centres were late in submitting the coursework sample; this made the process of moderation unnecessarily difficult and time consuming. Where the number of candidates is ten or fewer than ten, all the coursework portfolios should be sent directly to the moderator. Where the entry is greater than ten, the Centre should wait for the moderator's request for the coursework sample.

Authentication Form

The majority of Centres succeeded in sending the Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) with the coursework. Centres are reminded that they need not send one for every candidate: only one per Centre is required. The submission of the authentication form for coursework is a requirement of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) .

Teacher Comments and Annotations

When Centres annotated work carefully, it was clear to see how the criteria had been applied. This dedicated approach was reflected in the Summative Teacher Comment and in the evident attention to detail in the candidates' work. Those Centres which failed to annotate candidates' work or to fill in the Summative Teacher Comment risked disadvantaging their candidates, as the absence of annotation or comment made it more difficult for the moderators to agree with the assessment.

Centres are reminded that it is particularly important that comments are made to indicate how marks have been awarded to individuals working in a group on Assignment 3.

Individual Task Assessment Forms

Almost all Centres organized their candidates' work effectively, using the Individual Task Assessment Forms to identify the precise task and to indicate the reason for the Centre's marks. The forms are available on the OCR website.

Centres are reminded that candidates must give the **title** of the production and the **names of members of a group** on the Individual Task Assessment Form for Assignment 3.

Assessment

The majority of Centres applied the mark scheme carefully, using comments from the assessment criteria in the annotation of their candidates' scripts. As with last year, Centres which used the criteria as a shared marking policy with candidates were successful.

Where adjustments were made, these tended to be in connection with the over-marking of Assignment 3, particularly with regard to the assessment of planning and of the Evaluative Commentary. Centres are reminded to consult the guidelines in the Teachers' Guide and the specification (pages 40–45) for clarification on what should be included in the Evaluative Commentary and appendix.

General Organization and Packaging

Presentation and organization of the portfolios was exemplary. Moderators were grateful for the care taken over the ordering and clear labelling of the samples with each candidate's name and number. However, there were still a few grumbles over the use of three-sided plastic wallets and bulky folders. If Centres are in any doubt, please see pp.46-47 of the specification for instructions on the presentation of the coursework.

Internal Moderation

Centres are reminded of the importance of internal moderation and of demonstrating to the moderator that this has taken place. In Centres where there is more than one teaching group, moderators are instructed to check that work has been fairly assessed and moderated across the groups. Where a mark has been altered through internal moderation, the original mark should be crossed out (rather than erased) and the new mark initialled by the Head of Department, so that it is not interpreted as a clerical error.

Teachers' Tips

How to Present Coursework

- Record the teaching groups on the MS1 forms and ensure the forms are legible
- Write a summative comment on the Coursework Assessment Form and attach it to the front of the portfolio
- Ensure that all staff have signed **one** Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) for each Centre and include it with the sample
- Ensure that evidence of internal moderation is clear
- Check that all assignments are annotated by the teacher
- Make the details of each assignment clear and give a brief explanation of how the marks were awarded on the Individual Task Assessment Form
- Write the title of each production for Assignment 3 and the names of all members of the group on the Individual Task Assessment Form
- Comment briefly on the individual candidate's contribution to Assignment 3 if s/he worked in a group
- Label all videos, DVDs, audio tapes/CDs and websites with the title of the production, your Centre's name and number and your candidate/s name/s and number/s
- Place coursework assignments in the correct order using card folders or treasury tags, **NOT three-sided plastic wallets**
- Include the required research and planning material for Assignment 3 in an appendix (see pages 42-44 of the specification)

Assignments 1 and 2

Centres are increasingly opting for creating their own varied, challenging and interesting responses to Assignments 1 and 2. This is encouraged.

However, a few Centres did not seem to understand the difference in emphasis between 'Languages and Categories' and 'Messages and Values' and therefore concentrated on the same area twice. Whilst there may be some overlap, this approach can only disadvantage candidates. Setting a focused task is important; there are suggestions for tasks for Assignments 1 and 2 on pages 36-38 of the specification and further suggestions and exemplar material are given in the Teachers' Guide. These incorporate complementary practical exercises which are not obligatory, but which will enhance candidates' work, enabling those in the lower levels to achieve more marks and those in the higher levels to offer more rounded responses. Differentiation of tasks benefits the candidates in the lower mark bands who struggle with the more challenging titles.

Generally, these two assignments addressed the key concepts, produced relevant analysis and were tackled with enthusiasm by the candidates. In a small number of Centres, relatively short pieces were over-rewarded, while other Centres offered overlong assignments, which would have benefited from editing. Centres are reminded of the guidelines on the word count: 1,000-1,500 words.

Assignment 1: Media Languages and Categories

This assignment tests the candidates' understanding of the codes and conventions of media texts. A minimum of two texts must be studied and a **comparison** between the two is required in order for candidates to achieve the higher levels. Those Centres that asked candidates to analyse the opening sequence of one film only disadvantaged their candidates.

The most popular option for this assignment continues to be a comparison between the opening sequences of two films. Some candidates find it easier to compare two very different genres for this assignment, such as historical epics with thrillers, but comparing two films from the same genre can also be very successful. Most Centres focused effectively on extracts of films, ensuring concise, detailed analysis. The use of media terminology was generally impressive.

Moderators commented that this assignment was generally well taught, if at times, **over-taught.** As this is usually the first assignment set, this is understandable, but some impressive Centres encouraged their candidates to choose from a variety of texts after they have worked on two or three as models. This enabled the candidates to express genuinely personal views and offer original comments.

It is important for Centres to recognize that asking candidates to compare two whole films is far too broad a task and almost inevitably leads to generalized description rather than sustained analysis.

Teachers' Tips

Assignment 1

Examples of Successful Tasks set in 2006

- A comparison between the ways in which genre and narrative are established in the opening sequences of *Dune* and *The Matrix* **or** *Lord of the Rings* and *Van Helsing* **or** *Tarzan* and *The Lion King* **or** *Halloween* and *The Others*
- A comparison between the ways in which two documentaries use codes and conventions to convey their subject matter. Successful choices of documentaries included: *Dunblane: A Decade On* and *Sorted* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *9/11* (Naudet Brothers)
- A comparison of the ways in which three television advertisements for mobile phones use media language in order to target their audiences.
- A comparison between the ways in which two or three music videos use codes and conventions in order to construct the identity of the performer/s and to appeal to their target audiences
- A comparison between the ways in which three different newspapers (*The Sun, The Daily Mail* and *The Independent),* use codes and conventions to construct brand identity
- A comparison between the codes and conventions of Radio 1 and a local radio station.

Assignment 2: Media Messages and Values

This assignment tests the candidates' ability to analyse and compare representations and values in a minimum of two media texts.

This assignment is generally tackled with enthusiasm and strong personal engagement from the candidates. Whilst many Centres offered imaginative, challenging tasks that were appropriate for their candidates, there is a tendency for some Centres to stick to the familiar and 'safe' options suggested by OCR, such as *Bend it Like Beckham* and *East is East*. Whilst this is acceptable, it is suggested that Centres should aim to choose at least one contemporary text. This year an interesting and challenging example was *Little Britain*, which caught the interest of the candidates.

Centres are reminded that they should choose a different media area to focus on from Assignment 1. A number of Centres chose film for both Assignments 1 and 2. This inevitably does not give their candidates a broad enough experience of studying the media. As with Assignment 1, tasks need to be tightly focused, rather than general and broad. A brief historical context is a successful aspect of the best assignments, encouraging candidates to reflect on changing representations over time and to become personally engaged with the issues.

Teachers' Tips

Assignment 2

Examples of Successful Tasks set in 2006

- A comparison of representations of youth in *Stand By Me* and *Ten Things I Hate About You*
- A discussion of how the genre of reality TV relies on stereotypes, looking in particular at class and values in *Wife Swap* and *Big Brother*
- A comparison between the representations of police and criminals in *Midsomer Murders* and *CSI* **or** *The Bill* and *Heartbeat* **or** *Miami Vice* and *Homicide*
- A comparison of the representation of women in *The Observer Sport* monthly magazine and *The Times* Saturday magazine
- A comparison of the representations of women in early and contemporary TV soap powder advertisements
- A discussion of representations of Eastern European immigrants in a range of newspapers
- A comparison of representations of cultural groups in *La Haine* and *Bullet Boy*

Teachers' Tips

Assignments 1 and 2

There are many more suggestions for Assignments 1 and 2, together with complementary practical exercises, on pages 36-38 of the specification and in the Teachers' Guide.

Assignment 3: Media Production and the Evaluative Commentary

This assignment was tackled with commitment and enthusiasm in the majority of cases. The set briefs were very successful in motivating candidates and giving them an opportunity to develop their skills and understanding, demonstrating what they could do.

A small number of Centres produced work using the 'old' briefs. The current briefs are published in the specification (pages 39-40), at the end of this report, and in the Teachers' Guide.

Print work continues to be of a very high standard, with magazine production the most popular option, and advertising campaigns a close second. It was pleasing to see an increase in the use of original photography and in the confidence of candidates in their use of print software. There is no doubt that Centres are gradually gaining better access to resources and technology, although it is worth reminding Centres that it is expected that all candidates should engage with technology in the production of the coursework portfolio, and in particular for Assignment 3.

Centres are reminded that candidates must give the title of their production and the names of the members of their group on the Individual Task Assessment Forms. Centres must also indicate an individual's contribution to practical work in the box provided in order to explain how marks have been awarded. Candidates must include a clear explanation of the allocation of roles in their Evaluative Commentaries (see page 41 of the specification). Guidelines on this point are given in the detailed instructions to candidates for each individual brief in the Teachers' Guide.

Planning and research material

Centres are to be thanked for making a clear separation between the finished production and the planning and preparatory material. However, despite clear guidelines given in the specification regarding the amount of planning material to be sent to the moderator, there were some disparities. Some Centres sent everything related to the assignment, including teaching notes and 50 responses to a questionnaire, while others provided nothing. A number of film sequences failed to include a storyboard, which in some cases may have penalised some candidates.

The purpose of the inclusion of this material is to offer clear evidence to the moderator of research and planning. It can also help candidates to reflect on the processes of planning and production when writing the Evaluative Commentary. There is clarification in the specification on what is required and what is optional.

Teachers' Tips

Planning and research material for Assignment 3

The details on the requirements for the planning and research material for each brief are given on pages 42-44 of the specification.
This material should be placed in an appendix, separately from the finished production.
Further information on the amount of material to be included for each individual brief is given in the Teachers' Guide. These instructions have been designed to be given directly to the candidates.

Found images

Centres are to be congratulated for a big increase in the use of original photography, which enlivened the majority of print productions. Advertising campaigns that failed to employ original photography were rare. In the small number of cases where Centres relied on found images for their advertisements, there was less to reward and candidates suffered accordingly.

Centres are reminded that the use of original images is a requirement for all briefs apart from Brief 3. Therefore it is important that candidates are not allowed to rely entirely on found images. (See page 44 of the specification.)

Centres are reminded that written text for print work or websites and recorded dialogue for the radio option should be original material, unless it is made clear that it is quoted and the sources are acknowledged by the candidate. There were some instances this year of Centres including magazine pages that had clearly been lifted directly from the internet.

Set Brief 1: Television sequence

Television soap operas, sitcoms and crime dramas were examples of successful sequences offered this year for this brief. Although these were often entertaining, with some good camerawork, editing is a skill that still needs developing. Storyboards were not always included. Centres are reminded that there are many textbooks, booklets, and CDs, such as those produced by Film Education, which give detailed information on how to storyboard. Whilst it is not essential that candidates should be able to draw artistically, shot descriptions, shot lengths, camera movement, dialogue, and sound FX should all be recorded on the storyboards as an essential stage of pre-production planning.

It would help candidates to plan their productions if they included details in their commentaries on where and when their programme would be broadcast. It was clear from the outcomes and from the Evaluative Commentaries that candidates engaged well with this option.

Set Brief 2: An opening sequence for a new film

This option was more popular than Brief 1, with many examples of the thriller or horror genre. Some of these were highly successful, but many involved endless chases by hooded figures around school premises and fights or knife and gun attacks in classrooms, on stairwells or in the playground. These were rather lacking in originality and sometimes very hard to follow, especially when storyboards or scripts were not supplied. Detailed planning is inevitably reflected in the final production and ensures a more successful outcome.

Whilst the level of enjoyment and engagement was clear from candidates' Evaluative Commentaries, it is worth remembering that aiming for a Blair Witch Project approach (successfully accomplished by one Centre) is more likely to prove successful than trying to replicate a Hollywood blockbuster.

Poor editing was a problem in a number of cases. This may be due to lack of practice or problems with access to editing equipment. However, Centres are reminded of the minimum requirements for the necessary technical resources for running this GCSE are stated on pages 12 and 28 of the specification. If Centres do not have access to the required equipment for a particular option, they should choose another brief.

Set Brief 3: Radio

Although only a small number of Centres continue to offer this option, there were a number of successful radio productions this year, including music radio stations and magazine style programmes. These productions were well suited to candidates of all levels.

Set Brief 4: Magazine sample

There were some excellent magazines produced, with impressive use of original photography and original writing. ICT was used with exceptional imagination and skill and there were some impressive ideas for covers and inside pages.

Most were aimed at the teenage target audience, although the brief has now been opened up to 'a sample for a new magazine, aimed at a specific audience'. Once again, there were some impressive music magazines. One Centre ensured that each candidate created an imaginary new music artiste and constructed a double page spread with an interview and original photography. A particularly good example was entitled 'From The Streets to Stardom'. This approach ensured the use of original material and demonstrated the candidate's understanding of the Languages and Categories as well as Producers and Audiences. In addition, it ensured the candidates' motivation and commitment to the task, as they clearly enjoyed constructing themselves or their friends as stars.

Centres are reminded that where candidates work in a group, it is expected that each group member will produce a double page spread article, in addition to the front cover and the contents page, which can be collaborative.

Only a small number of Centres submitted work without original photography and they were marked accordingly. There are disparities in the way that the final product is presented: submissions ranged from laminated and bound pages to unattached single sheets. Centres are advised that magazine productions should be submitted so that they handle more like actual magazines. This also encourages candidates to take pride in the final product. Magazines can be bound quite cheaply with a plastic binder.

Set Brief 5: Advertising campaign for a new product

There were some superb examples of advertising campaigns, from a campaign for a new perfume with meticulous attention to detail and a professional looking photo shoot to a mouth-watering campaign for a new chocolate bar.

This option produces some of the very best, detailed work with careful research of target audiences and advertising campaigns for existing products. The option is ideal for developing candidates' understanding of media production and for candidates with a creative flair. There was some impressive original photography and design, demonstrating the candidates' understanding of the codes and conventions of their chosen genre of advertising.

As with the magazine option, only a small number of Centres submitted work without original photography and they were marked accordingly.

Set Brief 6: Local newspapers

Only a small number of Centres offered this option, generally successfully. Again, candidates' use of ICT has improved so that there is less reliance on DTP software templates, which can impose awkward restrictions on candidates' layout and make it difficult for them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the codes and conventions of newspapers.

Set Brief 7: Entertainment website

Candidates who tackled the entertainment website managed, on the whole, to produce well planned websites which were effectively aimed at their target audiences.

Set Brief 8: Website promotion for a new band

Those who chose the more popular website promotions for a new band succeeded in using some very good original photography and in demonstrating their understanding of the codes and conventions. This is an effective option for candidates who are able to develop technical ICT skills and link them to their own creativity. There is a good example of a promotional website in the Teachers' Guide, with detailed band members' profiles and interviews, together with moving image and audio clips of the band's music

Moderators reported that they sometimes found website discs difficult to access. In addition, in some cases, a print-only version of the websites was submitted. Whilst it is important that moderators are sent hard copies of the websites, it is essential that they can also access the site as designed in order to investigate the interactive nature of the production and check the candidates' understanding of the conventions of web publishing. As websites become increasingly popular as an option, it is important that Centres check the accessibility of the final product.

Evaluative Commentaries

The majority of Centres ensure that their candidates produce reflective commentaries, demonstrating the candidates' progress in their knowledge and understanding of the media and the key concepts, and in their acquisition of key technical and creative skills. However, there are still a few Centres that over-reward their candidates for a few rough narrative comments on the process of production, with no sense of evaluation at all.

Teachers' Tips

The Evaluative Commentary

Instructions on how to write the evaluative commentary in three separate sections are given on pages 40-42 of the new edition of the specification.
Detailed guidelines on how to write the evaluative commentary for each of the eight briefs are given in the Teachers' Guide. These can be issued directly to candidates.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Media Studies (1918)

June 2006 Assessment Series

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
1	60	-	-	44	36	28	21	14	0
2	60	43	36	29	18	-	-	-	0
3	60	-	-	47	38	29	21	13	0
4	60	48	39	31	17	-	-	-	0
5	60	-	-	39	29	19	10	1	0
6	60	44	32	21	12	-	-	-	0
7	120	99	84	69	57	45	33	21	0

Syllabus Options

Foundation Tier - FA

	Maximum Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall Threshold Marks	240	143	116	90	64	38	0
Percentage in Grade	-	19.68	25.05	23.14	15.81	10.24	6.07
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	-	19.68	44.73	67.87	83.69	93.93	100.00

The total entry for the option was 2199.

Foundation Tier - FB

	Maximum Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall Threshold Marks	240	145	118	91	64	37	0
Percentage in Grade	-	31.59	26.80	20.26	11.33	6.54	3.49
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	-	31.59	58.39	76.85	89.98	96.51	100.00

The total entry for the option was 569.

Report on the Components Taken in June 2006

Higher Tier - HA

	Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Overall Threshold Marks	240	202	176	147	119	87	71	0
Percentage in Grade	-	5.53	18.81	33.24	25.94	12.79	1.89	1.8
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	-	5.53	24.34	57.58	83.51	96.31	98.20	100.00

The total entry for the option was 3597.

Higher Tier - HB

	Maximum Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Overall Threshold Marks	240	213	183	152	121	86	68	0
Percentage in Grade	-	4.05	20.95	32.10	27.48	11.70	2.03	1.69
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	-	4.05	25.00	57.10	84.57	96.28	98.31	100.00

The total entry for the option was 914.

Overall

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Percentage in Grade	3.33	12.27	21.04	24.68	17.25	9.40	5.41	3.46	3.17
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	3.33	15.60	36.64	61.31	78.57	87.96	93.37	96.83	100.00

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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