

Report on the Components

June 2007

1918/MS/R/07

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

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General Certificate of Secondary Education GCSE Media Studies - 1918

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Report on GCSE Media Studies Textual Analysis 1918/1 - 4

July 2007

General Comments

Responses to this paper continue to improve. Most candidates are well prepared for this examination, can engage with texts, can use media language terminology where required and can produce detailed textual analyses. It is now the norm to attempt all four questions.

There were some good examples this year of theory embedded within textual analysis. The equilibrium-disequilibrium-new equilibrium structure was often usefully applied to sitcoms – with specific examples in the better cases – though categories such as ‘domcom’ and ‘actcom’ often failed to aid analysis. Candidates should be reminded that simply referencing a theory is no substitute for textual analysis with specific exemplification. Theory is only useful in this paper if it aids analysis and can be discarded if it doesn’t.

Please note that the moving image extract for the 2008 papers will be on DVD. A note will be sent out to Centres in the Autumn confirming this.

Recurrent problems:

Many candidates still write too much for question 1 and not enough for question 4. The answers to question 1 did not have to be complete sentences, just brief statements of features that could be in the form of bullet points. This meant that Foundation Tier candidates were often more successful than those Higher Tier candidates who read too much into the question. Note, however, that the format of question 1 will change slightly next year for the Higher Tier papers (see below).

A few candidates, particularly at Foundation Tier, still failed to separate their answers to 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 their less competent candidates for Foundation Tier. Some Foundation candidates gained very high marks and may have gained more than a grade C if entered for the Higher Tier.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Moving Image: Components 1 and 2

1 Some candidates still wrote too much, but most performed well in this question.

Most candidates identified the home nature of the setting.

Foundation Tier candidates could score full marks on number of main characters by stating that there were five of them, but Higher Tier candidates needed to link the number to generic conventions (which most did), or discuss the use of stereotyping, the cohesive group, or any other convention.

Most responses on soundtrack correctly identified the laughter track or studio audience laughter as a generic convention. Many candidates, as is common, conflated 'soundtrack' and 'music', cited the 'light-hearted soundtrack' and gained no marks.

Centres are advised to *constantly* remind candidates of the range of elements covered by the term soundtrack.

Some candidates – mostly in Foundation Tier – did not appear to know what a title sequence was, but most could identify a generic convention in use in the extract.

Please note that the format of question 1 at Higher Tier will change slightly next year (from a four part question to a two part question) but the knowledge tested will not change. Candidates may be asked, for example, to decide for themselves which elements to select to exemplify generic conventions.

For Foundation Tier, the question will remain the same or similar to this year's question so that candidates are given more guidance.

- 2 Question 2 asked candidates to analyse naturalistic media language elements of the extract. This proved to be a relatively difficult task and fewer candidates scored highly on this question this year.

Centres are advised to include a naturalistic situation comedy in the three that they study, so candidates are used to analysing this form of media language

Some candidates gave a number of examples and explanations for each sub-question – this was to their benefit as they often made relevant points towards the end of the answer and the accumulation of relevant points showed a confident understanding of the constructed nature of naturalism.

Most candidates could analyse how the sets were designed to look real.

Fewer candidates could discuss acting and instead described the narrative or the characters.

There were some very good answers on lighting that showed an acute awareness of how naturalistic lighting is constructed. Weaker candidates would assert that the lighting was natural domestic lighting or sunlight.

Many candidates discussed the lack of 'fancy' editing or camerawork techniques and those with a firm grasp of terminology were usually much more succinct and accurate. Some candidates argued wrongly that the camera zoomed in to people's faces to show emotion or that there were jump cuts between characters. It is often hard for candidates to be accurate about camera work and editing in exam conditions which suggests they need a lot of practice in this skill.

Centres are advised to give their candidates some camera work and editing experience or extra practice at analysing camera work and editing if their candidates are entered for moving image textual analysis but their production is not a video.

Some candidates could identify relevant aspects of media language but were insufficiently explicit about how they created realism.

- 3 Question 3 proved accessible and most candidates made use of the bullet points (or listed points for Higher Tier) in their answers, but weaker candidates 'plodded through' the bullet points and made the same point repeatedly.

Centres are advised to inform candidates that the bullet points are there as a helpful starting point and that it is more important to develop an argument than to work through them slavishly

Most candidates could discuss how the setting, the humour and the characters addressed a mainstream family audience, but far fewer could discuss the overall style of the extract; successful responses often referred to its conventional nature, less successful responses simply repeated points made previously in the answer.

Many weaker answers exemplified the range of character types that *My Family* presents with a great deal of unnecessary description.

Some candidates, usually in the Foundation Tier, discussed the appeal of *My Family* to large families rather than a 'large, family audience'.

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

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 that are clearly not situation comedies (*Little Britain* was again the main culprit, but *The Catherine Tate Show* also appears).

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

Centres are advised to study two similar texts and one contrasting text, prepare candidates to adapt their knowledge and understanding to the demands of the questions, and warn them not to discuss other texts that might not be sitcoms.

- 4(b) This question again asked, at Foundation Tier, for a specific number of generic pleasures (or 'reasons why audiences watch') to encourage focused answers. The Higher Tier question was much more demanding, asking about the different appeal of two sitcoms.

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

The Higher Tier question differentiated well between candidates who had simply learned a list of pleasures and those who could discuss and exemplify the different appeal of contrasting situation comedies. Many effective answers contrasted the appeal of conventional and unconventional sitcoms (e.g. *The Royle Family* or *The Office* versus *Friends* or *Only Fools and Horses*). There were some interesting comparisons of British and US sitcoms.

Many candidates discussed target audience rather than audience appeal, producing inaccurate demographic hypothesising ('*The Office* is aimed at people who work in offices' or '*Only fools and Horses* is for a niche audience of older men') instead of discussing the pleasures offered by the texts.

Some texts clearly offered greater opportunities for discussing audience appeal than others. When the candidates had enjoyed the text they were usually more confident in explaining its appeal. There were very few poor answers about *Friends*, for example. Shows such as *Keeping Up Appearances*, on the other hand, left many less able candidates bemused as to their appeal. Moreover, older texts were often seen as inferior simply because they were old. There were, however, some shows that proved surprisingly effective in the right hands – some candidates wrote confidently about the difference in appeal between *Frasier* and *The Young Ones*, for example.

Centres are advised to study sitcoms that the candidates can watch on contemporary television and those with obvious audience pleasures for the candidates.

Print: Components 3 and 4

- 1 This question was generally accurately answered, though some higher tier candidates failed to make explicit points about their chosen element was typical of music magazines. Some Higher Tier candidates discussed how elements of media language reflected the nature of rock or punk music and in doing so often failed to pick an element that fitted the conventions of the music magazine genre as a whole. Thus, it is not a convention that there is a purple haze around the photo on the front cover, however much this might fit rock conventions.
- 2 Responses to this question varied greatly in quality. Some candidates clearly did not understand the meaning of 'house style' and tried to discuss how the style of the magazine reflected house music.

Most candidates identified repetition of colours and, to a lesser extent layout, but more struggled with fonts and graphics. Those who could identify the consistent use of sans serif fonts had little difficulty, but these were a minority. Many candidates clearly did not understand the term 'graphics' and, particularly in Higher Tier, were not rewarded for discussing the content of photography. Those that noticed the repetition of the flame graphic found the task easiest.

- 3 Question 3 proved accessible in that most candidates effectively discussed audience address using some or all of the bullet points. The main differentiator between the answers was the sophistication and range of the analysis.

Some candidates profiled the audience for *Rip and Burn* – they had clearly been taught about audience circulation and wanted to apply this, inappropriately, to a question about audience address.

- 4(a) An accessible question for which there were very few poor answers, though some answers were descriptive.

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.

Report on the Components taken in June 2007

- 4(b) This question again asked for a specific number of pleasures (or 'reasons why') to get focused answers at Foundation Tier and asked a much more demanding question about different appeal 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 Tier candidates struggled less with this question than their peers doing the equivalent Moving Image question, possibly because many of them had studied clearly contrasting magazines and because the appeal to audience is perhaps more explicit in this medium. Better candidates could explicitly contrast the appeal of two magazines and would organise their response so they covered both magazines at once, thus cutting down on the repetition that always follows when they discuss one text and then the next.

REPORT FOR PUBLICATION TO CENTRES-2007

Media Studies GCSE 1918 05/06 Cross Media Topics

General Comments

Much of this report echoes the key points raised in previous years' reports and at some points the keen eye will note that a number of observations are repeated verbatim. In many ways this is a good thing as it is clear that Centres are adopting good practice which in turn is reflected in the quality of the responses provided by Candidates. However on a number of levels it also suggests that certain suggestions for good practice are not being embraced in the spirit in which this report is published.

Nonetheless on the whole Centres have got to grips with the idiosyncrasies of this Unit and once again a significant number of students achieved full marks this year both at Higher and Foundation level. Again the Centres who had taken a clear and defined case study approach allowed their candidates ample opportunity to succeed as opposed to those Centres where candidates were given 'carte blanche' or a choice from a selection of clearly unfocussed and under prepared foci. This is of course not to deny students opportunity to take an autonomous approach to this unit but it is a rare candidate indeed who demonstrates an aptitude to thrive within this context without at least some firm guidance. This is a task that some 17-18 year olds find challenging and, though one could argue that it is excellent preparation for work at a higher level in a number of disciplines, it must be done within very tight parameters. It is worth noting at this point that the nature of the paper is somewhat synoptic and as such Centres are reminded that notes cannot be taken into the examination.

It is again a depressing fixture of these reports to have to point out the small but significant number of candidates and in a couple of cases small Centres where the responses offered were based upon materials encountered in the news or on a billboard witnessed en route to the examination. Nonetheless this was, as said, a minority and it must again be stated that there was a great deal of very good practice within the vast majority of Centres which allowed candidates to articulate quite effectively in response to the demands of the paper.

Effective differentiation between tiers seemed readily apparent within most Centres but it is still nonetheless disappointing to mark the work of a Foundation Tier candidate who clearly would have flourished in the Higher paper, and in one case a Centre where a large number of candidates could clearly have excelled beyond the mark range stipulated at this level. Conversely at least one Centre had clearly entered a vast majority of candidates at Higher Tier who would have better prospered at Foundation and resultantly a majority of such candidates would not have attained a grade. Foresight and preparation are the key and mock examinations and trial papers cannot be urged enough as a means of ensuring that candidates are entered for the relevant paper and therefore grades. OCR INSET is also an extremely useful forum for guidance and identification of the key requirements of the paper.

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 as many candidates as possible are appropriately prepared and briefed for the exam with case studies and not generalisations and it is again firmly suggested that in order to familiarise candidates with the demands of the questions prior papers are used as a basis for discussion during lessons as well as in mocks. A characteristic of this paper is that there is little change to the 'flavour' of the question despite subtleties of focus and wording and therefore Centres can better prepare their candidates to show their flair and understanding without the need for worrying too long about idiosyncratic elements of the question paper. With this said it was pleasing to see that many centres had embraced this

approach without having to resort to pre-prepared answers. Many students thrived with the framework of preparation provided (q.v.) and were allowed to interpret and provide a sense of the personal engagement, a characteristic of the Proficient and Excellent response.

Once again evidence suggests that responses using two examples in answer to a question tended to be better focussed than when three were used and 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 notable instances of this within the Higher Tier. That is not to say that exceptions were not apparent within this years responses and there were indeed a small but significant number of candidates who had clearly been well briefed and who used the time effectively to offer detailed in depth responses to the questions posed.

As ever 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 and appropriate terminology is rewarded. This was particularly obvious with reference to News. It was pleasing to see some of the most able candidates offering interesting ideas and insights into complex media theories such as Uses and Gratifications and Maslow, although there were equally a significant number 'bolting on' theories or 'carpet bombing' hoping that by simply adding a few practitioners names into the body of their work it would add credibility to a response. Theory is much welcomed at GCSE Level but only if it is employed to further illuminate the response and, it must be said, there are candidates who achieve the very highest of marks without referring to a single theorist. It is again important to note that a number of candidates were disadvantaged by poor literacy skills and in some instances the actual presentation of their work which on some occasions was near illegible making it very difficult for an examiner to offer an intelligent assessment.

There were few candidates who failed to make good use of their time this year giving equal time and consideration to both questions although again there were a few 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. Those that failed to use time effectively were generally those who were ill-equipped or unable to tackle the paper and such work tended to demonstrate time dedicated to graffiti and doodling as opposed to experiencing issues regarding strictures of time within the exam room.

Very few candidates were confused by 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 are well advised to be prepared to answer two questions on the same subject matter.

FOUNDATION TIER SECTION A

QUESTION 1

Once again this question was answered by a relatively few candidates although there were some examples of good practice amongst those that did. The majority of students 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 there is clear evidence that a number of Centres are teaching to such examples. Again this year many candidates wrote about institutions without reference to specific new stories and again it is important to note that this is a

perfectly legitimate and acceptable way of tackling the question with many candidates achieving pleasingly high marks from this approach. That said however there is still a general feeling 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 or read in the paper that morning (q.v.) ultimately limits that candidate's potential - once again the importance of specific closely analysed case studies must be stressed. Consideration of target audience was again informed with 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 in generic terms or by referring to social classifications without the facility or understanding to effectively explore such significance.

It was noted that a number of candidates at this level who undertook this question ended up offering simple narratives of events or indeed even offering their personal opinion as to how news institutions treat people and events. Although points may be made with passion few such points were anchored within a media context and as such limited the candidate's marks.

At the higher end of this level there were nonetheless 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*, *The Guardian*, *The Times* a number of news programmes ranging from *Newsround* to Channel 5 News and the BBC, a variety of regional and national news offerings and a varied spread of radio stations and internet sites. It is worth noting again that documentaries are not strictly classified as news although they do refer to newsworthy events and candidates who refer to them will find their marks impeded. Nonetheless there were very few examples of such texts being used this year.

QUESTION 2

As with previous years candidates at Foundation level seemed better equipped to answer this question than Question 1, with clear evidence of effective use of case studies which showed preparation and planning. A pleasing 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 as opposed to institutions. However it is pleasing to see that some Centres have been referring to advertising agencies or personnel as a way of contextualising certain adverts and this is only to be encouraged, although candidates should be guided away from simply offering a history of a certain agency or a certain product without considering it in the context of 'presentation'.

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 with many successful analyses being offered on texts as diverse as *The Blair Witch Project*, *Snakes on a Plane* and *Gladiator*. Similarly competent responses were also offered with reference to Coca Cola's print and internet campaign and Levis television and magazine adverts. A number of candidates also offered perceptive and cogent responses comparing different brands' use of media, e.g. Lynx and Chanel, Sensodyne and Gillette, Coca Cola and Virgin Cola and Levis and Benetton. Some Centres chose charity campaigns and although these provided the more able candidate with opportunity to analyse appeal it posed an added difficulty to the weaker candidate who was first confronted with the difficulty of actually working out what was being advertised and in turn would simply offer rather lurid descriptions of the more shocking adverts without considering their significance.

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

SECTION B

QUESTION 3

Again there were very few responses to this question and such responses tended to be answered less effectively than Question 1. This once again largely owed to poor choice of examples to show understanding of changes in representation over time. References to the recent departure of Tony Blair as Prime Minister and the treatment of German prisoners in World War II invite little obvious comparison beyond the facetious- which I shall leave from these pages. Such subject matter does not serve as a clear platform upon which a student can access this question and again Centres are urged to go for the simplest approach possible. This question is challenging enough for many at this level and so clear and obviously comparable texts are essential in order to give us much opportunity as possible. As ever significant number of candidates tended to simply describe 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 and though this has its positive features which were duly rewarded a lack of consideration of the inherent concept of messages and values associated with such changes leads to a limited response. Similarly once again candidates could get quite incendiary regarding the socio-political issues underlying news stories rather than actually focussing on how events are represented. As a result there were a significant number of responses crusading about the Iraq conflict and the recent regrettable disappearance of Madeleine McCann. This should be discouraged whatever the political leanings or personal viewpoints of a candidate. Although significantly fewer than in previous years some candidates unfortunately compared news stories that were within a short period of one another, for example the previously mentioned disappearance of Maddie and that of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, which served only to limit the marks available. Centres are advised to choose news events which will allow candidates to fully explore the similarities and differences in representations over time.

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 Falklands war in comparison to recent events in Iraq, and Pathe newsreel of German prisoners of war during World War II in comparison to prisoners from the current Iraq conflict. Again potted histories of events and/or celebrities tend to lead to the most basic of responses. Centres are reminded of the importance of focussing on how the media have influenced such perception of such celebrities and/or events.

It is also worth pointing out that some candidates became somewhat confused between messages and values and news values. It is worth stressing the difference as this did lead to a number of diminished opportunities.

QUESTION 4

Again 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 a degree more replication of subject matter with some candidates viewing it as another opportunity to answer Question 2. Again 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 also 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. Once again Centres are advised to choose adverts from significantly different time periods which will allow candidates to fully engage with the spirit of the question, a consideration of how messages and values have changed as well as of course 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 tended to produce weaker responses as this impeded their ability to develop an argument. Popular choices at this level involved Tango and Lucozade especially using the Lara Croft adverts as well as the hardy perennials of Levis and Coke where there is lots to say, a fact that characterises the reasons why these products have been ubiquitous within the pages of these reports over the years.

HIGHER TIER SECTION A

QUESTION 1

This question was answered well by a number of candidates although, as noted above, significantly less than those who answered Question 2. Once again it is pleasing to see the sophistication and maturity exhibited by a number of students in their discussions of how news is produced and the effect on audiences. The breadth of knowledge and facility to respond to the challenges of the question at the top end continues to increase with each year. There were some highly effective comparisons of different media and again it was pleasing to see another year in which radio and the internet were being heartily embraced by Centres. Some of the more able candidates provided extremely broad but also in depth analysis. .

Good practice was shown this year with some centres focussing on the Jade Goody racism story that was in the Sun and the Guardian and BBC news, showing the tabloidisation of Broadsheet and BBC. Really detailed textual analysis, clear focus on audience, using highly precise and complex media terms, led to very high marks. The subject matter engaged the more able candidates allowing them to shine as well as offering opportunity for the weaker candidates. It is a point worth making that choosing texts and stories which interest candidates is as important as the actual preparation in media terms. In a paper that is challenging enough already this gives them something to bolster confidence and which should not alienate them further from the requirements of the paper.

Other good news stories included the Michael Jackson trial verdict as covered by Murdoch/News International elements such as Sky News and The Sun and a number of successful comparisons between websites with TV news, especially highlighting the different target audiences and the speed and interactive nature of news websites. That said some centres found news more challenging and the candidates tended to write about society's behaviour rather than how the news represented it.

A few candidates failed to offer comparison, merely offering two stand alone descriptions of different media which again 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, although it must be noted there were some who proved perfectly capable of dealing with such a broad study and offered insightful and lucid responses. E.g. excellent answers as they were not able to stand out or be original or confident.

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

QUESTION 2

Once again 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, all perfectly valid, be it a consideration of one companies' campaigns across a variety of media or comparable companies' different employment of different media. Most candidates effectively used specific examples although some, who had clearly been well briefed as to the role a certain advertising agency might have played, could be seduced into writing 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 successful responses included the Peter Kay John Smith's adverts as well as the Nescafe Trinny and Susannah adverts which lent themselves to detailed textual analysis with clear understanding of celebrity endorsement, humour and methods for capturing attention with a target audience. And of course Levis and Coca-Cola offered opportunities for detailed response.

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

SECTION B

QUESTION 3

Many varied responses were offered to this question at this level. Once again 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 again 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 new stories from at least two distinct eras. Most candidates, however, explored effectively comparable news stories to fully develop responses to this question and some particularly lucid, mature and sensitive discussions were offered. In particular one Centre offered a study of the Iraq war in comparison to the Dunkirk withdrawal - represented as a victory. Looking at **Pathe** newsreel and newspapers of the day there was opportunity for detailed textual analysis. Comments of tabloid and TV coverage of Iraq was, mature and informed, referring to how embedded journalist as a controlled sources of news discussions on how unilateral journalists like Frank Gardener and Alan Johnston risking all for the truth. Analysis of the use of new technology, mobile phones downloads, Aljazeera and the Baghdad blogger provided ample opportunity for the examiner to award highly.

Although nowhere near as significant at Foundation level there was still a notable of candidates who did not fully grasp the concept of representation and so reverted to producing an answer

more appropriate to Section A. Some candidates also 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 describing meaning of representation. As stated above the importance of rigorously preparing candidates for this key concept cannot be overemphasised.

Again 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.

QUESTION 4

Again this was a generally well answered question with appropriate examples used demonstrating effective preparation by Centres. There were again some issues regarding the concepts of different time periods, still a few candidates compared adverts that were from the same year and Centres are again 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 and there were many proficient examples of responses which demonstrated this). Many responses showed an understanding of representation with some particularly lucid and 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.

Some excellent answers were offered on Lucozade, Levis, washing powder, Dove soap, the Oxo family and Walkers crisps. An inspired use of Women in TA adverts produced interesting, detailed textual analysis and insightful remarks about changing gender roles. Candidates who chose totally different subjects tended to produce weaker responses as this impeded their ability to develop an argument.

Principal Moderator's Report 2007

Coursework Portfolio (1918/7)

General Comments

The standard of work submitted for the coursework portfolio this year was high, with the vast majority of Centres fulfilling the requirements of the specification admirably. Centres are setting a range of interesting, good quality assignments that test their candidates' knowledge and understanding of the key concepts. There were many examples of well written, engaged responses from the candidates, while the trend to include a short practical production response is increasing. This benefits the candidates, helping to inform their theoretical understanding.

There was generally very good evidence of knowledge and understanding of media concepts, and impressive 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.

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 are still a few Centres that present assignments with no annotations at all. Centres are advised to use the wording of the assessment criteria from the specification for their annotations. A brief Summative Comment on the Individual Assessment Task Form is also essential so that the moderator can see how the mark has been arrived at.

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 generally done to a highly commendable standard, 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 practical tasks for Assignments 1 and 2 are given on pages 36-38 of the new edition 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.

Where Centres are unsure about setting appropriate tasks, there are some examples of successful assignments in this report below. There are more tasks suggested in the specification (pages 39-40) and others can be accessed in the Teachers' Guide (available on CDROM from OCR).

Video work for Assignment 3 continues to improve, with evidence of better use of technology and improved editing skills. The print production work produced some superb work again this year, demonstrating the candidates' engagement and theoretical knowledge. There were some highly creative designs for magazines with an excellent awareness of target audience. Some of the photographic work for the perfume advertising campaigns was outstanding.

Report on the Components taken in June 2007

The majority of Centres included background planning and research material for Assignment 3 that supported the candidates' marks. There were still a few Centres that included every single response to a questionnaire when an evaluation of the findings is all that is required. 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), while detailed instructions for candidates on what to include are given in the Teachers' Guide CDROM.

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 One and Two (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 a few cases, moderators expressed concerns about the narrowness of the course devised; particularly if both Assignments 1 and 2 were film based essays and the film option were selected for Assignment 3. In order to ensure the study of a range of media texts, Assignments 1 and 2 should focus on different media.

Administration

The majority of Centres are to be congratulated for sending the MS1 forms punctually to the moderators. Centres are to be thanked for making the forms clearly legible; this is very much appreciated as it is acknowledged that it can be a time consuming task. 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

This year there were very few Centres that failed to send the Authentication Form with the coursework. Centres are reminded that they need not send one for every candidate: only one per Centre is required.

Teacher Comments and Annotations

When Centres annotated work carefully, it was extremely useful in seeing how the criteria had been applied and also clearly demonstrated the high quality of the teaching. This dedicated approach was also reflected in the teacher's Summative 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 Teacher Summative Comment risked disadvantaging their candidates, as the absence of annotation or comment made it more difficult for the moderators to see how the marks had been awarded.

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. There were just a few Centres that placed work in the wrong order or where the production work could not easily be matched to the candidate, but the majority of Centres are to be congratulated on the care taken over the presentation of the coursework.

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.

Where adjustments were made, these tended to be in connection with the over-marking of Assignment 3, particularly with regard to the assessment of the 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

As mentioned above, presentation and organization of the portfolios was often exemplary. Moderators were grateful for the care taken over the ordering and clear labelling of the samples with each candidate's name and number. It would be appreciated if Centres avoided three-sided plastic wallets, as these delayed the task of moderation; if Centres are in any doubt, please see pp.46-47 of the specification for instructions on the presentation of the coursework,

Centres are to be thanked for the thoughtful inclusion of copies of posters, magazine advertisements and newspaper articles that had been studied by the candidates.

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.

The Centre Report

The purpose of the report to Centres is intended to give support and useful information that can be acted on. It was dispiriting in a small number of cases to see that some Centres disregarded advice given in previous years.

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 Assessment Form and attach it to the front of the portfolio
- Ensure that all staff have signed **one** Authentication Form 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 confidently setting a range of appropriate and challenging assignments that suit their own interests and their candidates'.

There is inevitably some overlap between 'Languages and Categories' and 'Messages and Values', but Centres need to ensure that the tasks set make a clear distinction between the two. The more focused a task is the better; candidates do not write well when comparing whole films for Assignment 1. A five minute sequence or the opening sequence will test candidates' knowledge and understanding far more effectively and give them space to demonstrate close detailed textual analysis. Differentiation of tasks undoubtedly benefits the candidates in the lower mark bands who struggle with the more challenging titles.

Centres are reminded that the tasks suggested below and in the specification are only suggestions, and that they are free to continue setting tasks which have proved successful in the past or to try out new ones which suit their enthusiasms and their candidates' interests.

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. A small number of Centres asked candidates to produce two separate analyses of the opening sequences of two films. This means that candidates could not access the higher mark bands.

The most popular option for this assignment continues to be a comparison between the opening sequences of two films, but there was also some very good work on documentary, music video and advertising. Some candidates find it easier to compare two very different genres of film 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.

TEACHERS' TIPS

Assignment 1

Examples of Successful Tasks set in 2007

- A comparison between the ways in which genre and narrative are established in the opening sequences of *Rebel without a Cause* and *Gregory's Girl* or *Gladiator* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or *Forrest Gump* and *Rainman* or *Love Actually* and *Oceans 11*
- A comparison between the ways in which two documentaries use codes and conventions to convey their subject matter. Successful choices of documentaries included: *Touching the Void* and *Supersize Me* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Bowling for Columbine*
- A comparison of the ways in which three television advertisements for cars use media language in order to target their audiences.
- Compare the codes and conventions used to create identity and image of two artists in music videos, such as Geri Halliwell and Missy Elliot
- Compare the ways in which three different newspapers (*The Sun*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Independent*), use codes and conventions to construct brand identity
- Compare the codes and conventions of the breakfast shows on Radio 1 and on 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.

Some of the candidates' best work is produced in this assignment, as Centres are setting tasks that engage and enthuse their candidates. There was some very good work on representations in advertising, comic strips, reality TV and crime fiction.

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 2007

- Compare representations of masculinity in *Billy Elliot* and *Bend it Like Beckham*
- Discuss how the genre of reality TV relies on stereotypes, looking in particular at class and values in *Wife Swap* and *Big Brother*
- Compare the representations of police and criminals in *Midsomer Murders* and *CSI* or *Life on Mars* and *The Sweeney*
- Compare representations of Britishness in *Little Britain* and another comedy sketch show
- Compare the representations of women in early and contemporary TV soap powder advertisements
- Compare the representations of ethnicity in *EastEnders* and *Hollyoaks*
- Compare the cultural representations in comics from China and Britain
- Show how different cultural and historical backgrounds influence the messages and values in comic strips: *Barefoot Gen* and *When the Wind Blows*
- 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 the usual clear 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 and to demonstrate what they could do.

Print work continues to be the most popular option, with some superb examples of magazines that would not have looked out of place amongst those on sale in a newsagent's. There was an increase in the use of original photography, although a few Centres still allowed found images to dominate.

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 Assignment 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 new edition of the specification). Guidelines on this point are also given in the detailed instructions to candidates for each individual brief in the Teachers' Guide.

Formats

Moderators experienced a number of problems this year with disks that did not open and DVDs that did not play. It is essential that Centres check that the work can be accessed before they send it to the moderator. Work needs to be tested on a standard DVD player or PC before it is sent. Moderation is a time consuming process and moderators should not be placed in the position of having to wait for another version of the candidates' work to be sent.

Planning and research material

Centres are reminded that the primary purpose of the inclusion of planning and research material is to offer clear evidence to the moderator. 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 new edition 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 written so that Centres can give them directly to the candidates.

Set Brief 1: Television sequence

Television sitcoms, soaps and crime dramas were examples of successful sequences offered this year for this brief. Editing was generally better than last year, although in a minority of cases there appeared to have been very little or no editing at all. The candidates who undertook this task did so with enthusiasm and commitment.

Centres are reminded of the importance of planning and that storyboards are an essential part of this process. Even if the finished product varies from the original storyboard, it is a requirement that the storyboard is submitted. 'Recce' shots, scripts and shooting scripts may also be included as evidence of planning.

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. Although this brief is possibly more ambitious and more difficult to succeed in than the television brief, there were some effective productions with impressive locations and camerawork. Some candidates managed to make the most of the mundane school environment through careful selection of location, focused acting and tight editing.

However, editing remains the weakest part of the production. Centres can help candidates by beginning with a short production exercise that focuses on editing and by encouraging shorter finished productions that are more tightly edited.

Set Brief 3: Radio

A small number of Centres continue to offer this option, producing chat shows, music stations and magazine style programmes. These productions were well suited to candidates of all levels. Centres are advised to limit the length of the music tracks, so that candidates can demonstrate a variety of skills.

Set Brief 4: Magazine sample

There were some excellent magazines produced, with impressive use of original photography and original writing. 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'. Music magazines were particularly popular and successful this year.

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. There was some concern this year that the requirements of the Brief were not always met. Where original photography was not used, Centres marked candidates accordingly.

Set Brief 5: Advertising campaign for a new product

There was some photographic work of a very high standard, particularly for fragrance advertising campaigns. These were creative, artistic and meticulously carried out – a pleasure to moderate. Many Centres have designed excellent schemes of work for this assignment, resulting in the engagement and commitment of the candidates.

Sometimes the distinction between a billboard and a magazine advertisement is ignored; Centres do need to consider the different target audiences and ensure that there is a difference. It would also be appreciated if the advertisements were labelled to clarify their purposes.

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

There were some good examples of entertainment websites this year, although this still remains a less popular option. Those who did undertake it managed on the whole to produce well planned websites which were effectively aimed at their target audiences.

Moderators reported that they sometimes found website disks 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.

Set Brief 8: Website promotion for a new band

This option was very well tackled by the small number of candidates who chose it. The website promotion gave candidates the opportunity for some lively original photography, which then had to be carefully manipulated in order to fit into the websites. Candidates evidently engaged well with the task, demonstrating their understanding of conventions and their creativity at the same time. Interviews, profiles and tour information were well covered, demonstrating the candidates' IT skills effectively.

The problems associated with accessing the disks have been mentioned above, but is worth reiterating here. It is the Centre's responsibility to check that discs can be accessed and to send a print version of the website. Moderators need to be able to investigate the interactive nature of the production and check the candidates' understanding of the conventions of web publishing.

Evaluative Commentaries

On the whole, candidates do not find it easy to evaluate their own work, although the commentaries are improving. However, there are still a few Centres that over-reward their candidates for a few notes on the production process, even when there is no evaluation at all. Detailed instructions for Centres and candidates are to be found in the specification and in the Teachers' Guide CDROM.

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 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.

Conclusion

There are many examples of excellent Centres, where candidates are enthused and high quality learning takes place. Centres are to be congratulated for their hard work, careful planning and delivery of the course this year.

**General Certificate of Secondary Education
Media Studies (1918)
June 2007 Assessment Series**

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS MOVING IMAGE (F)	60			46	38	30	23	16
02 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS MOVING IMAGE (H)	60	45	38	30	20			
03 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS PRINT (F)	60			44	34	27	19	11
04 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS PRINT (H)	60	42	35	28	14			
05 CROSS-MEDIA TOPICS (F)	60			38	30	20	12	4
06 CROSS-MEDIA TOPICS (H)	60	41	29	18	10			
07 MEDIA PORTFOLIO	120	99	84	70	58	46	34	22
87 MEDIA PORTFOLIO (C/FORWARD)	120	99	84	70	58	46	34	22

Specification Options

Foundation Tier

FA Moving Image	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	240				148	124	96	69	42
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	240				20.5	43.9	71.4	88.4	97.8

The total entry for the examination was 1703

FB Print	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	240				146	122	93	65	37
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	240				23.6	49.6	73.2	90.8	98.6

The total entry for the examination was 506

FC Moving Image Portfolio C/Forward	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	240				154	126	96	69	42
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	240				0	0	0	0	0

The total entry for the examination was 2

Report on the Components taken in June 2007

FD Print Portfolio C/Forward	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	240				152	122	93	65	37
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	240				0	0	0	0	0

The total entry for the examination was 0

Higher Tier

HA Moving Image	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	240	206	178	150	118	88	73		
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	240	5.7	25.7	55.3	85.5	96.6	98.0		

The total entry for the examination was 3739

HB Print	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	240	201	173	145	116	82	65		
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	240	4.5	24.7	54.1	83.1	96.9	98.4		

The total entry for the examination was 1329

HC Moving Image Portfolio C/Forward	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	240	219	185	151	118	88	73		
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	240	0	0	0	0	0	0		

The total entry for the examination was 0

HD Print Portfolio C/Forward	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	240	216	182	148	116	82	65		
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	240	0	0	0	0	0	0		

The total entry for the examination was 0

Overall

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	3.9	18.3	39.5	67.0	82.2	90.7	95.5	98.1

The total entry for the examination was 7279

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

(General Qualifications)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

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