GCSE

Media Studies

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J526**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Media Studies (J526)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

B321 Individual Media Portfolio

General Comments

The controlled assessment work submitted for this unit this year was of a very good standard overall. There were many examples of creative approaches taken by centres, resulting from established good practice and well-structured courses. The work sampled demonstrated the candidates' high level of engagement and enabled them to demonstrate their understanding of **Media Language** and **Representation**, the two concepts that are tested in this unit.

The best work was seen from centres that selected their topic, texts and production exercises to suit the expertise of the staff and to engage their candidates' interests. Centres have gained in confidence in this unit, resulting in more examples of candidates being given a certain amount of autonomy in the selection of the texts for study for the Analytical Assignment. This ensured that the candidates could demonstrate an excellent level of understanding and engagement and produce very impressive portfolios, while meeting the assessment criteria.

Examples of successful tasks are given below, in order to help centres ensure that they make the best choices for their candidates.

Centres are reminded that a minimum of two existing media texts must be studied for the analytical assignment. They are also reminded that the element of comparison between the two existing texts is essential for candidates to achieve the higher levels.

Whilst the topics are set by the exam board and must be adhered to, centres are able to devise their own tasks for the comparative analytical assignment and for the production exercise. Centres are also able to use the exemplar tasks suggested in the specification, or in the OCR GCSE Media Studies textbook. Particularly popular and successful topics this year were Advertising and Film Genres. Popular Music was also popular, but tended to produce varied results, depending on how much autonomy was given to candidates in their selection of texts for study.

The sections of the portfolio
Centres are reminded that there are three distinct sections required for the portfolio and that these should be clearly separated and presented in the following order:

- Analytical Assignment
- Production Exercise
- Evaluative Commentary, together with evidence of research and planning material.

Evidence of research and planning
There was generally much better evidence of research and planning this year. Where centres did not include such evidence, this has been highlighted in the moderator's report and the centre is requested to act on this for next year. The assessment criteria for the Evaluative Commentary on pages 31-32 of the online specification clarify the importance of research and planning as part of the portfolio. If research and planning evidence is scanned in and presented as part of a retrospective commentary, it is essential that this is made clear to the moderator and that all details are included.

Many excellent centres had clearly guided their candidates to produce a stage by stage account of the whole process. This included a range of documents, including considerable research into similar media texts and detailed, annotated work. Annotations of existing texts can be a very successful approach to individual research, but it is important that centres ensure that

candidates avoid merely printing out examples of existing media texts and presenting them without comments or annotations.

A small number of centres included all class notes and exercise books where only a few pages had been used, making packages unnecessarily heavy. Centres are requested to include only evidence of individual research and planning.

Key concept areas
Best practice was demonstrated where there was a coherent approach to the portfolio, which meant that all three tasks were linked and candidates were able to refer back to the analytical task in their evaluation of the production exercise. Centres are reminded that each of the three sections of the portfolio should focus on **Media Language** and **Representation,** the two concept areas that are being tested in this unit.

Organisation and the recording of marks
There has been a welcome increase in the number of centres that submitted portfolios that were clearly organised and presented, with distinct labelling of each section of the portfolio. There were still a small number of centres that sent work that was disorganised, or without cover sheets clearly filled in. Centres that presented work meticulously tended to be those where they had taken a more rigorous approach to the whole process, resulting in the work being assessed appropriately.

Centres are reminded that it is essential that cover sheets are correctly filled in, with candidate numbers and a detailed breakdown of the marks awarded. Marks should be checked, as should transcription from the back of the cover sheet to the front. It is also vital to check that the total mark on the cover sheet matches the mark on the MS1 before sending the work to the moderator. There were a few cases where this process had clearly not been carried out. The topic and tasks must be clearly set out in detail on the cover sheets. Centres are reminded that they must select **one** topic only for this unit from the list of options on pages 9-11 of the online specification.

Centres are reminded that the use of three sided plastic wallets is not permitted, as this holds up the moderation process (see page 2 of the Controlled Assessment Submission Instructions).

Teacher comments and annotations
Almost all centres included detailed and thorough teacher summative comments on the cover sheets, making the reasons for the allocation of marks clear, and referring to the assessment criteria. They also offered detailed, helpful annotations on the work itself; this made it the moderation process go smoothly and made it easier for the moderators to support the marks allocated.

Centres are reminded that it is essential that hard copies of the cover sheets, with detailed summative comments, are sent to the moderator, and it is expected that hard copies of the work, together with detailed teacher annotations, are also sent.

Use of original images
Best practice involved the use of original images for the production exercise, and there was work of an exceptionally high standard in this area this year. As stated in the specification, the use of original images is strongly encouraged, as it enables candidates to demonstrate their creativity, originality and technical skills. Centres are strongly advised to avoid relying entirely on found images, as it makes it harder for candidates to demonstrate creativity and personal engagement and achieve the higher levels.

Assessment
The majority of centres applied the assessment criteria accurately to their candidates' work. There were a small number of adjustments made. Centres are strongly advised to look at exemplar work, on the Professional Development section of the website at http://cpdhub.ocr.org.uk

Where centres overmarked the comparative Analytical Assignment, this was often because of a lack of detailed comparison, which is required to gain Level 3 or above, or because the work was lacked a detailed discussion of the ways in which the technical elements constructed particular representations.

The Analytical Assignment
This element of the unit was generally approached well, particularly where candidates had some autonomy over the texts used. The candidates' enthusiasm and engagement were clearly evident in these centres, and learning was particularly well demonstrated.

The variety of texts selected this year was impressive, ranging from an investigation into the representation of the Oscar Pistorius case in the tabloid press to a comparison of the representation of the outsider in *Donnie Darko* and *Napoleon Dynamite.*

Where two or three texts (or two or three key scenes in the case of Film Genres) were analysed in detail, candidates were able to focus on the ways in which representations were constructed through the analysis of particular technical elements.
Effective approaches included those that looked at material from the past and compared it to current representations. These approaches are almost always successful, because they often offer explicit traditional or alternative representations of gender, race and class. Advertising and popular music are particularly fruitful topics in this respect. One centre considered the representation of gender in superhero films, which proved to be an accessible task as the texts tend to operate on largely stereotypical lines.
On the whole media terminology was used accurately and appropriately, but there is still a small number of centres where candidates rarely use technical terms (for example, in relation to camerawork or editing), and this inevitably impedes their analysis.

The Production Exercise
This section of the portfolios sees candidates go from strength to strength. There were some very impressive examples of excellent original photography, enabling candidates to demonstrate a strong sense of engagement, creativity and individuality.

The majority of centres had structured their courses carefully so that the Production Exercise was a coherent part of the portfolio, and reinforced their candidates' knowledge and understanding of Media Language and Representation.

Where original photography was used, as it was in the majority of centres, there was a clearer sense of targeting a specific audience and more success in the use of codes and conventions. There were some excellent examples of film noir posters where the centre had asked candidates to produce two contrasting texts: one aimed at a female audience and one aimed at a male audience. There were also many examples of impressive CD covers, advertising campaigns and digipaks, where candidates had been given the choice of music genre.

Where found images were used with little or no manipulation, the production exercises were less successful in demonstrating creativity and understanding of representation. They were also less successful in demonstrating candidates' presentational skills.

A number of centres submitted a very successful mixture of original and manipulated found images. Centres are reminded that where found images are used, their sources should be clearly referenced by candidates.

Careful, detailed annotation of drafts and of the final outcome of front covers, film posters, DVD cases and CD covers was a feature in the most successful centres.

The Evaluative Commentary
Best practice here ensured that candidates analysed the ways in which they had constructed specific representations in their production exercises and reflected on the relative success of their productions. The candidates who had completed the research and planning stages with care and precision tended to be the candidates with the more detailed commentaries.

Some candidates did not seem to understand the purpose of the evaluative commentary, which resulted in vague, generalised responses. Many candidates continued to offer descriptive accounts of the production process, with far too little space devoted to evaluating the process and the finished production. The key areas for candidates to write about are: decisions, revisions, and comments on the relative success, including strengths and weaknesses, of their finished production. A 'sound sense of reflection' is required in the evaluation in order for candidates to achieve a Level 3 or above.

Moderators found that whilst PowerPoint presentations offered well illustrated evaluations, the essay form with embedded screengrabs, images and captions seemed to work best for the majority of candidates, as it allowed them to analyse and reflect on their productions with more depth.

Conclusion
There was an excellent range of analytical and creative work and an improvement in the overall standard in the work seen for this unit. Candidates had engaged well with the texts and the challenging concept of representation. The majority of centres demonstrated good practice in their delivery of the course and ensured that their candidates successfully fulfilled the requirements of the three sections of the portfolio. Centres are to be congratulated for the successful planning, delivery and assessment of this unit.

Summary of best practice
- Work in the portfolio is presented in the correct order.
- Cover sheets are correctly filled in with candidate numbers, topics, texts and titles; a detailed breakdown of the marks awarded; summative comments which refer to the assessment criteria and the specific candidate's achievement.
- There is detailed annotation on the Analytical Assignments, Production Exercises and Evaluative Commentaries, in order to make it clear to the moderator how the marks have been allocated.
- Clear evidence of the research and planning processes is included in the portfolio.
- There are good levels of skill in the production exercise, using original photography and technology.
- Additional information to help support the marks is given in the summative comments on the cover sheets, such as whether the candidate used original photography or found images.

Examples of successful tasks 2015

Topic 1: Documentaries
- Compare the representation of age in *Barely Legal Drivers* and *Children on the Front Line.* Produce a magazine advertisement promoting a new documentary that represents teenagers positively.
- Compare the representation of teenagers and teachers in *Educating Yorkshire* and *Harrow: A Very British School.* Produce a magazine article on a new documentary on education that represents teenagers positively.

Topic 2: Film Genres
- Compare the representation of women in *Sherlock Holmes* and *Double Indemnity*. Produce two film noir posters; one aimed at a male audience and one aimed at a female audience.
- Compare the representation of gender in the sci-fi films *Dune* and *The Matrix* by analysing three key scenes. Create two posters for a new sci-fi film with a prominent male or female character.
- Compare how *Forrest Gump* and *The Village* represent learning and physical difficulties. Produce a poster marketing a new film with a positive representation of disability.
- Compare the representations of race in *Coach Carter* and *Remember the Titans*. Create a DVD cover and poster for a new sports drama.

Topic 3: Popular Music
- Compare the ways in which class and status are represented in *Unfinished Sympathy* by Massive Attack and *Bittersweet Symphony* by The Verve.
- Compare the ways in which teenagers are represented in *Teenage Dirtbag* by Wheatus and *Ill Manors* by Plan B. Produce a CD front and back cover for a new artist with a specific representation of teenagers.
- Compare the representation of gender in Pink's in *Raise Your Glass* and The Pussycat Dolls' *When I Grow Up*. Produce a CD front and back cover featuring a new female artist.

Topic 4: Celebrity
- Compare how Disney ex-stars are represented in the media and how this has affected their transition into adult stars. Produce a magazine front cover and article on a child star.
- Compare the representation of Justin Bieber in still and moving images at different stages of his life. Produce a magazine article on a new youth celebrity.
- Compare the representation of One Direction in the American media with their representation in the UK media. Produce the home page of a website for a new celebrity.

Topic 6: Soap Opera
- Compare the ways in which disability is represented in two contrasting soap operas: *Hollyoaks* and *EastEnders*. Produce a digital storyboard for the opening sequence of a new soap opera with a positive representation of disability.
- Compare the ways in which working class young people are represented in *Waterloo Road* and *EastEnders*. Produce a magazine front cover and contents page to subvert traditional representations of young people.

Topic 7: Sport
- Compare how male and female tennis stars are represented on television and on news websites. Design a web page for a new sports person.
- How have representations of the Paralympics in 2012 changed since the first official Paralympics in 1960? Produce a storyboard for an advertisement for the next Paralympics.

Topic 8: News
- Compare the representation of young people in the London riots of 2012 in the *Daily Mail* newspaper and the *Independent* website. Produce a radio news bulletin representing young people in a particular way.
- Compare the representation of the American election debate in Fox News and Al Jazeera English. Produce a magazine article representing a country, city or town in a positive way, using original photography.

Topic 9: Advertising
- Compare the representation of men in three television detergent advertisements. Produce a print advertisement selling detergents to men.
- Discuss the representation of women in a series of cleaning adverts from the 1950s to today. Produce a billboard advertisement advertising a cleaning product.

- Compare and contrast the representation of gender in two television Gillette advertisements. Design a radio, internet or print-based advertising campaign for a new product of your choice.

Topic 10: Video games
- Compare the representation of women in videogames, using Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider* and Princess Peach in *Mario Brothers.* Produce the packaging for a new videogame with a female artist.
- Compare the way men and women are represented in *Halo* and *Mirror's Edge.* Create a game box cover challenging traditional representations of gender.

B322 Textual Analysis and Media Studies Topic (Moving Image)

The quality of answers for this paper continues to rise. Candidates appear well-prepared for the demands of each question and can manage their time in the examination room. In particular, this year has seen a marked improvement in the quality of answers to Q3 on representation and to the editing bullet point of Q2.

The extract for this paper was the opening scene of 'Skyfall' – from Bond discovering that 'Ronson's down' to the point when Bond drives a motorbike through a window and lands on the floor of a market. This extract proved successful in generating informed and interesting responses on genre, media language and representation. It was accessible to weaker candidates but with sufficient sophistication to allow more able candidates to write with evaluative flair.

Question 1
This question was answered well as most candidates could state two generic conventions. Stronger answers referred to conventions that would apply to the whole range of action/adventure sub-genres; weaker answers might state elements specific to this extract (such as the car chase, the suits, the use of guns) and fail to link these to wider conventions. Candidates successfully identified several unexpected conventions, which were credited, including: a challenging location; a race against time; peaks and troughs (when linked to specifically action/adventure events); danger; and a quest or mission. Very few candidates simply named conventions; most gave specific exemplification.

Some weaker answers discussed 'protagonists' and 'antagonists' without linking these to the genre. Better answers discussed their heroism and villainy, or discussed particular aspects of the hero. These included: the heroic protagonist being controlled by a government authority in some way; chaos, which the hero has to sort out; the heroic protagonist going off-grid or being a maverick.

Question 2
Most candidates were able to give examples of the use of soundtrack to create connotations, many choosing to give one musical example and one diegetic sound example, which helped create variety in the answer. Most candidates were able to identify the differences in tone and pace of the music during the contrasting elements of the sequence and fewer candidates this year made the mistake of conflating 'soundtrack' with 'music'. Many candidates referred to the enhanced sound of glass smashing, guns firing, cars crunching or tyres squealing.

Editing answers were much improved this year. Many candidates discussed the change in editing pace across specific parts of the extract, the use of cross-cutting between Istanbul and London, and the use of shot reverse shot between Bond and Eve in the car. Attempts to discuss CGI were nearly always less effective, and some weaker answers struggled understandably to give connotations for continuity editing, eyeline matches, or match on action (though a few very good answers did succeed in this). Some weak answers discussed non-existent jump cuts or slow motion, soundtrack, or aspects of mise en scene such as lighting.

Mise en scene answers were dominated by suits, guns and cars. However, many better answers referred to the low-key lighting in the opening section which allowed for the use of terminology (though weaker attempts described this as 'dark' lighting) and specific exemplification. Many commented on Istanbul as a location.

The extract was rich in camerawork techniques and candidates picked up on these very well, especially the use of crane shots, tracking, hand-held camera, point of view shots, and low and high angle shots. Some weaker candidates discussed editing techniques such as shot reverse shot or found close-ups that weren't there. Those that struggled with connotation would often discuss what the shot revealed and failed to move beyond the descriptive.

Better answers picked examples with clear connotative effect, for example: the orchestral beat as the motorcyclist smashes through the window connoting the dramatic climax; the cross-cutting emphasising the contrast between anxiety in London and physical action in Istanbul; the low key lighting connoting danger and mystery; the aerial shot creating a sense of power and spectacle. Weaker answers would suggest effects on the audience such as: 'making them excited'; 'showing the audience what is happening'; 'making the audience fearful'; or 'showing the audience how dangerous it is'.

Question 3
A large proportion of candidates were able to answer this question well. Some answers clearly understood the concept of stereotyping without using the term, which limited their mark to level 2, at best. A few answers used the term constantly without demonstrating any understanding. But most candidates engaged well. Many discussed the anti-stereotypical representation of women, especially M's position of power and Eve's active involvement in the conflict. Many discussed the contrast of professional London and chaotic under-developed Istanbul. Most candidates were able to identify the gender stereotyping when Bond grabs the wheel from Eve. Many answers discussed the ambiguity in the representations, such as M being authoritative and unsentimental and Eve having agency yet both still not taking a full part in the violence. There were some very thoughtful analyses of the representation of Istanbul that showed an admirable critical autonomy.

Many weaker answers still discussed conventional character types and only referred to roles within action adventure films (seeing 'stereotypical' as synonymous with 'conventional'). A few very weak answers verged on the offensive because comments were not clearly established as stereotypes and came across as the candidates' own opinions.

A surprising number of candidates thought that Istanbul was a 'small town'. On the other hand, Daniel Craig should be pleased that a large number of candidates found him 'handsome' or 'attractive'.

Question 4a

There were fewer self-penalising answers that discussed the history of one programme's scheduling than in previous years, as the question asked specifically for one channel, time and day. The best responses could clearly identify the ethos and aims of the channel and then neatly slot in their chosen programme. There was some good discussion of scheduling techniques. Most candidates were able to effectively use the term 'watershed'.

Many candidates found the day of transmission the hardest to discuss in terms other than guesswork as to what the audience might be doing at particular times on particular days. Better answers would discuss day and time in terms of scheduling techniques: counter-programming, the branding of particular days, stacking or tentpoling. In this way they could show an understanding of how the programme fitted into the schedule. Better answers could argue why the text fitted its scheduling in prime time, for example, rather than simply stating that prime time was good for attracting audiences.

There were many answers using terrestrial channels that worked well, possibly because of their more strongly developed ethos and clearer scheduling strategies compared to some smaller channels such as *Comedy Central* or *Dave.*

Texts that worked well:
Russell Howard's Good News
Have I got News for You
Miranda
Mrs Brown's Boys
Citizen Khan
Mock the Week
Bad Education
The Inbetweeners (for stronger candidates)

There were still some examples of extremely old scheduling which did not always help the candidates, such as *Friends* from the 1990s.

Question 4b

Answers to 4b were generally strong - and very few either missed this out or wrote description. It was clear that many started with this question. The best answers successfully compared and contrasted the pleasure offered by two programmes, showing sophisticated evaluative skills in the use of detailed textual knowledge. Less successful answers listed the pleasures of the two programmes consecutively.

A few candidates fell into the trap of identifying many different types of comedy – such answers could not achieve level 3 marks if they only covered one pleasure (comedy).

Some candidates showed evidence of strong knowledge of as many as 4 or 5 pleasures without textual detail - as if the candidate prioritised listing the pleasures over the need to exemplify them.

Some answers failed to state audience pleasures but referenced them in passing. Some answers claimed 'intertextuality' or 'exaggeration' as a pleasure without explaining how these offer pleasure.

Some weak answers offered overly extended textual evidence and did not leave enough time to write about the second text or a second pleasure.

Programmes that worked well for this question were contrasting texts such as *QI*, *Have I got News for You* or *Live at the Apollo* compared to shows like *Outnumbered*, *Modern Family* or *The Simpsons*. Different formats allowed candidates to get into Level 4 through clear contrast.

Contrasting pleasures linked to differences in target audience, such as those for *Friends* versus *Outnumbered*, or *The League of Gentlemen*, also proved productive, so long as the candidate did not stray into discussing target audience at length. Such discussion, especially when using demographics or psychographics, routinely leads to wild and unsubstantiated assertion.

Texts that worked well:
Benidorm
The Inbetweeners
Mock the Week
Friends
Outnumbered
Bad Education
The Big Bang Theory
How I met Your Mother
Miranda
Outnumbered
Have I got News for You

QI

Less Successful texts:
The Fresh Prince of Bel Air
The Simpsons
Family Guy
The Cleveland Show
Jonah From Tonga
Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
My Mad Fat Diary

B323 Textual Analysis and Media Topic (Print)

The quality of answers for this paper continues to impress. Candidates appear well-prepared for the demands of each question and can manage their time in the examination room.
The extract for this paper was the front cover, contents page and editor's letter, and three inside pages of the teenage lifestyle magazine *Look*. This choice of extract worked well to enable candidates to discuss media language and representation but the choice of sub-genre did lead some candidates to conflate the lifestyle magazine in general with the women's lifestyle magazine.

Question 1
Many candidates were able to identify key conventions of the genre, including the direct mode of address, the hybridity of contents, the personal editor's letter, and the dominance of the front cover by a celebrity or model. Weaker answers might simply list some contents without establishing hybridity and argue that they could be elements of a lifestyle. Many weaker answers appeared to assume incorrectly that all lifestyle magazines are aimed at women and saw any feminine content as proof of genre.

Question 2
The variable layout of the magazine offered many opportunities to discuss the look of the page. Many commented on the mix of coverlines creating a cluttered layout on the front cover, suggesting a cornucopia of contents, and contrasted this with the more ordered layout of the contents page, created by the use of columns. Many commented on the scrapbook effect of the page layout in the 'Love Lives' pages. Weaker answers would often comment on the layout as a whole, without specifying particular pages.

Typography was often well-answered as candidates worked through the varied use of serif and sans serif fonts using specific examples (i.e. individual coverlines or headings or specified body text). Weaker answers often tried the same approach but inaccurately.

Colour was the most accessible bullet, with most citing the femininity of the pink, the freshness and summery feel of the yellow and blue, and the connotations of the red on the 'Love Lives' page.

Language proved occasionally problematic. Better answers chose language use that was both easy to exemplify with specific quotes and ripe for connotative analysis. Weaker answers might fail to give quotes or might chose examples, such as alliteration, for which it is harder to find connotations.

Question 3
There were two clearly distinct types of answers – those with representation analysis and those discussing audience, showing that a number of weaker candidates remain unclear on representation analysis. Answers concentrating on gender could still reach the top mark band but better answers typically ranged across gender, age, race, sexuality and celebrity culture with, at best, some references to ideologies of consumerism, romance, patriarchy, or heteronormativity.

Many competent answers explored the equation of femininity with the desire to 'look good', to find romance, to share in gossip and to aspire to look young.

Question 4a
There were fewer self-penalising answers that discussed the history of one programme's scheduling than in previous years, as the question asked specifically for one channel, time and day. The best responses could clearly identify the ethos and aims of the channel and then

neatly slot in their chosen programme. There was some good discussion of scheduling techniques. Most candidates were able to effectively use the term 'watershed'.

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Question 4b

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Some weaker answers offered overly extended textual evidence and did not leave enough time to write about the second text or a second pleasure.

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The Cleveland Show
Jonah From Tonga
Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
My Mad Fat Diary

B324 Production Portfolio in Media Studies

General Comments:

Unit B324 represents 30% of the GCSE Media Studies qualification. This unit offers candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in Research and Planning, Production, and Evaluation as well as their understanding of the Key Media Concepts of **Audience**, **Institution**, **Media Language** and **Genre**. The B324 Unit brings together various elements first seen in the other GCSE Media Studies Units (B321, and B322/B323). It is expected that centres will use the best resources/technology available and choose tasks for which they have the expertise to deliver and which also appeal to their candidates (Ref Spec P15, also P25 4.2.1e).

The twelve set briefs in the specification were successful in offering a range of choices (Print, Video, Audio, Websites and Cross Media) for most centres. However, some centres made changes to the briefs in such a way that they became difficult to moderate in terms of the specification assessment criteria. It is important that for unit B324 centres follow one of the set briefs as described in the specification (ref Spec P16-17). The set briefs offered in this unit are not exemplar topics like those available in unit B321 and must be followed exactly as set out in the specification.

Portfolio Evidence

The controlled assessment work submitted for this unit was of a generally good standard overall. Where candidates had provided separated sections of their portfolios for Research and Planning, and Evaluation, they were able to demonstrate that they had met the requirements of the specification clearly. In the best instances they had also provided a contents list with page numbers and an appendix, which brought discipline to their approach, as well as helping the process of moderation.

Candidates achieved higher marks when they considered all of the subject matter and supported their answers with analysis. When candidates did not achieve higher marks it was usually because they were either descriptive or did not complete the work submitted.

Most centres were well-organised with cover sheets completed accurately, with appropriate comments. However there were some arithmetical errors. One of the biggest issues was generic teacher comments without any personalisation regarding elements of the candidate's work, such as the candidate's input to the group during the production.

The organisation of candidate work from the majority of centres was a strength including the correct order (research and planning, production and evaluation). However some centres need to ensure that candidates separate the presentation of Research and Planning from the Evaluation in their candidate portfolios (ref Spec P17-18). The research and planning element and the evaluation element are assessed separately, and each has its own specific assessment criteria (ref Spec Research and Planning P41, also Evaluation P42-43).

Brief Selection

Some Centres attempted a variety of briefs, which seemed to have an effect on the overall marks awarded and the evidence submitted for research and planning and evaluation in particular.

Centres need to refer to specific pieces of evidence in a candidate's portfolio when completing the controlled assessment cover sheets (CCS339), making sure they have referred to the appropriate assessment criteria (ref Spec P33-43).

Some centres had made assessment judgements appropriately, applying the assessment criteria as intended. However others had increased the marks submitted, particularly in the production element with little justification. For these, it would be wise for centres to review the exemplar portfolios on the OCR website in order to better gauge the national standards expected for this unit specification. See the OCR CPD Hub: https://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk

Most centres had encouraged their candidates to demonstrate initiative in exploring and presenting their response to a set brief. Candidates who were allowed to do this provided evidence to satisfy the requirements of the assessment criteria. However some centres continue to use templates. All centres are reminded of the changes in specification from the 2014 entry. In particular Section 4.2.2 (P.26) makes clear what teachers can, or must not do in terms of assisting candidates (for example the ban on using templates).

The sections of the portfolio
Centres are reminded that there are three distinct sections required for the portfolio and these should be clearly separated. The portfolio needs to be presented in the following order for each candidate:
- Research and Planning (plus an optional Appendix)
- Production
- Evaluation

The appendix can contain items such as drafts, research sources, and shared materials. Sources of information (particularly websites) were at times inconsistently referenced within the portfolio submission.

Research and Planning
There was generally good evidence of research and planning this year. In most centres, there appeared to be a sense of independent research and planning taking place with a good sense of ownership of work conducted. Production logs varied greatly in quality.

There was a range of research and planning tasks completed by centres. There was successful research into specific genres, which underpinned the candidates' understanding of the areas on which they were focusing. Media language terminology and ideas were applied throughout the candidates' portfolios. Centres set tasks that were well-structured to ensure that candidates used this terminology appropriately. Some candidates successfully utilised audience feedback/focus groups when exploring their concept. Institution was varied and inconsistent in submissions. Some candidates considered this almost as an add on or afterthought, focusing in more detail on concepts like Genre.

Summative paragraphs helped explain how the candidates intended to use their planning to shape the production and describe the creative journey on which they were embarking.

'Similar media texts' was an area of considerable strength for the majority of centres with clear analytical skills demonstrated and detailed annotations evidenced. Costumes and props was also an area where considerable inventive skills had been demonstrated. In some instances, Centres had allowed candidates the use of suspect items without apparent regard for health and safety, or evidence of appropriate risk assessments. Location agreements, risk assessments, and recces should be included in this instance.

Most centres had made use of sensible age appropriate research materials for their candidates. However there are still some centres where candidates were allowed to engage with certain materials that were beyond the maturity of candidates at this level. Examples included film (horror and extreme violence, drugs etc.), music videos (bad language and profanities in evaluation) and an extract from a new TV programme (unsuitable material in terms of the representation of people with learning difficulties). The BBFC and PEGI advisory ratings should be consulted by centres.

Production
The production was of variable quality across the board and largely depended on the equipment and resources available to the centre. Candidates who produced footage/original images in external locations benefited massively. Candidates seemed to engage with the majority of tasks set. There were some very creative and thoughtful productions that looked almost professional. Candidates with low marks for their research and planning or evaluation components sometimes produced some interesting productions.

There were many instances where centres had encouraged and facilitated candidates in developing relevant technical skills. Candidates had clearly taken satisfaction as they had responded to the set briefs in a variety of creative ways.

There were in some instances a high proportion of found images used in print based briefs. There needs to be sufficient use of original images, their selection, digital processing and export for use in DTP to allow the candidates to demonstrate their achievement as a number of the assessment criteria depend on this (ref Spec P33-34). For more information on the production briefs see Section 2.

Evaluation
The evaluation aspect of the unit was generally approached well. Best practice within this section included candidates monitoring the process and revisions made, noting how earlier research into audience and comparative texts influenced production, the use of genre forms and conventions, evidence of post-production audience feedback and interpretation, and understanding whether the production had met the brief.

Some centres used a director's commentary during their evaluation. This enabled candidates to evaluate successfully their productions and was presented as MP4 files.

On the whole, evaluations included detailed audience feedback on the completed production. Strengths and weaknesses were identified and there was a clear focus on the production process.

For some centres this aspect of the portfolio was either descriptive (rather than critical) or was not submitted.

Authentication and Group Work
Most centres provided good quality summative comments and annotations on the candidate work and on the controlled assessment cover sheets to describe how marks had been awarded. Clear teacher comments/candidate descriptions provide essential background information in the process of assessment, as well as making it easier for moderators to verify the centre's submitted marks (particularly within group work)

In the best instances, comments were clear, related to the evidence submitted, to the assessment criteria, and importantly, were personal to the individual candidate. In other cases, comments were either omitted completely, or were copied from the assessment criteria and did not advance the moderation process at all.

It is important for candidates and centres to identify, where appropriate, the individual's contribution when working in a group. Each candidate is assessed upon their own individual contribution even when working in a group. Centres need to use the controlled assessment cover sheet (CCS339) boxes to help differentiate an individual's contributions to the moderator (ref Spec P41). If individual contributions are not outlined, it can make it more difficult for a moderator to support centre assessment decisions.

Evidence of research and planning, as well as the evaluation should be individual to each candidate. Centres should instruct candidates clearly about the individuality of their portfolios, and the need to identify their sources.

Formats for Submission
There were some problems for moderators when they were unable to access candidate work because electronic/digital work was not offered in standard formats. Candidate work needs to be exported to a universal format. For example, print magazines should be submitted as PDF documents if submitted electronically. Audio should be playable on a CD player or made available in MP3 format, and Video should be playable on a DVD player or if supplied on a DVD-Rom it should be in a standard video file such as *.mpg or *.mov.

This also applies to portfolio work as well as the production if submitting work electronically. The variety of word processor packages and various versions of Microsoft PowerPoint and Word software require centres to check that their material can be accessed on computers other than their own before submitting.

All documents submitted in electronic format must be in a standard universally accessible form (there is a list in the specification P59-60). The best way to offer all digital print material (production and evaluation) is PDF.

Some centres had submitted website work on authenticated disks as required; others had attempted submissions for website, or other briefs via URL using a variety of hosting websites, ranging from centre owned ones to web hosting or template based sites. These included Weebly, Wix, YouTube and Facebook. Web based submissions are specifically banned from candidate work by OCR at GCSE, because of the problem of security of candidate work, and online exposure for controlled assessment (unlike coursework requirements).

Some centres continue to submit work via USB memory sticks. These are not an acceptable way of submitting work, as they are unreliable, affected by heat, knocks, subject to electronic interference, and prone to passing computer malware. DVD disks are easy to prepare, stable, reliable, and also cheaper.

Resources
There have been some excellent examples where centres have trained their candidates in the choice and use of software prior to its application in an assessment context. However it has also been clear that in some cases, candidates have been left to learn about software with minimal support, and at times their achievement has reflected this. centres can obtain further support by consulting the OCR website, where exemplar material and additional advice is given.

Summary
There was a good range of creative work and an improvement in the overall standard seen for this unit. The majority of centres demonstrated good practice in their delivery of the course and ensured that their candidates successfully fulfilled the requirements of the three sections of the portfolio (research and planning, production, and evaluation).

Best Practice
- Cover sheets are accurately filled in, with marks, briefs, texts and summative comments that relate to the individual candidate and support the marks awarded
- Work is presented in the correct order: research and planning, incorporating a production log with a possible appendix of materials; the production; and the evaluation
- Work is clearly organised, with the final production clearly identifiable from drafts (e.g. contents page with page numbers)

- Teacher annotations clearly show how marks have been awarded
- Similar media texts analysed using media language and possible target audience explored
- Audio director's commentary used during the evaluation stage (especially effective for a video brief)

Comments on Individual Briefs:

All of the set briefs were attempted by candidates this summer. There was a clear range of work with examples of excellent work including:

Set Brief 2- New Magazine
Print magazine extracts where candidates had researched and provided individual material for an identified audience, included original photographs and used DTP software to create an appropriate layout.

Set Brief 3- Print Advertising
Print advertising campaigns where candidates had demonstrated photographic flair, manipulated the images using the appropriate software, and laid out the advertisements using the relevant codes and conventions.

Set Brief 5- Music Video
Music videos showed good attention to detail, enthusiasm of codes and conventions, and suitable choices of locations, props, costumes and actors.

Set Brief 6- Extract from a new TV programme
A variety of approaches to the television productions which included - TV documentary and wildlife drama. 'Previously' section adopted by centres fitted with the selected genre.

Set Brief 7- Opening sequence from a Film
Some film openings showed creativity and flair on the part of candidates, and were presented in a variety of genres. There were some original narratives created with good use of characterisation and enigma. Specific codes and conventions were displayed.

Set Brief 8 - Magazine Radio Programme and Set Brief 9 - Radio Drama
Radio work included topics such as news, sport, health, music, celebrity and local events. There were also some scripted radio dramas with sound effects. Relevant codes and conventions were displayed (e.g. sound effects, transitions, ident).

Set Brief 11 - New Entertainment Website
Websites were submitted on disk and easy to access, with all the individual components appearing in the upload folder. Subjects for the website included an entertainment and music focus.

Set Brief 12- Music Promotional Package
The Cross Media set brief also gave candidates the opportunity to bring together a number of media as part of a coherent promotion package, including examples of CD covers, album cover, magazine insert, websites, gig posters and video adverts. In many instances, the house style was evident across all three products.

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