



National Qualifications Framework Levels 2–3, 2007

Media Studies

National Moderator's Report

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General Guidance for Assessors of Achievement and Unit Standards

The purpose of external moderation is to provide reassurance that assessor judgments are at the national standard and are made on the basis of assessment materials that are fair and valid.

All assessment materials are expected to:

- give the learner the opportunity to meet the requirements of the standard
- have an assessment schedule that gives evidence of appropriate learner responses and clear judgments at all levels.

The Ministry of Education contracted subject experts to write assessment resources for achievement standards. These are not pre-moderated. The intention is that they are modified to suit teaching programmes and learner needs. They do not provide “rules” but suggest different ways of assessing to the nationally registered standard.

Specific Comments on Individual Achievement Standards

90277: Close read unfamiliar media text

Whilst ‘unfamiliar’ is embedded in the standard, it is not necessary for learners to be responding to texts of which they have no knowledge. In a film study, for example, teachers might consider studying several sequences of a film in class and then set another sequence for assessment. For analysis (excellence), it is particularly important that learners have experienced the whole text in order for them to carry ‘the study to wider implications, issues or ramifications’. ‘Unfamiliar’ should be read as requiring response to samples of media language that learners have not specifically studied in class.

Often, insufficient time was provided for learners to achieve at merit or excellence. This standard does not have to be assessed under test conditions over a single class.

For achievement, description (a detailed account) of the way media language *contributes to meaning* is required. A standard interpretation of this is that learners must give an ‘effect’ comment. However, it is not sufficient for the ‘effect’ to be described in general terms; ‘The high angle shot makes him look vulnerable’. A ‘detailed’ account is one where description of a specific effect occurs, for example:

‘The high angle shot makes him look vulnerable as he comes through the door. He is about to get attacked from behind by the villain. The high angle emphasises his vulnerability to this attack.’

For merit, using the same example, the ‘effect’ comment needs to be explained (*include reasons/justification*). For example:

‘The high angle shot makes him look vulnerable as he comes through the door. The director has deliberately done this to foreshadow the attack that is going to happen in the next few shots. We peer down at him as if we are perched on the ceiling and the effect is to make him seem unsettled, as if we are spying on him and the attack to come. The attack then happens as we expected.’

For excellence, analysis occurs (wider implications, issues or ramifications). For example:

‘The high angle shot makes him look vulnerable as he comes through the door. The director has deliberately done this to foreshadow the attack that is going to happen in the next few shots. We peer down at him as if we are perched on the ceiling and the effect is to make him seem unsettled, as if we are spying on him. This shot recurs through the film at many points just before characters are attacked and by now we have come to expect what happens. The director is using typical horror film shots to lead us on but in this case the outcome is different because the victim ends up defeating the attacker, which is a shock for the audience. The director succeeds in making us expect one thing and be jolted into experiencing another.’

It is not necessary for the standard that correct terminology be used at all times. It is appropriate that learners use correct terminology at this level, but the standard does not require it. Simple terminology mistakes should not affect level of achievement. A useful strategy to avoid this is to allow learners to correct terminology errors in a brief resubmission opportunity. There is no reason why they could not be given access to a terminology sheet during assessment.

90280: Demonstrate understanding of narrative conventions in media texts

When describing narrative conventions, it would be useful for learners to consider the overall shape of the story and how this is created by characterisation, setting, plot, structure etc. It is not generally helpful for learners to close-read scenes or focus on individual features of film language. Learners should be looking for large patterns that help create narrative. For example, when studying the way characterization creates narrative in film, rather than focusing on an individual shot showing a powerful character, they could consider the character’s motives, personality, situation, desires etc and the way these help to drive the story. As supporting commentary, learners might comment on the way these aspects of character are shown, and they might mention the use of low angle shots to show power (for example), but this detail would come as part of a larger study of characterization in the film.

90282: Use technology in media production

It is important when assessing technology use that primary evidence of that use is presented for assessment. That evidence could be footage of learners using technology, or products submitted that are the result of technology use. Paperwork (reflections, tests) can support this evidence, but should not replace it.

The standard exemplified by achievement (competent use, range of basic tasks) generally assumes that the learner has had exposure to the technology in more than one context. They can then perform a range of tasks independently, with some confidence, and this is evident in their work. Their technology use might at times contribute towards the technical polish of the product, but might also at times detract from the technical polish of the product. For merit, skilful (effective) use is required. Their use of technology will be having a positive impact on the product, and will be contributing towards the technical polish of the product much of the time. For excellence, their efforts are expert, and will be consistently contributing towards the polish of the product.

Technology use that usually detracts from the technical polish of a product will most often result in a not achieved grade for this standard.

90765: Design and produce a media product and evaluate the process used to create the product

Evidence for all three criteria must be submitted for moderation. For criteria one, evidence that a design process (i.e. planning) is required. This could include written statements, visual plans (storyboards, draft layouts), annotated research notes, question lists etc. For criteria two, the completed product must be submitted. For criteria three, a sufficient written evaluation is appropriate. This must be convincing evaluation; it must be appropriately complex and reflective and refer to specific details or examples. The published activities have extracts for assessor reference.

For achievement, the product must be complete and use conventions in an appropriate way. For print, both the quality of writing and the manipulation of visual design must be assessed together. If written work has many syntax and spelling errors and/or does not flow appropriately or tell an effective story, then it will not achieve, even if the visual design work is sufficient. For moving images, all aspects should be considered- scripting, characterization, ideas or meaning communicated, production design, direction, technical aspects like composition, shot choice, sound levels and mix, editing pace and flow etc.

Likewise for radio, both content and form must be assessed holistically.

Determining whether or not a text is polished must follow a similar holistic model- all aspects can contribute toward polish (or detract from it), and the decision to award merit should weigh up all evidence. For print, some samples are included with published activities. The moving image exemplars published by The Ministry of Education in 2004 are still available and useful resources. There are no published exemplars as yet for radio.

Whether or not a text is at excellence level ('integrated') requires another holistic judgement. A 'focused media product' is likely to be one where most or all aspects (content and form) are 'polished'.

It is pleasing to note where assessing a group performance, teachers were aware all members must make a sufficient contribution to the production, and this should be clearly identifiable and assessable. It is quite possible for a learner to not achieve based on lack of input, whilst other learners in the group receive an achievement grade or higher.

90600: Explain how meaning is created in media texts

For this standard, learners often write too much, and go into too much detail concerning their chosen texts. They should be encouraged to pick significant features of media language, and find one or two examples at the most to illustrate each feature. The examples should be chosen for the richness of their language use and creation of meaning; not all examples are equal, and learners should look for ones (and be guided to find ones) that will allow them to explain and analyse easily. Too often, learners chose to write about many examples in a superficial way, rather than few with analytic depth or insight. Careful teacher guidance during the drafting process would be useful.

Learners continue to have difficulty making different readings of the same text. There are many different ways of reading a text, and there are useful notes in a number of the published activities to support assessment. It may be useful for learners to look for oppositional or alternate readings where appropriate, as these are often the easiest ones to write about and analyse. Detailed teacher guidance for learners when they are deciding what readings to complete would be appropriate; the standard does not require that the learner come up with the type of reading themselves, and teachers can assist in deciding how to read.

90604: Complete and justify a concept and treatment for a media product

It is important that work submitted for this standard gives a clear idea of the scope of the product for which the material has been developed.

For achievement, the concept needs to give a clear idea of the proposed genre, content, story and/or ideas, target audience, appeal and purpose. The treatment needs to detail use of significant appropriate conventions that will ‘realise’ the concept, and give a clear description of the specific style to be used. In practice this means that all description of conventions should be linked to an explanation of the intended effect of those conventions that helps to realise the concept.

It is important that conventions chosen are significant and that specific detail is given; for example, it would not be sufficient to describe use of the close-up in a film treatment unless significant numbers of close-ups were necessary to realise the concept. In a thriller, close-ups might be used to limit the audience’s access to information, or to intensify the fear a character feels. But a discussion of close-ups explaining that their use is to ‘show the character’s emotions’ would not be sufficient; almost all films use close-ups in this way. For the explanation to be sufficient, it must be linked to the specific concept.

There were some difficulties in determining what a polished or integrated concept/treatment might be. It is worth considering the following.

For merit the concept/treatment needs to be well developed (thorough and convincing). Excessive detail is not necessary. What is vital is that the concept/treatment is convincing on a variety of levels. Using the example above, the following might contribute to a ‘well developed’ or convincing concept/treatment: discussion of why it is important to limit the audience’s access to information, what kind of information is being withheld, and what kind of emotional journey/story will the use of close-ups be communicating (and why), with all comments linked to realisation of the concept.

For excellence, the assessor has to be satisfied that the media product, if made as specified, will be an ‘outstanding’ one.

It is recommended that the learner be justifying their decisions as they develop their concept/treatment. It is not necessary to have a separate ‘justification’ section as long as the learner is explaining why they have made decisions in the concept/treatment sections.

The work completed by learners for 90277 and 90600 will be very useful when they come to develop their own treatments. Teachers should contemplate using the same media and/or genre in work in one or both of those standards as preparation for production work for 90604.

90606: Create a media product using appropriate media technology

For the standard to be awarded, pre-production tasks must be reasonably complete. Each group member needs to show that they have contributed to this process- they must have done some of the pre-production work. This can be shown through paperwork and reflections on the process. It is not necessary for every learner to complete all pre-production tasks.

Technology use must be identifiable and assessable. Supporting documentation (reflections on work done, lists of shots completed, or timecodes showing what portion of the final edit has been done by an individual) is usually necessary to ensure that learner technology use is identifiable and assessable

Particular care needs to be taken when assessing some types of technology use. For example, in video editing, learners often work better if they edit collaboratively. For technology use, however, the learner must actually be controlling the editing interface, not just contributing ideas to the editing process. If more than one learner wishes to gain technology use credit for editing, then it would be appropriate to require them to complete independent edits of the same material.

Often a polished product was not always appropriately decided. A number of resources have been published to help teachers with the question of what constitutes a polished product. Comments in this report under 90765 describing what can be considered when determining polish are appropriate to this standard as well. It is important to note that the level of polish required for this standard should be significantly higher than that required for achievement standard 90765. For learners to be creating a polished product for 90606, one would expect them to have had experience in using the specified technology in creation of media texts during the year and in previous courses.

However, polish is also concerned with story, ideas, characterisation, personality, and other aspects independent of technology. A careful judgement is necessary to weigh up the relative qualities of any text in arriving at a final judgement concerning the overall polish of a text.

There was some variation in assessors understanding of what constituted a media text completed to a competent standard. The explanatory note gives the same definition for competent as ‘publishable’ under version one of the standard. The text should be complete and ready for the exhibition contexts listed. Thus, most texts of a competent standard will have one or several aspects that are polished about them, but not sufficient to say that the text overall is polished (and merit). Another way of thinking about ‘competent standard’ at level three is that it would be equivalent to at least a merit text at level two (i.e.- polished at level two overall is similar to competent at level three).

An integrated, excellence level text is one that is outstanding. Many aspects of the text will be polished, and combine to make a product that has considerable impact.

It would be appropriate to consider the three terms ‘competent, polished, integrated’ as a quality continuum where all qualitative aspects of the text (carefully weighed) contribute to the final grade.

90779: Investigate an aspect of media and explain its significance for New Zealand

It is not necessary that this standard be assessed as a fully-fledged research task. Assessors could provide appropriate material (topic, resources). The student must define

their investigation (angle, key questions) and identify appropriate material from supplied resources in order to write an analysis of the significance of an aspect of media. By providing materials, the assessor can significantly reduce workload and better focus learner effort on the key skill being assessed by the standard.

The key skill assessed in the standard is the ability to explain or analyse significance of an aspect of media for New Zealand.

All work should be focused on this skill. It is not necessary for the learner to present a detailed account of their chosen aspect. Only the material related to significance for New Zealand is important; only that material contributes towards the assessment.

The term ‘investigate’, which is clearly defined in the standard, should be connected to the requirement to explain significance; what learners are doing is investigating significance.

Learners should be encouraged to devise questions that will focus them clearly on significance. For example, when investigating Peter Jackson’s career, appropriate key questions might be: ‘What economic impact has The Lord of The Rings Trilogy had on New Zealand’s film industry?’ ‘What do Peter Jackson’s films contribute towards our sense of national identity?’

Most of the submitted learner samples contained extensive discussion of the aspect of Media, but little related to its significance for New Zealand. Many of the questions posed encouraged factual responses that contributed little to the reports. Learners were often completing very long reports (above 10 pages of type-written text, in excess of 5000 words in some cases), with very little discussion of significance.

Whilst it is not generally useful to discuss word lengths, it should be possible to successfully achieve this standard at any level in a focused report of 1000-1200 words.

Media Studies Unit Standards

A limited number of providers submitted material for these standards. The activities published by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority some years ago do not have sufficient evidence statements.

It is essential that assessors develop detailed evidence statements (samples of work at the national standard) for their activities. The standards themselves are generally as rigorous, and occasionally more rigorous, than the achievement standards.

A number of level three unit standards use terms like ‘analyse’ and ‘investigate’. These are clearly defined in special notes, and require a high level of thinking.

At level two, a standard like 7468 requires work of broader scope than 90279. Students must discuss conventions, changes, appeal and relationship to society for 7468. Additionally, the term ‘explore’ is used for element two, and is clearly defined. It requires higher level thought than that appropriate for 90279 at achievement level. Where terms are not defined in the unit standards (for example, ‘describe’ in 7468), common understandings from achievement standards are used. Thus, a detailed account is required when completing work on conventions and changes in the genre for element one of 7468.