

# MEDIA STUDIES

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Paper 9607/03  
Advanced Portfolio

## Key messages

In order to successfully complete this coursework component, candidates should:

- complete one of the four set briefs
- keep a detailed blog showing the development of the project, their final three artefacts meeting the requirements of their chosen brief, and a critical reflection upon their work in essay format
- aim to complete these elements to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and applying them through skilled use of media tools
- reflect upon their work both in blog posts and the critical reflection essay
- ensure the blog remains online and easily accessible throughout the examination series.

Individual Candidate Record Cards must be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective and strand. If candidates have worked in groups comments must reflect individual contributions to projects.

When using Submit for Assessment, centres should ensure that all of the required forms (Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC)), are uploaded to the correct folder; that the most up to date forms are used, that they are clearly legible, that all necessary paperwork is uploaded, and that if their entries are over ten, they select and upload the ICRCs of an appropriate sample as set out by Cambridge. It would also aid moderation if centres hyper-linked all of their candidates to a centre web page or blog, the url address of which should be clearly hyper-linked on the ICRCs of each candidate. Moderation continues to be delayed considerably due to illegible urls, non-hyperlinked urls that need to be transcribed, and/or broken links that point at error pages.

## General comments

For this series candidates have demonstrated a wide range of media skills firmly based on their knowledge and understanding of media concepts. It has been a privilege to be the audience for a range of very professional productions in video, print and online. Many candidates continue to present detailed and focused research into appropriate existing media, using skills, knowledge and understanding gained over the whole course to effectively plan and construct their own products. Critical reflections demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the subject, and the most effective were able to clearly reflect upon their own work. The quality of centre assessment has once again seen an improvement over the last series, and centres are to be congratulated on their professionalism.

## Comments on specific tasks

### **Blogs**

Many centres produced blog hubs (a centre blog or web page with candidates' names and numbers hyperlinked to their work) demonstrating good practice, however, the number who did not is still considerable. Even if there are only two entries the use of a hub helps teachers, as well as moderators, monitor candidates' work. All centres should follow this good practice and hyperlink the URL of the hub, and individual candidate's blog, on the Individual Candidate Record Cards.

It is important that centres check that within candidate blogs, and the blog hub, all links are working and that the moderator is given access to all documents throughout the moderation period; moderators have again spent too much time chasing centres for access to work. Google documents continue to be of particular

concern. Centres and candidates need to ensure that privacy options do not prevent candidate work from being accessed. Many candidates embed Google documents and apps in their blogs but are often unaware that they have them set to private or available only to those with a Google account. It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that candidates are aware of this and that they make their work available to all who have access to their blog. Moderators will not use personal accounts to sign in to Google, or any other platform. If data protection is an issue, then it is recommended that centres password protect their blog hub and make candidate blogs only available via the link from the hub. Passwords should always be made available to the moderator.

The most effective blogs used a linear format, organising the blog so that the earliest post is last and the most recent post is first. The package of products and the critical reflection should be the first thing seen when opening up the blog. All elements should be clearly labelled whether through the use of menus, tags, or headers. The most successful blogs use a simple template with all posts visible to read without having to click through 'read more' links.

Candidates who documented the whole process of production in detail tended to be most successful. They showed clear evidence of research in all aspects of the production, clearly documenting and justifying the choices and decisions they made – including the ideas at each stage that they rejected. The least successful were simply diaries of what the candidate had done, with little or no reflection on process or outcome. Some centres continue to encourage candidates to post all their class or examination related work to their blog as well as their Portfolio work. This is to be discouraged, as work for other components cannot be assessed as part of the Advanced Portfolio. It is also recommended that candidates use separate blogs for their AS and A level work, as combined blogs often cause confusion, especially if they are not well labelled.

At this level, a substantial amount of evidence in a variety of forms (photos, video, articles, audio, presentation, surveys, comparisons, annotations, text, mock ups, tests, drafts and roughs) is needed to illustrate an effective understanding of the key concepts. Some candidates are presenting in excess of fifty meaningful blog posts. At A level a small number of 'thin' posts is insufficient to earn the marks that some centres continue to give candidates.

### **Critical reflections**

In the mark scheme Assessment Objective (AO) 2 draws heavily upon evidence presented in the Critical Reflection. Therefore, candidates need to fully address the four set questions. These should not be dealt with separately but integrated into a fluent essay-style response. Too many candidates are still ignoring the requirement to produce an essay and are answering each question individually, sometimes with the question as a title or header. Some candidates produced AS level type creative critical reflections, which should be discouraged by centres.

The mark scheme clearly states across all levels that there should be a degree of engagement with **all** questions. If candidates do not engage with **all** of the questions they self-penalise and this should be reflected in the centre's marking.

The syllabus requires that candidates produce an 'evaluative essay' therefore centres should prepare candidates for this and discourage simple responses to the four questions set out as four paragraphs under the question heading. Some candidates continue to struggle with 'around 1000 words' of continuous prose. Centres should advise candidates that this word count should be seen as an advisory minimum. Using fewer than 1000 words candidates are liable to self-penalise through lack of depth of reflection. Candidates should focus on presenting a well-structured and well-argued reflective and analytical essay rather than worrying about the word count.

Some candidates developed their critical thinking through application of their media skills, making effective use of captioned images from their productions to support the content of their essays. This is good practice and to be encouraged.

The strongest critical reflections tended to be from candidates who had kept the most reflective records of their research, planning and production. Successful candidates thus answered the questions using clear examples from all stages of their production.

## Research and planning

The third strand of AO3 relates directly to the candidate's research and planning, and how this has led to the construction of the final products. Therefore, all research and planning materials should be posted to candidate blogs and made accessible to the moderator.

Candidate blogs should include a range of research and planning materials posted over the duration of the project which illustrate the process of production from research and initial ideas to the final production packages and critical reflection. The best research materials demonstrated a range of textual analysis with focused and annotated examples. It is important that candidates include the exploration of similar products aimed at similar audiences to those chosen for their production tasks. In the strongest work the research was revisited at stages throughout the production and reflection process, for the purpose of comparison and to demonstrate how conventions were used or deliberately broken. Audience research was strongest when learners went beyond quantitative based questionnaires, which are rarely as useful as qualitative, and analysed how target audiences actually engage with products. Candidates were rewarded when they explored multiple ideas for their product and then documented the progression and development of those into pre-production documents.

There was a range of excellent planning and development presented, especially where candidates had recorded evidence that enabled them to reflect and make informed choices about the way forward for their productions. Centres could continue to encourage learners to include evidence such as: script readings, screen tests for actors, location pre-shoots, practice shots or lighting tests, costume fittings and ideas, behind the scenes videos or photos, production vlogs (video logs), and 'making-of' video(s). Candidates could also be encouraged to make photos or video on the set and annotate them with reflection of their own roles. Work was almost always improved when candidates gained feedback on rough cuts and in many strong portfolios this was done on a number of occasions for each of the major and minor tasks.

Centres are reminded that research and planning should not just reflect the process of production of the major task. The briefs are to produce a package of work; therefore, candidates should research and plan the major task, the two minor tasks, and branding across the products. Unfortunately, the lack of research and planning for the minor tasks very often resulted in an adjustment of marks for AO3 (iii) (the third strand of AO3).

## Production

Products are primarily assessed across the first two strands of AO3. Marks should be awarded for the application of technical skills and how these are used to communicate meaning. Products should demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of media language and key concepts. All three products should be assessed together as a package. This should be clearly communicated to candidates as many are still focusing all their efforts on the main product and neglect the minor ones.

The most successful production work built on previous skills, knowledge and understanding. Candidates produced packages of products demonstrating consistency in style, purpose and quality between the major and the minor tasks. Strong examples paid close attention to simulating form, style and generic conventions across video, print, and online work as well as identifying a clear branding strategy.

Of the four briefs (Music Promotion Package, Film Promotion Package, Documentary Package, and Short Film Package) the Music Promotion Package continues to be the most popular. The least popular for this series, as for last, was the Documentary package. The Short Film Package has recovered in popularity this series with some of the best work once again being produced for this brief. The Film Promotion Package declined considerably in popularity this series, this could have been due to centres realising that the brief is not an 'easy option' and that to produce an effective package requires just as much work as the other briefs.

## Major video products

All briefs contain a major video product. These are a music video, two film trailers, an extract from an original TV documentary, or a complete short film.

There were some creative approaches to music videos, and many were of a professional standard. These employed a range of forms with the most popular, and effective, being a mixture of narrative and performance. Weaker productions tended to be simple narratives accompanied by music. The most successful had the star persona/s to the fore and were able to carry this 'branding' across to their minor

products. Lip synching, if employed, should be practiced before production in order to achieve the desired professional results.

For the film trailer products most candidates continue to choose to produce a teaser trailer plus a theatre trailer. This is an effective approach, although some theatre trailers continue to be on the short side. Codes and conventions were often researched and applied. Although some teaser trailers were simply short versions of the theatre trailer. Distinct material should be produced for the purpose of each type of trailer. Candidates working on this brief often presented too much of the narrative of the film they were promoting failing to select and film appropriate extracts. Weaker productions tended to present over long extracts from one part of the film.

TV Documentary extracts continue to be of mixed quality. The most successful were conscious of the fact that they were extracts and candidates often contextualised these in their blogs. Codes and conventions were adhered to and it was often clear that research into theories of documentary production had been explored and applied. Weaker examples tended to attempt too much and started to resemble full short documentaries. They were often poorly researched and edited with long shots of rambling and/or repetitive information.

There were some powerful short films with thoughtful narratives, conscious choices of mise-en-scene, and well-considered casting. Weaker products tended to try to produce a short feature film rather than treating the product as a distinct genre in its own right.

Centres are reminded of the importance of producing risk assessments for all video products. It remains a concern that many products contain scenes with weapons, some of which are clearly either real or very good replicas. Products often contain vehicles driven at speed and sometimes dangerous stunts which centres should discourage. Centres should also consider the wellbeing of their candidates and discourage scenes depicting drug use or suicide.

Some centres where English is not the first language are choosing to present products in their first language. This is acceptable for video products as long as English subtitles are used and the rest of the portfolio is completed in English. There was, once again, some effective subtitling this series, especially of the short films.

### **Minor print products**

Whilst there were some excellent minor print products conforming to appropriate conventions and continuing the branding of the major product, many still seemed to be an after-thought. Candidates should view the minor products as an integral part of the brief and centres should give marks based on the whole package not just the major task. Candidates should be encouraged to produce original imagery for their print minor product and not use screen grabs from their video product.

The most effective digi-packs (Music Promotion) had clearly been well researched and employed an appropriate number of panels. Images had been produced specifically for the product and usually promoted the star persona/s of the major task. Weaker products often resembled vinyl LP covers with just two panels and limited imagery, often lifted directly from the major product. The choice of fonts was often ill-considered and sized inappropriately.

Film posters (Film Promotion) were the most effective of the minor tasks with candidates demonstrating a clear understanding of their role in the promotion of the film. The main weakness with some posters was the production of original photographs with some candidates relying on screen grabs from their major products for this purpose.

Magazine articles (Documentary) were often well written and clearly a product of effective research. However, if centres choose to offer this brief, they should offer candidates some instruction in journalistic technique in preparation. Copy should be carefully proofed and formatted appropriately. The most effective products were presented as articles from existing professional magazines or online journals. Articles should contain some original photography as well as clear copy and effective design.

The short film festival postcards (Short Film) tended not to reflect the quality of the films they were promoting. Often candidates would lift an image from their film and place text over it along with the film festival logo. Postcards were presented as single sided and often lacked in detail. Some candidates confused postcards with posters and ended up producing a mixed brief which is not allowed by the syllabus.

The most successful products again demonstrated a clear link to detailed research, employed some original imagery, and considered both sides of the card.

### **Social Media pages**

All briefs require the production of a social media page as part of the promotional package. The page should reflect the overall branding of the main product and be used to demonstrate an understanding of how products target their audiences. Unfortunately, this element continues to be the weakest part of many packages. A strong major product and minor print product were often let down by a poor social media product. Centres should continue to focus on this element as an area for development.

Social media pages may be 'live' online or produced within templates and embedded in candidate blogs. Centres should ensure the safety of their candidates when using live social media pages and adhere to any local guidelines.

The most popular format by far for this series was once again Instagram. Fewer candidates chose to use other generic templates based on the Facebook or X format. Weaker Instagram constructions consisted of a few images from the main product whilst the most effective Instagram products used original images creatively and made effective use of the reels function. Some candidates created a range of characters to comment on their social media page, this is good practice and demonstrates a good understanding of audience. The most effective products were clearly promotional and reflected the branding of the main product, the weaker products simply posted a few images from the main product with little or no sense of purpose. It is a concern that many candidates are neglecting this element of the promotional package thinking that they can achieve good marks by simply dropping four or six images into the Instagram format. Centres could encourage candidates to research social media forms and usage in depth and to apply their learning to their own promotional package.

# MEDIA STUDIES

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Paper 9607/01  
Foundation Portfolio

## **Key messages**

In order to successfully complete this coursework component, candidates should:

- keep a detailed blog, showing the development of the project, their final artefact meeting the requirements of their chosen brief, and a creative critical reflection upon their work
- aim to complete these elements to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools
- ensure the blog remains online and easily accessible throughout the examination series.

## **General comments**

Centres and candidates continue to build upon their developing knowledge and understanding to produce some exceptionally creative products and reflect upon the process. It is pleasing to see some very professional artefacts which demonstrate high levels of skill in the use of media tools. It is also pleasing to see the quality of teaching and learning that has obviously taken place over the year.

On the whole, centres are engaging well with this component and candidates produced some excellent work, demonstrating detailed research into existing magazines and film openings, which fed into the planning and construction of their own media products. Many candidates demonstrated high levels of skill in the use of media tools, in both the products and in the creative critical reflections. In the best work, knowledge and understanding of conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with comprehensive evidence of the process.

## **Administration**

Centres are generally using Submit for Assessment effectively, but there continue to be some issues that need to be addressed. When uploading forms, centres should ensure that they use the latest available version, especially the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC), these are active forms and allow the inclusion of hyperlinks, which greatly help the moderation process. Even if centres are using these forms they should still link their candidate work to a central blog hub for ease of access. Moderation continues to be delayed considerably due to missing paperwork, broken urls, and inaccessible/locked work embedded in blogs. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that all paperwork and candidate work is available for moderation.

The quality of teacher comments on Individual Candidate Record Cards has greatly improved over the past two series but there are still a significant number of centres who are not providing clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective and strand. Providing personalised comments linked to the mark scheme and those reflecting individual contributions to projects is invaluable to moderators when agreeing centre marks.

## **Comments on specific tasks**

### **Blogs**

Some centres continue to produce blog hubs (a centre blog or web page with candidates' names and numbers hyperlinked to their work) demonstrating good practice, however, many are still not doing so. Even if there are only two entries the use of a hub helps teachers monitor candidates' work and aids the moderation process. All centres should follow this good practice and clearly hyperlink the URL of the hub on

the Individual Candidate Record Cards. All hyperlinks in both the centre's hub and candidate blogs need to be checked carefully by centres to ensure that they are working. Centres not checking has been the primary reason for delays in moderation this series.

Blogs should be clearly organised so that they read in a chronological order using date stamps if possible. The finished product (film opening or magazine pages) should be the first thing seen as the blog is opened so that it is clear to moderators which is the final version. All elements should be clearly labelled and the use of menus and tags is to be encouraged. The best online content is comprehensive, with candidates posting meaningful posts on a regular basis. Some candidates continue to produce upwards of fifty meaningful posts whilst others seem content to settle for less than twenty. The most effective blogs demonstrated the whole process of the project from initial idea, through research into similar products, planning, production and creative critical reflection. The least effective were those presented on poorly organised blogs with often descriptive posts lacking in reflection and evaluation of the process of production.

All elements of the portfolio must be online, either on or linked to the blog for the moderation period. Google applications continue to be popular for presenting work. This is acceptable as long as all documents are either unlocked or the moderator is provided with a password for access. Much time was once again spent contacting centres to make work available for moderation after the submission deadline. Moderators will not use their personal Google log-ins to access work. Candidates should be made aware that even though they think materials are visible they may be set to private or for access with a Google account. All embedded documents, no matter what platform or app, should be available to the moderator without them having to log-in, unless with a single user name and password provided by the centre.

### **Creative Critical Reflections**

The mark scheme for this component relies on candidates fully addressing the four set questions, using a range of digital applications to demonstrate their skill, knowledge and understanding when completing the Creative Critical Reflection (CCR). Assessment Objective (AO) 2 calls upon candidates to analyse and evaluate their own work. Marks for this AO are awarded in both the CCR and the blog, but the criteria explicitly refer to engaging with the set questions. If candidates do not engage with all of the questions it is difficult to move beyond level 2. Assessment Objective (AO) 3 strand 4 gives marks purely for the technical and creative skills used to communicate ideas through the CCR. Therefore, centres should not award high marks for this strand to candidates who produce CCRs that do not employ creative approaches. Many centres are still relying on what are essentially oral essays. A talking head or voice audio is not a creative approach if used for all four questions. A significant number of candidates are still leaving this element to the last minute and not paying it enough attention for the sometimes-high marks given. There are still a minority of candidates who are only providing text responses to the four questions. This approach does not allow them to access any level for AO3 iv.

There continues to be some excellent use of multi-media applications making use of a range of sources taken from the production process to fully explore the four set questions. The most successful candidates have allocated adequate time to the CCR and considered it an integral part of their portfolio; the least successful have rushed it and/or considered it a necessary chore following their production. Centres should encourage candidates to give equal value to each of the four questions. Some candidates start with a comprehensive and creative response to **Question 1** and regress to finish with a thin response to **Question 4**.

### **Research and Planning**

The third strand of AO3 relates directly to the candidate's research and planning, and how this has led to the construction of the final product. Therefore, all research and planning materials should be posted to candidate blogs and made accessible to the moderator.

The most effective research is that completed independently by the candidate/group. It is clearly relevant to the final product and the candidate is able to articulate how their research models have informed their production. The least effective is class work, where the whole class has analysed the same text which bears little or no relevance to the final product. Some candidates continue to present research into magazines when following the video brief and vice versa. This is relevant if presented as demonstrating the candidate's choice of brief but not as preparation for construction of the opposite brief.

There is no prescribed list of planning materials but candidates should clearly demonstrate the process of production via their blog. The process should reflect professional practice where possible so should include those documents associated with magazine or film production. The most successful candidates present a

wide range of materials which clearly show the development of the project. The least successful tend towards generalised descriptive comments about what they did, often in a diary-like format.

## Products

Products are primarily assessed across the first two strands of AO3. Marks should be given for the application of technical skills and how these are used to communicate meaning. Products should demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of media language and key concepts.

## Magazines

The print brief continues to decline in popularity. Candidates who attempted this brief generally fulfilled the requirements, with understanding of features of design, layout, font choice and size in evidence. Some candidates completed well organised and considered photo shoots resulting in some excellent original images. Overall, centres still need to encourage candidates to produce a wider range of appropriate images. Some candidates are still presenting the minimum number of images required rather than considering what their magazine actually needed. Contents pages, whilst improving, continue to be an issue with many still needing to reflect the full content of the proposed magazine not just a few pages. It is recommended that candidates compare their products to real magazine pages. Double page spreads require candidates to have had some training in journalistic technique. Copy was often poorly proofread and in some instances meaning was not clearly communicated. Centres are reminded that, as per the instructions in the syllabus, if candidates work in a group, each candidate should produce unique versions of the magazine, including the images selected. Each should have their own copy, but a house style and tone could be established across the group.

Whilst some centres continue to invest in appropriate technical tools for construction of media products, some candidates still need more support in building their skills with dedicated DTP software such as InDesign, Quark Xpress, Affinity Publisher etc. Canva is not especially appropriate for the production of magazine pages at this level.

Opportunities for interim feedback need to be built into the task so that candidates can benefit from the critical eye of peers and teachers, particularly in relation to how far they have carried through their research into codes and conventions into their own products. Weaker productions often appear to be based on little or inappropriate research into existing products, sometimes taken from genres other than those of the proposed product.

Some candidates have started using AI generated text and images for this brief. Centres should discourage this practice. All of the main images should be photographic, with evidence of their originality provided. Copy should be written by the candidate and checked by the centre.

## Film openings

The video brief continues to be the most popular, with the most effective products being carefully researched and planned. For the best film openings candidates had researched professional work relevant to their own genre choice and had developed a systematic understanding of the institutional conventions of opening titles.

It is pleasing to see centres giving their candidates more opportunities to use appropriate technology. Many are showing the development of skills by producing and presenting well-constructed preliminary exercises which not only focus on camerawork but also some lighting and sound recording techniques. Centres should note that whilst smartphone cameras are appropriate tools for this brief, it should not be assumed that candidates 'just know' how to use them effectively. Appropriate training should be provided in all necessary media tools to facilitate candidates to demonstrate application of their knowledge and understanding. Centres would do well to pay some attention to recording and mixing sound, which continues to impede many productions. A significant minority of candidates still need to research the opening titles and credits of feature films. Credits, especially job titles, are particularly problematic. It is fair to say that many professional film openings have adopted unconventional formats but candidates should be encouraged to identify 'traditional' conventions and employ these in their work. Any attempts to subvert a code or convention should be well-documented from the outset, with a clear rationale for why the candidate feels it is appropriate or effective.

When candidates work in groups, as permitted by the syllabus, it is important that all members' roles are clearly identifiable and that the centre has allocated marks appropriate to those roles. Comments on



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Individual Candidate Record Cards should clearly identify how marks have been allocated according to candidate roles.

# MEDIA STUDIES

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<p><b>Paper 9607/21</b> <b>Key Media Concepts</b></p>
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## Key messages

**Section A** is a compulsory question, in which candidates must analyse an extract from a TV drama and consider how meaning is constructed, as well as the specific representations of individuals, groups, events, or places through the technical codes of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to answer the question, which was based on an extract from 'Your Honor'.

**Section B** requires candidates to answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting, and applying their knowledge. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from contemporary media.

## General comments

Candidates tended to perform better on Section A than on Section B. This seemed to be either because they found Section A easier, or else they didn't manage their time appropriately and ran out of time to respond adequately to Section B. Centres should encourage candidates to practice responding to exam questions within set times and to spend an equal amount of time on responses which carry equal marks.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

There was evidence of sound understanding of some technical elements, with most candidates able to identify camera shots, angles, movement, and composition, as well as mise-en-scene, using terminology accurately to explore how meaning was created. Candidates were less successful in identifying how sound and editing helped to create meaning, however. Some candidates simply described technical elements featured within the extract and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring meaning, making basic statements like 'the close-up shows emotion'. There was also more focus on narrative devices, such as enigma codes, foreshadowing, and the building of suspense/tension. This limited opportunities from exploring representations. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on how, and why meaning is created. This analysis should be underpinned with appropriate media terminology, and an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of contexts and critical debates, including key theories.

In good answers, candidates were able to analyse the way that meaning was created within the extract from Your Honor, using a range of appropriate technical terminology and elements. Candidates were more successful in demonstrating an understanding of the social significances explored within the extract and referencing representation as a key concept. Popular themes were race/ethnicity (discriminative stereotypes), gender (masculinity as a strength v illness as a weakness), socio-economic status (poverty), and the death of a loved one (grief, trauma). Stronger candidates made appropriate comments about representation of people (binary oppositions – being 'out of place' v 'gang' culture), and places (low socio-economic, dangerous area, run-down). Some candidates interpreted the meaning as pertaining to the moral message of not driving whilst being distracted, which is less relevant. Stronger candidates were able to link media theory to their analysis organically, and used terms such as equilibrium, signifies, diegetic, protagonist, connoting, opposition, transition and ambiguous appropriately and fluently. Theories which were applied successfully were Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, and Levi Strauss' theory of binary opposition. Stuart Hall's theory of representation, Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of semiotics and Roland Barthes theoretical perspectives on semiotics, signs and structuralism were also referenced.

Weaker candidates simply described/identified the camera shots (long shot), angles (high/low), movement (pan/track), composition, sound and editing techniques (transition, cut) used within the extract, often following the chronological order of the extract. Candidates who did this generally failed to explain how shot types created meaning, and so they were weaker. Points were repeated throughout, or analysis reduced to simple points, such as colour analysis (black is bad, white is good). There was also inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' instead of 'cut' or misunderstanding non-diegetic). Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesized and holistic approach to the analysis of individuals/groups, themes, or meanings. Theory was superficially applied to many responses, and in some instances not referenced at all. Many candidates would explain terminology, or theories, rather than utilising them as a point of analysis.

### **Section B**

Within **Section B**, **Question 2** was more popular than **Question 3**.

Film was the most popular media area on which candidates chose to focus their response followed by video games and music, with only a handful of responses relating to print and very few focusing on radio and podcasts (except in passing). Responses focused on music or video games tended to be more successful. This may reflect candidate's own consumption preferences, or reflect the instruction provided by their centre. The most successful responses were able to respond to the question by relating their discussions on media institutions, the nature of audience consumption and the relationships between audiences and institutions with reference to more than one media area and multiple examples. Most candidates were able to reference at least one case study.

There were some weak responses without any case study material at all, evidencing little more than a layman's understanding of the key concepts of audiences and institutions. These responses did not successfully address the question, providing a generalised overview and superfluous facts rather than demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, contexts and critical debates relating to audience and industry. Candidates should be encouraged to apply their case study examples to the question as set, rather than presenting factual information e.g. a potted history of Disney. The use of technical vocabulary was less frequent for **Section B**, in comparison to **Section A**. Centres should support candidates to develop technical vocabulary in relation to industry and audiences, and in response to the question. Examples used Successfully included fandom, synergy, convergence, prosumerism, conglomerate, oligopoly, and hegemony. Centres should also support candidates to engage more critically with a variety of media theories to ensure that they are understood and can be successfully applied, where appropriate. The application of media theory is preferable to an individual's personal experience, on which weaker candidates rely. Candidates presenting information from only 2–3 case studies often limit themselves by not having enough depth in their responses. They should be given more freedom to research each media area outlined in the specification and encouraged to build their own resources and case studies from each area (and perhaps even across various industries), whilst retaining a focus on one media area i.e. video games. Centres should encourage candidates to engage in whatever are the current debates across all aspects of the media. This would better equip them to engage more meaningfully with **Section B**.

### **Question 2**

**Analyse the relationship between media ownership and media content in the area you have studied.**

Most candidates opted to respond to this. Stronger candidates were able to develop a critical engagement and discussion of media ownership and content within at least one media area. The most common responses discussed ownership in relation to media theories, such as Curran & Seaton (profit over creativity), or Hesmondhalgh ('safe', guaranteed, successful, but repetitive products). They supported their discussion with points of evidence from their case studies, often forming counter points/arguments most successfully through their understanding of the independent sector producing 'different' products to oligopolies, how larger, more 'successful' companies can hire 'stars', and the dominance of Disney across the film industry, and other media industries. Marvel (MCU) and A24 were other successfully utilised examples, alongside Black Widow, Everything Everywhere All At Once, Host, Super Mario Bros, and Minecraft. Terminology was used fluently, demonstrating a good understanding. Some candidates were able to discuss multiple industries in relation to cross-media synergies, and how content is produced in relation to franchises. When used correctly, key theories strengthened candidates' responses.

Weaker candidates referenced case studies that were not recent, or relevant (usually due to their historic nature i.e. they were more from more than five years ago e.g. Star Wars, Jurassic Park) and so their

knowledge and understanding of media concepts were limited. Terminology was not used fluently. They focused on facts, without providing any analysis, with a focus on companies rather than media texts, often providing a historical overview limited to facts such as release dates and box office revenue or providing irrelevant information about theme parks. They evidenced no (or a weak) understanding of wider contexts or critical debates. There was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They did not engage with any theories, or superficially referenced older and less relevant theories, such as the Hypodermic Model, Two-Step Flow or 'The Big 5'. Some candidates erroneously used the excerpt from **Section A** to respond to **Section B**.

### Question 3

**Evaluate the ways in which audiences are active participants in the media area you have studied.**

Stronger candidates were able to discuss active audiences in relation to the evolution of audiences, prosumerism, engagement in marketing (merchandise, social media), and fandoms. Taylor Swift, Kendrick and Drake's 'beef', 'Barbenheimer' (Barbie and Oppenheimer), Mr Beast, and Fortnite were popular and successfully utilised examples. Successful candidates supported their discussion with points of evidence from their case studies, often forming counter points/arguments through their understanding of theories, such as prosumerism (Shirkey) and fandoms (Jenkins).

Weaker candidates focused on facts in relation to their case studies or media area without providing any analysis or demonstration of an understanding of wider context. They did not engage with any theories, or their engagement in theories was not accurate. There was a tendency for candidates to misunderstand the concept of 'active' audiences (presuming that this is a more recent development, and only related to current technologies, such as online streaming, or online gaming) due perhaps to their age and personal experience. There was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They may have evidenced a weak understanding of terms and concepts, such as audience response theories (Hypodermic Model, Two-Step Flow or 'The Big 5').

# MEDIA STUDIES

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<p><b>Paper 9607/22</b> <b>Key Media Concepts</b></p>
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## Key messages

**Section A** is a compulsory question, in which candidates must analyse an extract from a TV drama and consider how meaning is constructed, as well as the specific representations of individuals, groups, events, or places through the technical codes of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to answer the question, which was based on an extract from *Servant*.

**Section B** requires candidates to answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting, and applying their knowledge. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from contemporary media.

## General comments

Candidates tended to perform better on Section A than on Section B. This seemed to be either because they found Section A easier, or else they didn't manage their time appropriately and ran out of time to respond adequately to Section B. Centres should encourage candidates to practice responding to exam questions within set times and to spend an equal amount of time on responses which carry equal marks.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

There was evidence of sound understanding of some technical elements, with most candidates able to identify camera shots, angles, movement, and composition, as well as mise-en-scene, using terminology accurately to explore how meaning was created. Candidates were less successful in identifying how sound and editing helped to create meaning, however. Some candidates simply described technical elements featured within the extract and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring meaning, making basic statements like 'the close-up shows emotion'. There was also more focus on narrative devices, such as enigma codes, foreshadowing, and the building of suspense/tension. This limited opportunities from exploring representations. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on how, and why meaning is created. This analysis should be underpinned with appropriate media terminology, and an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of contexts and critical debates, including key theories.

In the stronger responses, candidates were able to analyse the way that meaning was created within the extract from *Servant* using a range of appropriate technical terminology and elements. Candidates were more successful in demonstrating an understanding of the social significances explored within the extract and referencing representation as a key concept. Popular themes were class/socio-economic status (powerful wealthy couple), binary oppositions, narrative enigma (suspense) and the foreshadowing of something 'dark' (horror genre). Stronger candidates made appropriate comments about representation of people (bright joyful older mother v 'dark' young servant) and places (mise-en-scene – low-level lighting, rain, and the difference in the sound of their footsteps). Stronger candidates were also able to link media theory (Strauss, Neale) to their analysis organically, and used technical terms fluently (protagonist, signifies, depth of field, synchronous, voyeurism, etc.). Theories which were applied successfully were Levi Strauss' theory of binary opposition. Stuart Hall's theory of representation, Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of semiotics and Roland Barthes theoretical perspectives on semiotics, signs and structuralism.

Weaker candidates simply described/identified the camera shots (close-up), angles (low angle), movement (track, pan), composition (rule of thirds), sound (diegetic) and editing techniques (cut) used within the extract,

often following the chronological order of the extract. Candidates who did this generally failed to explain how shot types created meaning, and so they were weaker. Points were repeated throughout, or analysis reduced to simple points, such as color. There was also inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' instead of 'cut' or misunderstanding non-diegetic). Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesized and holistic approach to the analysis of individuals/groups, themes, or meanings. Theory was superficially applied to many responses (Propp, Todorov), and in some instances not referenced at all. Many candidates would explain terminology, or theories, rather than applying them to an analysis of the extract.

### **Section B**

Within **Section B**, **Question 3** was more popular than **Question 2**.

Film was the most popular media area on which candidates chose to focus their response, followed by video games and music, with only a handful of responses relating to print, and very few focusing on radio and podcasts (except in passing). Responses focused on music, or video games tended to be more successful. This may reflect candidate's own consumption preferences, or reflect the instruction provided by their centre. The most successful responses were able to respond to the question by relating their discussions on media institutions, the nature of audience consumption and the relationships between audiences and institutions with reference to more than one media area and multiple examples. Most candidates were able to reference at least one case study.

There were some weak responses without any case study material at all, evidencing little more than a layman's understanding of the key concepts of audiences and institutions. These responses did not successfully address the question, providing a generalised overview and superfluous facts rather than demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, contexts and critical debates relating to audience and industry. Candidates should be encouraged to apply their case study examples to the question as set, rather than presenting factual information e.g. a potted history of Disney. The use of technical vocabulary was less frequent for **Section B**, in comparison to **Section A**. Centres should support candidates to develop technical vocabulary in relation to industry and audiences, and in response to the question. Examples used Successfully included fandom, synergy, convergence, prosumerism, conglomerate, oligopoly, and hegemony. Centres should also support candidates to engage more critically with a variety of media theories to ensure that they are understood and can be successfully applied, where appropriate. The application of media theory is preferable to an individual's personal experience, on which weaker candidates rely. Candidates presenting information from only 2–3 case studies often limit themselves by not having enough depth in their responses. They should be given more freedom to research each media area outlined in the specification and encouraged to build their own resources and case studies from each area (and perhaps even across various industries), whilst retaining a focus on one media area i.e. video games. Centres should encourage candidates to engage in whatever are the current debates across all aspects of the media. This would better equip them to engage more meaningfully with **Section B**.

### **Question 2**

**Explain the factors that would influence production for a new company in the media area you have studied.**

Stronger candidates were able to develop a critical engagement and discussion of media ownership and products within at least one media area. The most common responses discussed how budget and new technologies might influence a new company. Theories such as Curran & Seaton (profit over creativity), or Hesmondhalgh ('safe', guaranteed, successful, but repetitive products) were used. Stronger candidates supported their discussion with evidence from their case studies, often forming counter points/arguments most successfully through their understanding of the independent sector producing different products to oligopolies. Disney, Marvel (MCU) and A24 were popular examples, alongside Black Widow, Everything Everywhere All At Once, and Host. Terminology was used fluently, demonstrating a good understanding. Some candidates were able to discuss multiple industries in relation to cross-media synergies, and how this might affect the products, and establishment of a new company. When used correctly, key theories strengthened candidates' responses.

Weaker candidates referenced case studies or theories that were not recent, or relevant (usually due to their historic nature i.e. they were more from more than five years ago e.g., The Blair Witch Project, I Daniel Blake) and so their knowledge and understanding of media concepts were limited. Terminology was not used fluently. They focused on facts, without providing any analysis, with a focus on companies rather than media

texts, often providing a historical overview limited to facts such as release dates and box office revenue or providing irrelevant information about theme parks. They evidenced no (or a weak) understanding of wider contexts or critical debates. There was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They did not engage with any theories, or superficially referenced older and less relevant theories, such as the Hypodermic Model, Two-Step Flow or 'The Big 5'. Some candidates erroneously used the excerpt from **Section A** to respond to **Section B**.

### Question 3

**'Audiences are created, not discovered.'** To what extent do you agree with this statement in the media area you have studied?

Most candidates opted to respond to this question. Stronger candidates were able to discuss active audiences in relation to the evolution of audiences, prosumerism, engagement with marketing (merchandise, social media), and fandoms. Taylor Swift, 'Barbenheimer' (Barbie and Oppenheimer), and Fortnite were popular and successfully utilised examples. Stronger candidates supported their discussion with points of evidence from their case studies, often forming counter points/arguments through their understanding of theories, such as prosumerism (Shirkey) and fandoms (Jenkins).

Weaker candidates tended to focus on facts in relation to their case studies, or media area, without providing any analysis, or demonstration of an understanding of wider context, and either did not engage with theories, or used theories inaccurately. There was a tendency for candidates to misunderstand the concept of 'active' audiences (presuming that this is a more recent development, and only related to current technologies, such as online streaming, or online gaming) due perhaps to their age and personal experience, or centre instruction. There was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They may have evidenced a weak understanding of terms and concepts, such as older, and less relevant theories (Hypodermic Model, Two-Step Flow or 'The Big 5').

# MEDIA STUDIES

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<p><b>Paper 9607/23</b> <b>Key Media Concepts</b></p>
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## Key messages

**Section A** is a compulsory question, in which candidates must analyse an extract from a TV drama and consider how meaning is constructed, as well as the specific representations of individuals, groups, events, or places through the technical codes of camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to answer the question, which was based on an extract from *Servant*.

**Section B** requires candidates to answer one of two optional questions on one media industry they have studied, adapting, and applying their knowledge. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from contemporary media.

## General comments

Candidates tended to perform better on Section A than on Section B. This seemed to be either because they found Section A easier, or else they didn't manage their time appropriately and ran out of time to respond adequately to Section B. Centres should encourage candidates to practice responding to exam questions within set times and to spend an equal amount of time on responses which carry equal marks.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

There was evidence of sound understanding of some technical elements, with most candidates able to identify camera shots, angles, movement, and composition, as well as mise-en-scene, using terminology accurately to explore how meaning was created. Candidates were less successful in identifying how sound and editing helped to create meaning, however. Some candidates simply described technical elements featured within the extract and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring meaning, making basic statements like 'the close-up shows emotion'. There was also more focus on narrative devices, such as enigma codes, foreshadowing, and the building of suspense/tension. This limited opportunities from exploring representations. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on how, and why meaning is created. This analysis should be underpinned with appropriate media terminology, and an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of contexts and critical debates, including key theories.

In the stronger responses, candidates were able to analyse the way that meaning was created within the extract from *Servant* using a range of appropriate technical terminology and elements. Candidates were more successful in demonstrating an understanding of the social significances explored within the extract and referencing representation as a key concept. Popular themes were class/socio-economic status (powerful wealthy couple), binary oppositions, narrative enigma (suspense) and the foreshadowing of something 'dark' (horror genre). Stronger candidates made appropriate comments about representation of people (bright joyful older mother v 'dark' young servant) and places (mise-en-scene – low-level lighting, rain, and the difference in the sound of their footsteps). Stronger candidates were also able to link media theory (Strauss, Neale) to their analysis organically, and used technical terms fluently (protagonist, signifies, depth of field, synchronous, voyeurism, etc.). Theories which were applied successfully were Levi Strauss' theory of binary opposition. Stuart Hall's theory of representation, Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of semiotics and Roland Barthes theoretical perspectives on semiotics, signs and structuralism.

Weaker candidates simply described/identified the camera shots (close-up), angles (low angle), movement (track, pan), composition (rule of thirds), sound (diegetic) and editing techniques (cut) used within the extract,



often following the chronological order of the extract. Candidates who did this generally failed to explain how shot types created meaning, and so they were weaker. Points were repeated throughout, or analysis reduced to simple points, such as color. There was also inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' instead of 'cut' or misunderstanding non-diegetic). Weaker responses tended to take each micro element and address it separately, whereas more sophisticated responses usually employed a more synthesized and holistic approach to the analysis of individuals/groups, themes, or meanings. Theory was superficially applied to many responses (Propp, Todorov), and in some instances not referenced at all. Many candidates would explain terminology, or theories, rather than applying them to an analysis of the extract.

## **Section B**

Within **Section B**, **Question 3** was more popular than **Question 2**.

Film was the most popular media area on which candidates chose to focus their response, followed by video games and music, with only a handful of responses relating to print, and very few focusing on radio and podcasts (except in passing). Responses focused on music, or video games tended to be more successful. This may reflect candidate's own consumption preferences, or reflect the instruction provided by their centre. The most successful responses were able to respond to the question by relating their discussions on media institutions, the nature of audience consumption and the relationships between audiences and institutions with reference to more than one media area and multiple examples. Most candidates were able to reference at least one case study.

There were some weak responses without any case study material at all, evidencing little more than a layman's understanding of the key concepts of audiences and institutions. These responses did not successfully address the question, providing a generalised overview and superfluous facts rather than demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, contexts and critical debates relating to audience and industry. Candidates should be encouraged to apply their case study examples to the question as set, rather than presenting factual information e.g. a potted history of Disney. The use of technical vocabulary was less frequent for **Section B**, in comparison to **Section A**. Centres should support candidates to develop technical vocabulary in relation to industry and audiences, and in response to the question. Examples used Successfully included fandom, synergy, convergence, prosumerism, conglomerate, oligopoly, and hegemony. Centres should also support candidates to engage more critically with a variety of media theories to ensure that they are understood and can be successfully applied, where appropriate. The application of media theory is preferable to an individual's personal experience, on which weaker candidates rely. Candidates presenting information from only 2–3 case studies often limit themselves by not having enough depth in their responses. They should be given more freedom to research each media area outlined in the specification and encouraged to build their own resources and case studies from each area (and perhaps even across various industries), whilst retaining a focus on one media area i.e. video games. Centres should encourage candidates to engage in whatever are the current debates across all aspects of the media. This would better equip them to engage more meaningfully with **Section B**.

## **Question 2**

**Explain the factors that would influence production for a new company in the media area you have studied.**

Stronger candidates were able to develop a critical engagement and discussion of media ownership and products within at least one media area. The most common responses discussed how budget and new technologies might influence a new company. Theories such as Curran & Seaton (profit over creativity), or Hesmondhalgh ('safe', guaranteed, successful, but repetitive products) were used. Stronger candidates supported their discussion with evidence from their case studies, often forming counter points/arguments most successfully through their understanding of the independent sector producing different products to oligopolies. Disney, Marvel (MCU) and A24 were popular examples, alongside Black Widow, Everything Everywhere All At Once, and Host. Terminology was used fluently, demonstrating a good understanding. Some candidates were able to discuss multiple industries in relation to cross-media synergies, and how this might affect the products, and establishment of a new company. When used correctly, key theories strengthened candidates' responses.

Weaker candidates referenced case studies or theories that were not recent, or relevant (usually due to their historic nature i.e. they were more from more than five years ago e.g., The Blair Witch Project, I Daniel Blake) and so their knowledge and understanding of media concepts were limited. Terminology was not used fluently. They focused on facts, without providing any analysis, with a focus on companies rather than media

texts, often providing a historical overview limited to facts such as release dates and box office revenue or providing irrelevant information about theme parks. They evidenced no (or a weak) understanding of wider contexts or critical debates. There was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They did not engage with any theories, or superficially referenced older and less relevant theories, such as the Hypodermic Model, Two-Step Flow or 'The Big 5'. Some candidates erroneously used the excerpt from **Section A** to respond to **Section B**.

### Question 3

**'Audiences are created, not discovered.'** To what extent do you agree with this statement in the media area you have studied?

Most candidates opted to respond to this question. Stronger candidates were able to discuss active audiences in relation to the evolution of audiences, prosumerism, engagement with marketing (merchandise, social media), and fandoms. Taylor Swift, 'Barbenheimer' (Barbie and Oppenheimer), and Fortnite were popular and successfully utilised examples. Stronger candidates supported their discussion with points of evidence from their case studies, often forming counter points/arguments through their understanding of theories, such as prosumerism (Shirkey) and fandoms (Jenkins).

Weaker candidates tended to focus on facts in relation to their case studies, or media area, without providing any analysis, or demonstration of an understanding of wider context, and either did not engage with theories, or used theories inaccurately. There was a tendency for candidates to misunderstand the concept of 'active' audiences (presuming that this is a more recent development, and only related to current technologies, such as online streaming, or online gaming) due perhaps to their age and personal experience, or centre instruction. There was a lack of focus on responding to the question. They may have evidenced a weak understanding of terms and concepts, such as older, and less relevant theories (Hypodermic Model, Two-Step Flow or 'The Big 5').

# MEDIA STUDIES

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<p><b>Paper 9607/41</b> <b>Critical Perspectives</b></p>
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## Key messages

The most popular topic from the **Section A** optional questions was Media Regulation; Postmodernism was the least popular.

This paper asks students to choose two questions from a choice of three in **Section A**; each question is marked out of 15. **Section B** is a compulsory question on Media Ecology which is worth up to 30 marks. The syllabus states that case studies should feature a majority of contemporary texts, although any text may be used to give historical context. The term contemporary is used to mean a text which was first published no more than approximately five years before the examination year, in this case 2019

It was really encouraging to see some of the candidates scoring at the higher end of the spectrum go above and beyond the usual theories. Whilst nearly every candidate mentioned some concepts, the very strongest candidates were often working with what seemed like self-directed research, which was very refreshing but rare. Many answers seemed slightly learnt by rote, particularly for the Regulation and Postmodern questions, but thankfully more creative approaches were often to be found in **Question 4**.

There were some excellent responses from candidates that addressed the set question and offered detailed case studies which exemplified the relevant features of their chosen topic area. It appeared that this was a result of guided independent study which leads to a greater level of engagement with the topic than centre taught case studies of specific episodes of TV dramas / music videos. For guidance, the case study should be a collection of associated texts, linked thematically or in another way, which the candidate clearly knows well – including the processes through which the texts were made, how they were intended to be distributed and consumed, and their intended audience.

Some centres have adjusted their approach to reflect feedback from previous sessions, resulting in far fewer lengthy historical accounts, which has been a concern particularly in Regulation and Ecology.

## General comments

- There appeared to be significant problems with time management – many students submitted very lengthy **Section A** answers sometimes followed by very short Media Ecology responses, despite this compulsory question being worth the same number of marks as all of **Section A**. Regular timed exam practice is highly recommended as one method of addressing this; many candidates attempted **Section B** first which also worked.
- A significant number of candidates clearly had learnt a great deal but did not address the set question, which made it difficult for them to access the higher levels. In general candidates who were weaker tended to rely on simply listing things, with little analysis and a focus on answering last year's questions.
- Candidates should avoid using the same content for every answer, including repeating the same sentences. While there are connections between topics, to see the debates around Black Lives Matter (BLM) included in each individual question might suggest the candidate has not embraced the breadth of learning one would hope to see at this level.
- It would be worthwhile for centres to ensure students' handwriting is legible as examiners can only mark what they can read. Special considerations might be available in some cases which would permit the use of word-processed scripts.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

##### **Explain why media regulation is necessary.**

This topic is informed by a legacy of study around audience reception of texts and ensuing debates. Broadly, the early development of this field made many simplistic assumptions which most media specialists would now regard as problematic given the complexity of the inter relationship.

Many students wrote about BBFC (British Board of Film Classification), IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation) and the Leveson Enquiry, which showed understanding of the regulatory bodies functions and birth. However, weaker candidates did not give contemporary examples of editors breaking the codes of practice such as Noel Clarke Vs The Guardian or any local case studies, with the exception of Imran Khan's imprisonment in Pakistan. There were frequent references to the Molly Russell case which generally reported comments from the trial rather than explored the wider contexts one might expect from a student of popular culture. In general, candidates need to be critically sharper and less trusting especially of the social media self-regulation regimes. In terms of theory, it is rather surprising that the psychologist Bandura 'Bobo Doll' remains ubiquitous, seemingly becoming something of a default despite the fact it rarely offers anything of significance or relevance to the question. There is a substantial body of subject-specific, accessible, specialist academic work in the field of Media Effects including (but not limited to) the work of Barker, Livingstone, Petley, Gauntlett, Kermode and Byron. David Gauntlett's *Ten things wrong with the media 'effects' model* is an excellent starting point. For a nominal 30 mins response there is often too much emphasis on history, often dating back to the invention of the printing press and the Church's role in the 1800s which leaves little time to address the question. Popular texts referred to were *Joker / Barbie / Oppenheimer*.

#### **Question 2**

##### **'The postmodern media text requires a media-literate audience.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?**

This topic examines debates around how one might define postmodernism in media texts and to what extent such an understanding is needed for an audience to appreciate them. Approaches from not at all to absolutely must and everything in between were offered.

The best responses offered critical reflection clearly informed by study of key theorists Baudrillard, Lyotard and Jameson which implies that terminology and theory for this is taught very well. *Barbie* was the most frequently used example along with *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, *Tenet* and *Bridgerton*. The last formed the basis of many excellent responses with insightful, informed and detailed analysis of its' postmodern approach to soundtrack in key scenes. This was frequently paired with critiques of *Black Mirror Rachel, Jack and Ashley Too* enabling candidates to fulfil the criteria for the highest grades. More than other questions, this topic is regularly hindered by the use of very old examples (e.g. *Pulp Fiction*) which is still more common than one would expect given the clear guidance in the syllabus. When one reads such responses it is disappointing, given the obvious critical insight and engagement on display. Centres must exercise responsibility in ensuring such students are not hampered by focussing on texts which are well outside the requirements of being considered contemporary.

#### **Question 3**

##### **Evaluate the arguments for and against trusting the media.**

This question demands an informed critique of the power structures present in the Media within the context of wider society with reference to key texts to support viewpoints. These need to go beyond superficial comments about how the media is engaged in thought control / manipulation in order to gain credit.

The theories of Althusser and Gramsci around hegemony were explored in better answers. Less successful responses relied upon a conviction that social media platforms have allowed everyone to become an influencer, relegating Big Tech to merely neutral facilitators for uncensored free speech. Many cited Kelly, Jenkins, Shirky's work on prosumers. Morozov / Buckingham's critique of such utopian / technological determinist views serves as very useful counter arguments to such ideas. Candidates who were able to

provide strong examples often struggled to connect these to media contexts and debates, and those who abounded in personal opinions and layman viewpoints also struggled with the examples. The most detailed answers were when students used Edward Said and Gauntlett to explore ethnicity and identity. Popular case studies centred around George Floyd and the BLM movement, and Kim Kardashians Skims fashion company. Crucially, candidates would write about both generally and not write about the media product in detail e.g., the social media campaigns such as viral catchphrases or Instagram images.

#### Question 4

**‘Digital technology has had a significant impact on the representation of public and private lives.’ To what extent do you agree with this statement?**

This section involves considerations around how Technology and Society work upon each other. This is clearly an issue of importance for many concerned parties within various fields. While reflections upon personal experience of how candidates are influenced by engagement with others in their own lives and online are encouraged, these should be supported by evidence of study in the field of the ever-evolving media ecosystem.

One high scoring candidate provided a superb insight into how audiences curate their public self with reference to Spotify playlists. This was supported through critical discussion of Sherry Turkle’s work on private / public self along with consideration of the work of David Gauntlett. Students who attempted to address this highly nuanced public / private debate with such reference to appropriate theories scored very high marks. Debates / critiques around technological determinism as offered by Morozov were mentioned by a small sample of students. This could be a very rewarding starting point for this area as essentially such ‘internet centrism’ ignores the social, political and historical factors which demand to be addressed given the synoptic nature of this question. All too often, simplistic assertions supported by dubious, uncredited statistics were presented with barely any reference to the set question. Where such comment was offered it was usually along the lines of ‘digital natives do not care about privacy’ which does not reveal a great deal of developed knowledge around the media ecosystem. Some answers focussed on internet shopping and taxi services which are irrelevant and were rewarded accordingly. Unfortunately, there were some lengthy histories of Media Ecology centred on the work of Marshall McLuhan / Neil Postman which ran to hundreds of words which, despite presenting strong evidence of significant learning, meant there was little time (and space) for contemporary issues of private / public representations – the focus of the question. At the other end of the spectrum, many students would provide a quote from Marshall or Postman – one sentence (often ‘the medium is the message’) and then just move on without demonstrating its relevance to the question. Indeed the ‘downloading’ of learned responses which completely disregarded the question while offering a list of ‘theorists’ was all too common.

# MEDIA STUDIES

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<p><b>Paper 9607/42</b> <b>Critical Perspectives</b></p>
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## Key messages

The most popular topic of **Section A** optional questions was Media Regulation with 80 per cent of candidates selecting this question. The other questions were both equally as popular.

This paper asks students to choose two questions from a choice of three in **Section A**; each question is marked out of 15. **Section B** is a compulsory question on Media Ecology which is worth up to 30 marks. The syllabus states that case studies should feature a majority of contemporary texts, although any text may be used to give historical context. The term contemporary is used to mean a text which was first published no more than approximately five years before the examination year, in this case 2019.

There were some excellent responses from candidates that addressed the set question and offered detailed case studies which exemplified the relevant features of their chosen topic area. It appeared that this was a result of guided independent study which leads to a greater level of engagement with the topic than centre taught case studies of specific episodes of TV dramas / music videos. For guidance, the case study should be a collection of associated texts, linked thematically or in another way, which the candidate clearly knows well – including the processes through which the texts were made, how they were intended to be distributed and consumed, and their intended audience.

## General comments

- There appeared to be significant problems with time management – many students submitted very lengthy **Section A** answers sometimes followed by very short Media Ecology responses, despite this compulsory question being worth the same number of marks as all of **Section A**. Regular timed exam practice is highly recommended as one method of addressing this; some candidates attempted **Section B** first which also worked.
- A significant number of candidates clearly had learnt a great deal but did not address the set question, which made it difficult for them to access the higher levels. In general candidates who were weaker tended to rely on simply listing things, with little analysis and a focus on answering last year's questions.
- Candidates should avoid using the same content for every answer, including repeating the same sentences. While there are connections between topics, to see the debates around Black Lives Matter included in each individual question might suggest the candidate has not embraced the breadth of learning one would hope to see at this level.
- It would be worthwhile for Centres to ensure students' handwriting is legible as examiners can only mark what they can read. Special considerations might be available in some cases which would permit the use of word-processed scripts

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

**'Media regulation is just censorship by another name.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?**

This topic is informed by a legacy of study around audience reception of texts and ensuing debates. Broadly, the early development of this field made many simplistic assumptions which most media specialists would now regard as problematic given the complexity of the inter relationship between reader and text.

The most common approach offered was that of Censorship vs Freedom of Speech which led on to a debate around the self-regulation of social media too often referred to in generalised terms rather than with specific, detailed examples. Some students had clearly never thought about what regulation and censorship really meant and spent most of the essay trying to work it out. Better answers began with a definition of both and developed an understanding that regulation was the application of agreed standards and rules on our behalf, whereas censorship was generally done without our consent – North Korea, China and Russia were often quoted.

There is still a tendency for candidates to simply list texts and explain why they got the rating they did without referring to the question at all. Film is still a very popular area, but videogames, news and social media proved fruitful too. Livingston and Lunt's work is a good choice for this topic but all too often it was not applied to the arguments or was unanchored from candidates' case studies. Media effects is one of the most widely studied areas in the subject; it is therefore rather surprising that the psychologist Bandura 'Bobo Doll' remains ubiquitous, seemingly becoming something of a default despite the fact it rarely offers anything of significance or relevance to the question. There is a substantial body of subject-specific, accessible, specialist academic work in the field of Media Effects including (but not limited to) the work of Barker, Livingstone, Petley, Gauntlett, Kermode, Byron. Among the huge volume of work in this field David Gauntlett's *Ten things wrong with the media 'effects' model* is an excellent resource. Popular texts referred to were *Joker* / *Barbie* / *Oppenheimer*.

#### **Question 2**

**Explain why certain texts can be called postmodern.**

This topic examines debates around how one might define postmodernism in media texts

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**Analyse the ways in which media representations reflect differences in power in society.**

This question demands an informed critique of the power structures present in the Media within the context of wider Society with reference to key texts to support viewpoints. These need to be beyond superficial comments around gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ etc. It was good to see better answers looking at things like cultural imperialism and postcolonial theory rather than just gender related theories.

The theories of Althusser and Gramsci around Hegemony were explored in better answers. Less successful responses relied upon a conviction that social media platforms have allowed everyone to become an influencer relegating Big Tech to merely neutral platforms for diverse representations. A popular approach was to assume social media always allowed marginalised voices to be heard with some success in the case of the use of #BLM and #Metoo. Many cited Kelly, Jenkins and Shirky's work on prosumers. Morozov / Buckingham's critique of such utopian / technological determinist views serves as very useful counter arguments to such ideas. Candidates who were able to provide strong examples often struggled to connect these to media contexts and debates, and those who abounded in personal opinions and layman viewpoints also struggled with the examples. The most detailed answers were when students used Edward Said and Gauntlett to explore ethnicity and identity. *Sonic the Hedgehog* movie and the subsequent alterations to it was frequently used as an example of audience empowerment. Some very lengthy answers provided detailed comparative analysis of *Birth of A Nation* (1915) and *This Is America* (2018) which are both old examples and alternatives should be sought if this is the direction the Centre wishes to continue with. Some candidates regurgitated previous essays on representations without reference to power or ownership.

#### Question 4

**Explain how new media technologies have had an impact on the codes and conventions of media texts.**

This section involves considerations around how Media Technology and Society work upon each other. The specific focus here is on if and how technology has changed media forms. This prompted a few very interesting reflections upon the debate offering conclusions which varied from no significant difference to radical new forms of media targeted at a new online constituency.

Many candidates seemed to miss out the codes and conventions part of this question and just look at how media technologies have changed our lives offering a plethora of examples featuring often historical accounts of the move from print to online, cinema to TV etc. After two years studying Media it is surprising to read fairly widespread use of assertions such as 'people used to go to cinema now they watch Netflix' / 'send emails rather than post letters' and many other simplistic comments; these are not rewarded by the mark scheme.

All too often simplistic assertions supported by dubious, uncredited statistics were presented with barely any reference to the set question. Unfortunately, there were some lengthy histories of Media Ecology centred on the work of Marshall McLuhan / Neil Postman which ran to hundreds of words which, despite presenting strong evidence of significant learning, meant there was little time (and space) for contemporary issues of the effects upon the codes and conventions of media texts - the focus of the question. At the other end of the spectrum many students would provide a quote from Marshall or Postman – one sentence (often 'the medium is the message') and then just move on without demonstrating its relevance to the question. Indeed the 'downloading' of learned responses which completely disregarded the question while offering a list of 'theorists' was all too common.

There were some really good answers which looked at how technology like the smartphone and social media and websites had changed the nature of media texts with a switch to short form content with reference to Tik Tok. The greater the level of detail in the examples the more such answers were rewarded. There was also some really good use of Postman's ideas when applied to political debates and news reporting today. The Guardian was a popular and fruitful case study, where students looked at how the decline of traditional print media in the face of new media technologies had changed the representation of news topics, with short attention spans, audience interactivity, videos and blogs and social media updates etc. The most cited theories were those of Shirky and Kelly in particular the debate around prosumers. The best response interrogated such arguments rather than merely accepting that the platforms offered by Big Tech have removed all gatekeepers despite the obvious contradictions within such a statement. Such creators, labelled prosumers, were used to illustrate how diverse, minority / niche voices are empowered by social media. It would be interesting to explore whether such creators as Mr Beast might now be considered part of the mainstream.



# MEDIA STUDIES

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Paper 9607/43  
Critical Perspectives

## Key messages

The most popular topic of **Section A** optional questions was Media Regulation with 80 per cent of candidates selecting this question. The other questions were both equally as popular.

This paper asks students to choose two questions from a choice of three in **Section A**; each question is marked out of 15. **Section B** is a compulsory question on Media Ecology which is worth up to 30 marks. The syllabus states that case studies should feature a majority of contemporary texts, although any text may be used to give historical context. The term contemporary is used to mean a text which was first published no more than approximately five years before the examination year, in this case 2019.

There were some excellent responses from candidates that addressed the set question and offered detailed case studies which exemplified the relevant features of their chosen topic area. It appeared that this was a result of guided independent study which leads to a greater level of engagement with the topic than centre taught case studies of specific episodes of TV dramas / music videos. For guidance, the case study should be a collection of associated texts, linked thematically or in another way, which the candidate clearly knows well – including the processes through which the texts were made, how they were intended to be distributed and consumed, and their intended audience.

## General comments

- There appeared to be significant problems with time management – many students submitted very lengthy **Section A** answers sometimes followed by very short Media Ecology responses, despite this compulsory question being worth the same number of marks as all of **Section A**. Regular timed exam practice is highly recommended as one method of addressing this; some candidates attempted **Section B** first which also worked.
- A significant number of candidates clearly had learnt a great deal but did not address the set question, which made it difficult for them to access the higher levels. In general candidates who were weaker tended to rely on simply listing things, with little analysis and a focus on answering last year's questions.
- Candidates should avoid using the same content for every answer, including repeating the same sentences. While there are connections between topics, to see the debates around Black Lives Matter included in each individual question might suggest the candidate has not embraced the breadth of learning one would hope to see at this level.
- It would be worthwhile for Centres to ensure students' handwriting is legible as examiners can only mark what they can read. Special considerations might be available in some cases which would permit the use of word-processed scripts

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

**'Media regulation is just censorship by another name.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?**

This topic is informed by a legacy of study around audience reception of texts and ensuing debates. Broadly, the early development of this field made many simplistic assumptions which most media specialists would now regard as problematic given the complexity of the inter relationship between reader and text.

The most common approach offered was that of Censorship vs Freedom of Speech which led on to a debate around the self-regulation of social media too often referred to in generalised terms rather than with specific, detailed examples. Some students had clearly never thought about what regulation and censorship really meant and spent most of the essay trying to work it out. Better answers began with a definition of both and developed an understanding that regulation was the application of agreed standards and rules on our behalf, whereas censorship was generally done without our consent – North Korea, China and Russia were often quoted.

There is still a tendency for candidates to simply list texts and explain why they got the rating they did without referring to the question at all. Film is still a very popular area, but videogames, news and social media proved fruitful too. Livingston and Lunt's work is a good choice for this topic but all too often it was not applied to the arguments or was unanchored from candidates' case studies. Media effects is one of the most widely studied areas in the subject; it is therefore rather surprising that the psychologist Bandura 'Bobo Doll' remains ubiquitous, seemingly becoming something of a default despite the fact it rarely offers anything of significance or relevance to the question. There is a substantial body of subject-specific, accessible, specialist academic work in the field of Media Effects including (but not limited to) the work of Barker, Livingstone, Petley, Gauntlett, Kermode, Byron. Among the huge volume of work in this field David Gauntlett's *Ten things wrong with the media 'effects' model* is an excellent resource. Popular texts referred to were *Joker / Barbie / Oppenheimer*.

#### **Question 2**

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