

Media Studies

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H140

Report on the Units

June 2009

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

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G321 Foundation Portfolio in Media

Introduction

This was the first full session for the new specification and the new AS coursework unit. There were over 600 centres and 16,000 candidates undertaking the new tasks and completing the new form of evaluation marking out of 100 to revised criteria. There was some outstanding work from centres which had fully embraced the new specification, making use of digital opportunities and setting high expectations from construction in particular.

Many centres unfortunately had not fully taken on board the demands of the new specification; major adjustments to marks have been made in order to maintain the established standard for AS Level and a lot of this report attempts to detail to centres what needs to be done to address problems with particular aspects of practice.

This report will identify a number of issues with all areas – planning, construction, evaluation and administration. The training programme for 2009-10 will be designed to help support centres in improving practice in these areas.

Administration and General Issues

The team of 22 moderators were tasked with using a new electronic moderation system online for the first time; it was therefore to be expected that the process would not be entirely smooth! There were some delays in the despatch of samples from centres as they had not expected a change in the request process due to the new electronic system sending out e-mailed requests. In future, centres should expect the requests to come this way, rather than from moderators; ultimately, this should speed up the process.

Several moderators expressed concern that centres they had seen did not appear to have read the new specification fully; illustrations of the reasons for this suspicion will appear in the relevant sections below, but as a general point of advice, centres are reminded that it is vital that they make candidates aware of the rules for all components and that they take account of all these rules in assessing candidates' work. Centre marking and teacher comments in particular should make reference to the specification, levels and assessment criteria.

Centres are encouraged to reduce the size of packaging; it is still the case that for print work in particular huge folders of irrelevant material, often lavishly packaged and beautifully presented, are sent. Moderators do not need to see hundreds of questionnaires (one would be enough with a summary of results) or dozens of annotated magazine covers. Preliminary tasks, however, do need to be submitted; they do not affect the marks unless they are absent or incomplete, in which case marks should be deducted by the centre.

Marks need to be carefully transcribed from cover sheet to MS1; there were a large number of cases where the marks did not agree across the different forms of paperwork, which leads to a lengthy process of amendment which holds up the whole moderation process. Centres are also reminded of the importance of putting candidate names and numbers on all materials-sometimes work was marked up with first names only and since moderators rely on candidate numbers for identification, this again lengthens the process unnecessarily. Similarly, where candidates work in groups, centres should ensure that group lists with names and numbers are passed to the moderator.

It is helpful when despatching samples if centres can provide a point of contact, such as course leader phone number and e-mail as this enables moderators to deal with any problems quickly.

Where blogs are used, a central hub with links to all the candidate blogs makes the process run more smoothly. If a paper list of addresses is relied upon, there is a risk of transcription errors either by the centre or by the moderator and it takes longer anyway to type in addresses manually. It is easy for the links to be supplied electronically to the moderator (e.g. as hyperlinks to the blog sites on a Word document) on a CD-Rom and sent with the sample request. There are added benefits anyway to the centre of linking blogs together to enable candidates to give one another feedback. Where the only option is a school or college VLE, password access must be facilitated for the moderator when the sample is despatched and clear instructions must be given for using it.

Formats for work are still sometimes problematic; print work should be in a universal format, such as pdf; some documents (such as publisher files) proved impossible to open on Macs for example. Centres are also reminded that USB sticks are not an acceptable format for submission. CDs and DVDs should not have paper labels stuck on them as these tend to render them unplayable and/or get stuck in machines. If artefacts are online, they need to be easily accessible; some candidates' portfolios involved individually opening a large number of documents one by one and in other cases their video files were so large that they played back incredibly slowly. Where work is presented on CD and DVD, often the number of disks per centre could be reduced, either to one whole disk per candidate with all aspects of their work or one disk for the whole centre for construction and another for evaluation. Moderators often had to navigate between several disks in order to look at a single candidate's submission, which again made the process so much more time-consuming.

Evidence from this summer session has shown that paper marksheets are still needed by the moderator; pdf versions may be sent alongside on disks, but moderators need to be able to see how the marks have been arrived at on a printed version, whether typed or handwritten by the centre. In instances where they were relying on a pdf, moderators found they had too many documents onscreen at once to be able to do their job effectively.

Comments from teacher-markers in each of the three categories (planning, construction and evaluation) are essential on every marksheet and these should be detailed and refer to the product, the process and the assessment criteria. Individual contributions to the work of a group need to be clearly outlined and the mark fully justified. It was disappointing to see so many arbitrary marks awarded by centres, usually in level 4, often resulting in scores of 90 plus (sometimes entire cohorts all scoring 80 plus), which inevitably had to be moderated down, often quite drastically. Level 4 is reserved for excellence in each category; given that 50% of the AS level now rests on this portfolio and this time it was marked out of 100 rather than 120, it is only to be expected that centres will have found some difficulties in adapting. Several moderators reported that they had to adjust the marks outside tolerance in at least three quarters of centres; it is hoped that the feedback from this report will help centres adapt for future sessions.

Rank order was sometimes a problem, suggesting at times that internal moderation had not taken place effectively. This was particularly the case where centres had offered more than one of the tasks to its cohort; in such instances, teachers have to match up the criteria and compare achievement very carefully.

Finally, it was noted that despite the preliminary task, many candidates seemed to be struggling to use the available software; some even mentioned this in their evaluation. Centres are reminded of the need to give candidates adequate training and practice on the software to meet their needs.

Research and Planning

In arriving at a mark for research and planning, centres need to evidence the work that has been done on an individual basis. Much of this can be done by the candidates themselves keeping records as they go along, but at times centres will wish to comment on the contribution of individuals which may be less tangible from planning documentation; this is fine, provided there is something to suggest that the work has actually taken place and been productive. As with the legacy specification, if the finished product looks poorly planned and only worth a low mark for construction, a high mark for research and planning will need a lot of additional justification! Occasionally there was little hard evidence from candidates of their research and planning process, but the finished product could justify a high planning mark. In future sessions, a greater emphasis will be placed on the evidence provided so centres should let candidates know that their process work must be clear to see.

Research often dominated at the expense of planning; in many instances, this research was of doubtful relevance—women’s magazines or even film posters used as research for the music magazine task or detailed textual analysis of films from completely different genres to that chosen by the candidate. It is important that research into existing media texts is focussed and finds its way into the production itself.

The preliminary task can be provided as part of the early stages of research and planning, since it does involve some understanding of basic conventions with the medium and software; some centres included the task on blogs and this helped when it came to the question relating to the task in the evaluation.

Centres had the choice of paper or electronic modes of submission of planning material. For A2, it is important that centres note that only electronic submission will be permitted. If an electronic format is used, it makes sense that the evaluation is integrated with it. The evaluation could easily form the last seven posts of a blog, with links to earlier posts, or the last few slides of a PowerPoint.

Moderators reported that the most effective format tended to be the blog, though there was very mixed practice even within this format. Where an external blogging resource was used, such as Blogspot or Wordpress, these tended to work best. Use of college VLEs often limited what was produced (e.g. lack of images and video) or made accessing files over-complicated. The blogs tended to open up the possibility of showing detailed planning, research and process evidence, with the best including animatics of storyboards and screengrabs of print work in process. Where they were not used effectively, evidence tended to be limited to just a handful of posts or the blog seemed to have been set up at the end of the project as retrospective evidence. They do need to have an element of analysis rather than just being purely descriptive; where candidates used them for formative purposes, reflecting on their work so far or taking feedback from others, they worked better. PowerPoint presentations lent themselves less easily to the idea of recording an ongoing process, but in some cases they were used effectively, especially with audio and video clips, images and links to URLs.

Paper-based evidence was acceptable but needed pruning in many cases. There is no need for a set of questionnaires to be included; they will not be looked at by a moderator. One is sufficient, plus a summary of findings. Similarly, lots of printouts of magazine covers mounted in folders are unnecessary. At times it looked as if the presentation of planning material had taken up more time than making the final product and certainly more than the evaluation. Storyboards were often presented on paper, but it is worth noting how an animatic of a storyboard helps the process by bringing it to life.

Research into target audiences needs attention-often candidates were very vague as to whom their audience might be and sought feedback from less appropriate sources (e.g. parents for music magazines aimed at teenagers).

Construction

Almost all centres chose to offer just one task to their candidates, which is a sensible route for managing resources, assessment and training in use of equipment. Overwhelmingly, it was the film opening or magazine task which was on offer-well under 5% undertook the radio task and under 1% did the website.

The major problem with construction was the reluctance of centres to allocate anything other than Level 4 or high Level 3 marks. The full range of marks should be in use as not all candidates can expect to meet the criteria for the highest levels; this is where much of the reduction in marks by moderators tended to happen. Comments on the particular tasks and the strengths and weaknesses of approaches are detailed below.

Use of found images in magazines and inappropriate audio in films was the other significant issue, particularly when these went un-noticed by centres. There are very clear rules on this in the specification; where candidates infringe these, centres must pick it up in the marking.

Radio and Website

Since so few centres undertook these tasks, it is difficult to draw any particular conclusions; however, moderators were pleased to report that on the whole audio work was of a good standard and that candidates engaged with news as a genre effectively. In a couple of cases there were productions made for a real audience and actually broadcast. Less successful attempts usually involved candidates not taking the task seriously enough (seeing it as a spoof) or not knowing their equipment well enough. For best impact, careful planning and scripting combined with a natural reporting style tended to be most effective. Vox pops with people other than fellow students had a greater feel of authenticity.

The websites were usually online and well constructed, meeting all the criteria. The assumption that might be made from so few candidates taking this option is that centres lack confidence with the software, which is a shame since it offers many opportunities for progression in a media-related career.

Film Opening

Some outstanding work was seen in this category, with candidates demonstrating a real command of the medium and a full understanding of how film openings work. Such work was always accompanied by detailed evidence of planning and often with evaluations which maximised the potential of the technology (usually blogs and occasionally DVD commentaries).

Most video work tends to be done in groups, which puts the onus on the centre to articulate the differences between the contributions of individuals and to mark accordingly.

A high proportion of the film openings remained firmly in thriller genre from the legacy specification. The influences of 'Saw', 'The Blair Witch Project' and the themes of the hooded stalker and 'tie up and torture someone in a locked room' still predominate. Some candidates moved outside the genre with varying degrees of success. It would be good to see more of this next year; centres are free to determine a genre for their candidates if they wish to do so. There were examples from romantic comedy, zombie and film noir, as well as social realism and even superhero. Some moderators who had worked on the legacy specification reported that the standard had improved, possibly as a result of a combination of the preliminary exercise

teaching something about continuity editing and the need to create original soundtracks making candidates consider audio more deeply.

A fundamental of the task is to consider the range of purposes of the opening two minutes of a film; candidates would be well served to spend time looking at how films use their openings to introduce institutional information, to draw in the audience, to set up narrative and enigma, character, setting, theme, genre and style (e.g. with camera and editing). Often candidates try to do too much in their opening sequences and end up making a whole short film or confusing the viewer. Very few candidates seemed to have done much work on how titles are used at the start of films; this could easily be remedied by looking closely at their structure in some real examples. The jobs which are introduced, the companies referenced and the running order of titles do conform to a series of industry conventions which are important for candidates to know about. Frequently, titles appeared as a batch at the end followed by the film name, more in the style of a trailer.

Some aspects of *mise en scène* had often been considered quite carefully, such as setting and props, though costume often had not. Poor sound was often excused by centres as being the fault of the equipment; even limited microphones can be accommodated by recording some sound separately and planning accordingly. Relatively little thought had been given in most productions to the creative use of the camera; where angles, variety of shot distance, particularly big close-ups, and movement had been seriously considered, this was very evident and made a big difference to sequences. Some sequences were seriously over two minutes or in some cases barely over one minute in length; unless they are of exceptional quality, moderators will not watch something that is vastly too long and will be unlikely to be able to support the marks of something very short. The ideal length is somewhere between 90 seconds and two minutes.

Magazine

The new task seemed to work better than the teenage magazine task from the legacy specification, perhaps encouraging a greater focus and allowing a range of sub-genre options according to musical taste. There was some excellent work which showed a high degree of skill with the technology, a mastery of media language and a real understanding gained from research into existing products.

This task requires three sub-tasks: the cover, the contents page and the double page spread. If candidates work in a group, they have to produce a number of editions of the same magazine in the same house style. This is quite a challenging task and requires them to plan closely together. Most candidates worked individually and the key challenges involved maintaining consistency across the three sub-tasks, demonstrating understanding of industry conventions, setting up and manipulating appropriate photographs and using DTP software effectively. Some centres devised their own additional marksheet which broke the 60 construction marks down into three each of 20 for the three sub-tasks here. This helped them to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of each element and is quite acceptable practice.

Many centres used Publisher for the task, with the newsletter template, which is not really adequate at this level. Photoshop is an excellent program for the manipulation of images and can be used for constructing the cover, but on its own is unlikely to produce an effective double page spread. Centres really need to invest in a program like InDesign and train candidates in its use if they are to reach high levels for this task.

The finished magazines need not be printed out for moderators, so long as they are accessible in PDF format at a good resolution for viewing/reading, either online or on a disk.

As with the film task, looking closely at existing models of media texts involves some quite specific skills. Candidates were usually able to produce a convincing front cover, but often the

other elements did not work so well. Contents pages were often very poor with lots of white space or a style that was inconsistent with the cover. The same is true of the double page spread, where often the grasp of DTP fell down. A lack of column structure was usually the issue, combined often with a lack of content, leading to candidates using an inappropriately large font in order to fill space. Often the industry models which appeared in the planning folder seemed to have been completely disregarded when it came to the production, which looked totally different. Image and text integration is crucial-many were unreadable because of the fonts and/or colours chosen. Content and design often took precedence over codes and conventions, whereas a more balanced approach is clearly preferable.

Where photographs had been well-planned, the outcomes were often excellent, with a real sense of the genre emerging; however, there were a number of issues associated with photography which need raising here:

- Found photos may not be used as part of the project; all photos must be original.
- There must be a minimum of four original images included across the pages of the magazine.
- Original images should be included as part of the planning evidence and the process of changing them should be evidenced (e.g. through screengrabs of Photoshop process).
- There should not be a dominance of images of the same subject amongst the four-in many cases all the photos in the magazine were of the same person from marginally different angles.
- There needs to be more attention to mise en scène in the construction of images; too many photos appeared to have been taken in the institution without any preparation

Evaluation

This was the newest element of the specification and not surprisingly the most problematic for centres. The specification stipulates that it must be electronically presented and that it must address the seven questions in the specification. On this occasion, some flexibility was allowed for in moderation; this will not apply in future sessions, so centres should take note of the advice below.

A number of centres provided word documents or printouts, in some cases appearing to be based upon the legacy evaluation. Others provided printouts of PowerPoint presentations. In neither case is this acceptable. A number assumed that an essay on PowerPoint slides or on a blog would meet the brief; in such cases the candidates could not have access to level 4 marks as they did not meet the criteria in terms of their use of ICT. In some cases candidates failed to address the seven questions, instead writing an account of the project; again this is not acceptable. Very brief (one or two sentence) responses to the questions were not uncommon and could not hope to justify many marks. Though some questions may elicit considerably more in terms of a response than others, all questions do at least need to be attempted.

Electronic methods for presenting the evaluation were largely confined to PowerPoint presentations and blogs. There were a few examples of podcasts and videotaped presentations; unfortunately most of these just involved the candidate(s) reading from a script. A few taped presentations which showed candidates with their PowerPoint went further, with the teacher asking questions throughout which helped reveal more knowledgeable responses.

A small number of candidates created DVD commentaries, which tended to be better because they directly referred to illustrative examples. Occasionally, teacher comments referred to a presentation done by the candidate but without any evidence of it having taken place; there must be some electronic evidence, even if it is just the PowerPoint itself.

Blogged evaluations at their best made good use of the format, with links, embedded video, screengrabs, comparative images (their own/real magazines/film stills) and links to PowerPoint

presentations (often on slideshare). Occasionally, the evaluation component was a bit hidden away on blogs so that it was difficult to find to moderate. Centres are recommended to ensure that candidates flag up their evaluation really clearly. Strong PowerPoint evaluations took each question in turn and made good use of the form with annotated images, bullet points and links to URLs. It is very important in both these forms that the full potential of the form is realised if the top level is to be accessed in terms of marks. Where a PowerPoint only used seven slides to address the questions, it often looked a bit rushed or even like an afterthought. It is important to think of the evaluation element as worthy of one fifth of the marks, therefore worthy of considerable effort.

Questions which were hardest for candidates to answer tended to be those on audience feedback, distribution and representation, though they were often too dismissive of some of the others (such as prelim to final task or use of technology, which both needed expanding upon). Distribution of magazines was often seen as just about point of sale; better responses came from those who had done case studies of publishing houses in their research. Representation tends to need some coaxing from candidates and teachers should be prepared to intervene to help push the candidates' understanding forward on this area. Audience feedback needs to be from the target group.

Where candidates undertake their evaluation as a group, care needs to be taken to differentiate within the group and to ensure that they all get the chance to contribute.

Moderators are instructed to look for individual evidence to support the marks. Centres may find that individual evaluations are a better way of ensuring this evidence exists.

Summary of Key issues

Though this new unit bears many similarities to the old Foundation Production, there are significant differences of which centres need to take account:

- The expectations of the unit are greater, since it now carries 50% of the marks; the evaluation must be done electronically and advice is that the planning benefits from the same approach.
- Centres need to ensure that candidates make good use of their research into real media and that this feeds into their final products.
- Candidates need to be confident with the software they are using and that software needs to be fit for purpose.
- A central hub should be provided for blog links and all material should be no more than a click away for the moderator to access.
- Comments by the teacher need to reflect the material being assessed and the level from the specification; marks should be realistic.

G322 Key Media Concepts (TV Drama) and G323 Key Media Concepts (Radio Drama)

The entry for the June session was approximately 15,000 candidates for G322 and a nominal number of entrants for G323. There were no reported problems, with either of the extracts (for TV drama: **Doctor Who**, and Radio Drama: **The Transfer**). Given the nominal number of entries for Radio drama this report focuses on the unit G322 Television Drama, and a small section for the exam paper G323 (headed below), which shares the same question two. In this report, there is reference to and repeated advice from the January 2009 Principal Examiner's report.

Overall, this was an examination session, with a wide range of candidate responses, with evidence of excellent candidate responses in analysis and understanding of the question set in response to television drama and the representation of gender and for question two, on 'how important is technological convergence'. The candidates appeared to have enjoyed responding to the TV drama extract and some very full answers were marked in this session. The session was also characterised by a number of brief or incomplete responses by candidates.

For question one, the majority of candidates addressed the technical features of camera shot, angle and composition, and mise en scène well, with some fluency at times and there was noted improvement from January's session in the candidates' address of editing and sound. There was plenty of evidence of candidates being able to reach the higher end of the marks available and candidates, where needed, were awarded full or nearly full marks for their responses. Question two enabled suitable differentiation of candidates' responses and many excellent responses were seen in relation to the media areas studied. Candidates who had been prepared well with specific case study material and well rehearsed in the key conceptual areas of institution and audience could offer sustained, excellent arguments in relation to the question set. On the other hand, there was evidence of some candidates who struggled to understand the concept of technological convergence in application to the case studies they had been presented with.

Overall, the paper achieved a good level of differentiation within the cohort; being accessible enough, as well as adequately stretching. There was some evidence of improvement and at the same time some concern raised regarding the time management of the exam paper, especially for question two, when sometimes candidates wrote shorter responses than in question one or would offer no response at all. Centre's need to ensure that candidates spend an appropriate amount of time on each question and this needs to be addressed given the equal weighting of marks (50) to each question.

As indicated by the mark scheme for this exam paper, the use of media vocabulary is a very important part of the exam at AS level. The mark scheme and syllabi clearly stipulate that a number of marks are available for the use of terminology. Good practice suggests that candidates should be keeping a vocabulary list of technical language for both questions. At times, in question one there was an absence of vocabulary in some candidates' answers and some common misconceptions or misapplied camera shots and angles, for example, there was some evident confusion with the use of low/high angle shots in analysis of the extract. On page eighteen of the specification there is a list of the key terminology used in relation to analysis of the technical features of television drama. It is advisable that centres ensure coverage of these in preparation of the candidates in the exam; likewise for candidates embarking on the analysis of radio drama this key vocabulary list can be found on page twenty four of the specification.

Comments on candidate's responses to Question 1 – Television Drama

There was plenty of evidence that the question set on gender and representation and the extract **Doctor Who** achieved the desired differentiation of candidate responses. The extract was approximately five minutes in length and enabled the candidates to engage with the key skill of textual analysis using the four technical features: Camera shot, angle and composition, mise en scène, editing and sound. Of these technical areas, camera work and mise en scène were by far the most comfortable concepts the candidates addressed, with editing and sound the least, despite many improved attempts to address these technical features. Candidates responses, which did not link technical analysis to gender representation often lacked focus in their answers on how gender, was constructed through the technical features of the extract.

Candidates structured their responses in a number of ways for question one. Some began by addressing the concept of representation in the extract and a discussion of the representational differences between The Master the challenging stereotype of Martha Jones and contrasted this with the Doctor and other characters in the extract. Or on the other hand, the candidates would address the technical areas one by one.

Stronger candidates could provide an integrated analysis of the extract through analysis of key examples identified. These candidates explored *how* the technical features could be applied using a combination of the technical features, for example, in discussion of the argument that takes place between the Master and Martha. Stronger candidates could then place this sequence of conflict in its mise en scène (the spaceship, with reference to cross cutting to the flashback sequence on Earth), through the use of shot reverse shot (and editing) between Martha and the Master, camera types used and through the analysis of sound also discuss the Master's emasculation of power and authority. Weaker candidates could list many technical aspects, with varying degrees of accuracy, but struggle to say anything meaningful about the representation of gender.

Either of these approaches to the structure of question one is advisable and centres need to plan and help structure the candidate's responses in the classroom. It is advised against preparing candidates to word a long and lengthy introduction about what they are going to answer, or give theoretical introductions and/or historical contexts to television drama. Question one does not require a discussion of the generic qualities of the television drama.

It is also important that candidates move from description of key technical areas to analysis of *how* representations are constructed. This will enable candidates to achieve higher notional marks for their responses and avoid sets of basic answers, which on occasion in this session offered quite general textual analysis. These types of responses lacked focused discussion of the representation of gender.

The mark scheme enables credit to be awarded to students at three different levels Explanation, Analysis and Argument (20 Marks), Use of Examples (20 Marks) and Use of Terminology (10 Marks). Under the use of examples, the mark scheme does not credit a notional level four (16-20) when only three technical areas are discussed, therefore making it less likely that a candidate can be awarded the highest possible marks.

On the whole the use of media vocabulary was very good, but could centres please note that there are up to 10 marks available for the use of media terminology – hence the previous recommendation that candidates should be encouraged to use the appropriate media terminology. Good advice for centres is to encourage candidates to keep vocabulary lists. There were a significant number of candidates who still adopted an overly simplistic approach – centres need to encourage candidates to use appropriate technical language for precision in analysis and to make sure that they avoid superficial terms like cameras 'switching' or 'jumping', and know the difference between zooms and tracking or avoid describing characters as 'goodies' and 'baddies'.

This mark scheme is more able to credit answers, which have different strengths, and this session, the marking of candidates' papers revealed the flexibility in its application, according to the standards set. It is advisable that centres make the mark scheme available to candidates for the next exam session so that they are aware of how the work is assessed. This could also be used for the marking of timed assignments in the classroom and for the marking of mock exam papers. Finally it is important that candidates address a balance in their responses to all the technical features used in the extract to construct meaning, at times some candidates would focus too much on specific 'micro' aspect of the television drama, for example writing a whole side on the use of *mise en scène*.

Comments on the 'micro' aspects of Question one on Television Drama

The following comments are selected examples points and for use as examples to assist centres with the delivery of the topic and to help advise on candidates' answers, it is by no means an exhaustive list.

Camera Shot, Angle and Composition

This technical feature was well addressed by the candidates overall. Most candidates had a media vocabulary, which addressed the technical features of television drama. Where candidates used the correct terminology and could describe shot composition, this on the whole was well done. Weaker candidates were able to describe key shots used in exemplification, but would often lack explicit links to how these shots assisted in the construction of the representation of age. As with the January 2009 session, please be aware that terms 'insert' shots and 'wide' shots and the 'tilt' shot and 'jump' shot are common misconceptions/ vocabulary used by candidates. Many candidates argued how shot construction represented the juxtaposition of power between the antagonist and protagonist in the extract. It would have been encouraging to see a wider range of examples of shot sizes and camera movement referenced in relation to a sequence's representations.

Mise en scène

This technical aspect was by far the most comfortable used by the candidates. There was plenty of evidence of candidates' discussion of clothing and props, visual iconography and character, for example the power and authority at the beginning of the sequence of the Master, dressed in formal attire, who exerts his authority and domination in his body language expression and speech. More able candidates would be able to contrast the gender representation of different characters through the *mise en scène* and how the roles of the different characters changed, for example, how Martha Jones becomes a symbolic messenger and on more than one occasion the team of examiners noted that there was some excellent analysis of the *mise en scène* focused on hierarchies and power.

Setting, although a little more problematic for some, was used well in discussion of the range of representations of gender used in the extract. More able candidates would move beyond description and use the technical features of *mise en scène* in order to discuss the signification of the representation of gender. For example, candidates analysed important moments in the extract when the Master's empire and power was represented by the spacecraft and reference to the silver orbs in space, juxtaposed with cutaway's to the missile silo, as representative of the Master's domination. This represents the degree of sophistication in some candidate's responses and there were a vast range of interpretations of the text by candidates.

Candidates were able to account for costume and props as key elements in *mise en scène*, though many are still wedded to deterministic colour analysis, which is misleading and naïve, for example, “the female character's dress is red which is a signifier of danger”. The aspect least discussed of *mise en scène* was lighting, which was often commented upon without adequate analysis, for example the lighting was dark and the character of the Master was therefore evil. Special effects were often commented upon, quite legitimately in the discussion of the representation of gender to varying degrees of success.

Sound

There was some improvement in the discussion of sound since January's session, although there was still plenty of evidence of candidates omitting or offering minimal discussion of sound from the textual analysis. Whilst there was some excellent reference to how sound assisted in the understanding of the construction of gender, for example, in discussion of synchronous/ non synchronous sound in relation to the ticking clock as a symbolic omnipresence of the Master's power.

However, candidates often discussed this technical feature with some limitations, with some focusing solely on the use of dialogue between two characters. Candidates did also relate the use of non-diegetic sound to the triumphant victory of the Doctor over the Master at the end of the sequence. The use of non-diegetic sound to emphasise Martha's role as a messenger was often commented upon, as was the reference to the 'spaghetti western' music at the beginning of the extract as a signpost for the showdown that was about to commence. The 'spaghetti western' feel of the initial music was signposted by candidates because they felt as though Martha was heading towards her doom.

Often weaker candidates showed confusion with technical terminology, referring to ambient sound which was not shown in the part of the sequence they referred to, or simply getting diegetic and non-diegetic sound the wrong way round. The analysis of sound is more than just dialogue and weaker candidate responses may interpret the soundtrack/use of music in too general analysis. Centres should also consider more carefully the role that sound effects have in the construction of meaning, particularly in relation to the diegetic reality of the drama. It is advised that centres do cover the technical features of sound thoroughly in order to give candidates an opportunity to fully engage with the analysis of the extract.

Editing

As with the January 2009 session, this technical area proved to be the most problematic for candidates and the one technical area of analysis that was often omitted in candidate's answers.

Most candidates who addressed editing were able to address the type of transitions used and could comment on the pace of the editing. Indeed most candidates would recognise the use of the flashback, as an elliptical device in the narration of the story and this technical element was the most common discussed in candidates' answers. Weaker candidates often omitted any discussion of editing or offered quite simplistic accounts of how editing was used, for example in the use of the shot reverse shot sequence between the Master and Martha.

More able candidates could analyse technical issues of editing by way of analysis of the ellipsis, accounting for how the extract collapsed a series of events, for example, in explaining the narrative to represent Martha as the messenger and helper who communicates the need to save the world. Candidates were able to comment on pacing and the use of continuity, most often through the shot reverse shot compositions in the extract and some through the use of sound as well. These candidates cleverly discussed how soundbridges were constructed through the use of non-diegetic music in the representation of gender, for example, the orchestral and triumphant mood music representing the power of the Master.

Overall candidate's analysis of editing was satisfactory but, many candidates ignored this area completely or dealt with it in a perfunctory fashion. Very few candidates seemed willing or able to link editing to representation by, for example, showing how the editing created particular viewpoints which we are encouraged to identify with or how screen time indicated the shifting relationship between protagonists and antagonist in the sequence. With the right preparation, candidates can engage with the nuances of editing under exam conditions, with evidence that they could discuss crosscutting, eye line match and ellipsis in the extract. The lesser able candidates would refer simply to the continuity of the extract without reference to any of the technical aspects expected of them to use.

As in the last examiner's report, the advice offered to centres is to encourage as much practice on the concept of editing as possible and how this assists in the construction of representation. Again begin with identifying the techniques and encourage students to apply these to a range of examples in class and importantly, test them on this. A balanced and high level notional mark requires all the technical features to be addressed in the candidate's answer.

Representation

The candidates appear to have enjoyed the discussion of representation in this extract. There were a wide range of interpretations offered by the candidates, but the dominant reading of the text focused on the male as powerful and the female as dominated, to more sophisticated readings of gender representations, including how the representation of Martha's character changed and gender stereotypes changed. The most sophisticated responses could argue that a range of gender representations had been used and provided a full range of exemplification.

This key media concept was either addressed at the beginning of the candidates' answers or at the end. Candidates were able to relate the representation of a variety of gender groups closely to the textual elements of the extract. There was some solid analysis of gender and how it can be stereotyped in a variety of ways: female emotionality; male authority; changing shift of power between genders in the extract and other sensibly reasoned representations, such as men as users of force/ violence as opposed to women as unifiers/ action with words.

Some good examples in the candidates' responses included: Martha, as a messenger was empowering in overcoming the Master, the Master was represented as dominant and all powerful, but by the end of the extract, defeated by the male Doctor, the Doctor was initially represented as feeble and emasculated in the bird cage, but the transformation of the Doctor by the end of the extract and through analysis of the *mise en scène* (lighting and special effects) is the dominant all powerful male. More perceptive candidates could illustrate the Master's wife as a trophy, the Doctor as saviour and Martha as the helper.

There was throughout candidates' answers good discussion of stereotypes, particularly around the challenge of expected stereotypes in the text, through the character of Martha Jones. Weaker candidates failed to focus on the representation of gender, limiting their analysis to relating everything to power with oppositions – men as superior in antithesis to women as inferior or the technical textual analysis failed to explain how gender representations were constructed.

Radio Drama

The extract used was **The Transfer**. This was an extract that was five minutes in length. The number of candidates who took this unit was nominal. Of those candidates who answered the question well, there was a clear link between the analysis of technical aspects of radio drama and the key media concept of representation and gender. Most candidates dealt with the issue of speech and sound competently and at times in a detailed and thorough way. Candidates were able to analyse a range of speech codes including accent and timbre, as well as dialogue itself to produce analysis of gender representations. There was some good analysis of music in

discussion of 'gendered' soundtracks, for example the Oasis music track signifying a certain kind of masculinity. Candidates were able to identify the sound effects used, but not how they were used; stronger candidates were able to show how these functioned as indexical signifiers.

The major omission from candidate's answers was the analysis of editing in the construction of the radio drama and in particular, the way in which the technical feature of editing constructs specific representations. The introduction of the analysis of radio has worked well, but the number of centres taking this option is presently very small.

General Comments on Question 2

Question two allowed for a wide-ranging number of responses across all of the media areas that candidates could address. The question also provided differentiation in the candidates' responses, probably more so than in question one. However, there were a significant number of candidates (and centres) who did not seem to understand the concept of technological convergence, despite the fact that it is clearly indicated within the specification. On the other hand, there were plenty of candidates' responses which met level four and level three for question two and clearly could address the question set and had been prepared well by centres.

Stronger candidates focused their responses on the issues of technological convergence and were able to argue the importance for the institution they studied, the products they distributed and produced and how audiences consumed these products. These candidates could also focus on how important, with reference to and in evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of technology convergence for both institution and audience.

On occasion, the most able candidates could argue that technological convergence is not important for the institutions, for example some video games rely on the exclusivity that was provided by the platform used. Where appropriate, candidates were awarded full marks for question two. The best answers usually dealt with the internet and the ramifications of this or dealing with the media area study across a numbers of platforms.

Unfortunately, there were also a large number of candidates who failed to address the issue of technological convergence or simply did not understand the concept, despite it being an issue on page nineteen of the specification. There were also a number of brief and very short answers for question two. Lesser able candidates were able to discuss distribution and practice of synergy or focus on a discussion of digital initiatives, without entirely addressing the question that was set, therefore raising some questions about the relevance of the candidates' answers. There was a common misconception of technological convergence at times interpreted as convergent media companies or the transformation of the novel adaptation of a film.

Report on the Units taken in June 2009

Centre's need be reminded that Television is not one of the media areas covered as a topic on question two, including a study of ITV's the X-Factor; nor does a study of the 'internet' fall within the remit or rubric of the specification, in relation to question two. One further issue, which emerged is that some candidates were simply prepared for question two using textual analysis and not the study of institution and audience as the specification demands.

The best answers showed awareness of the ways in which institutions use technological convergence in order to meet the demands of their audiences and to make profit, widen audience demographics, target different markets, or simply cater for audience needs. Candidates could illustrate the issues that emerge with technological convergence for major and independent institutions, for example, piracy and the music industry or how the magazine industry in order to slowdown dwindling magazine sales, has developed more interactive web resources. More able candidates were able to illustrate such points with detailed reference to case study material.

Those candidates who could use their case studies and really focus on the question rather than simply regurgitating the whole case study wrote some interesting and well founded answers. Overall the best candidates related closely to the focus of the question, evaluating how important technological convergence is.

There was a frustrating lack of awareness of audience targeting and candidates need to be more aware of the way in which target markets determine decisions in production, distribution and exhibition/exchange for all media products – there are obvious points to be made about the way in which new media and converged media contribute to all of these phases for products aimed at specific tech-savvy audiences; equally arguments could be built around the ways in which products aimed at different audiences might not be dependent upon technological trends, but more traditional production practices. Very few candidates took the latter line and this led to some naive and superficial responses in which technological convergence was credited as very important in cases where its role was clearly limited – for example, in the success of low budget films, such as *This Is England*.

There was some evidence that some candidates were not appropriately prepared for question two and this was evidenced by the historical biographies offered of the media institution (eg Pinewood Studios) studied or of a particular media producer or director (Shane Meadows, *This is England*), on occasion, candidates simply re-wrote a history of the institution they studied, for example in one discussion of newspapers there was a description of the development of hot metal presses up to technological developments of the modern day press.

As stated in the previous Principal Examiners report, the advice that can be offered to centres is to refer to and use the questions posed in the syllabi on page nineteen and twenty and ensure coverage of key institutional concepts such as synergy, cross media, convergence, media technologies and audience consumption. This will aid candidates' conceptual understanding of institutions and audiences. It is also necessary for candidates to address the question set, rather than offer a general address of institutional practices across the board and centres should teach at least two specific case studies for question two in the media area that they teach.

The most popular media areas studied were film and music, the least were magazines, newspapers and radio. Below are selected comments and examples of candidate performances for question two topics.

Film Industry

Far too many candidates seemed to have been prepared with historical accounts of particular institutions which did not address contemporary issues of institutional or audience practices - Working Title was frequently used as a case study but with little contemporary material in evidence. Popular case studies included the study of UK film companies such as Working Title and Film Four, which provided plenty of promising material, particularly when their working practices were contrasted with Hollywood equivalents, such as the Dark Knight. Some centres had prepared candidates for this unit with single text studies (ie of an individual film), which clearly did not provide candidates with sufficient knowledge of wider institutional, and audience contexts to tackle the question set. Institutional questions, which dealt with, a comparison of successful American institutions versus less commercially successful home grown UK industries often worked well, for example, *Bullet Boy* and *This is England*.

In discussion of how important technological convergence is for the film industry, more able candidates could develop an argument which could discuss and evaluate how technological convergence enables effective digital distribution, supports viral marketing campaigns, such as the Dark Knight or *The Simpsons*, creates media synergy and, for example, the use of Sony BMG to record the soundtrack, and merchandising tie in deals. These able candidates could also evaluate how institutions and audiences used media technology across different platforms, for example on the iPod and other mobile devices/phones and the use of social networking sites to share and offer fan comments. Candidates also discussed downloading (including the issue of internet piracy) films, but did not give specific examples of websites or how you could subsequently watch the movies. On occasion candidates could offer criticism that independent and often British film releases which do not have the budget of major conglomerate film studio's had to find alternative non- convergent methods of distribution and marketing.

Centres need reminding that historical case studies of film studios, such as Hammer or Ealing film studios is not apart of the requirement for the study of film institution and audiences. At the same time if centres are using contemporary resources, such as *The Boat That Rocked* or *Slumdog Millionaire*, that they ensure candidates have an academic understanding of the film's institution and audience and not simply rely upon the prepared reading of the text and its marketing campaign alone.

The Music Industry

The candidates displayed good contemporary knowledge and understanding of the music industry. There was a focus on how the major and independent record companies relied on media technology, the use of the internet and how music download sites operated. There were also some very good discussions of 'independent' or subsidiary companies, such as Finders Keepers and Domino records. The candidates showed some excellent knowledge and understanding of technological convergence, synergistic practices and cross media ownership that record companies use in targeting British audiences.

More able candidates attempted to evaluate the importance of technological convergence in relation to record companies and how audiences consumed the music through the use of iPods, iTunes and My Space. There were a range of arguments which included an evaluation of the benefits for music institutions of convergent technology, in relation to the distribution of music via a website: for example AOL Time Warner as a wall garden and how a music artist/product could be marketed at global and niche audiences. More able candidates could also offer detail to specific case studies, the most popular included EMI and Sony as conglomerates and Domino and Ghost records as independent record companies and wider music debates/issues such as Pirate Bay, in relation to illegal music digital downloads.

Lesser able candidates would offer a profile of the institution and the types of artist that they had signed. Often a discussion of technological convergence would be slightly misconstrued in terms of distribution and marketing only. Frequently, a sense of audience would be omitted from any discussion and at times some quite simplistic versions of downloading music as an illegal act and that this would have an enormous impact on the music industry itself. However on the whole candidates with a wide range of responses answered this area of study of institution and audience.

The Newspaper Industry

The newspaper industry provided a basis for some good case studies, which often focused on national and local newspapers. It was pleasing to note after January's report that centres had taken onboard the need to examine the coverage of newspapers online. This study enabled the candidates to address the question that was set, in relation to how online editions of newspapers offer a more instant and interactive use of the printed press.

Some good address of the question included discussions of The Sun and The Guardian and how they have responded to declining circulation figures, through the development of online sales.

Most able candidates wrote well about newspapers and commented on the e-version of the newspapers, and how through the medium of the internet and its multiple points of access: PCs, phones, games consoles etc it could be accessed anywhere and at any time. Candidates often commented on the fact that e-newspaper's could be updated throughout the day, about how the reader could interact with the stories/texts by adding follow-on blogs, photos & videos, and how they could contribute to the news, rather than passively receive it. The interactive nature of online newspapers was acknowledged, as was their ability to make money through online advertising.

The strongest responses were those that discussed the changing nature of distribution, as well as the increase in citizen journalism and the potential of new technologies to create more active audiences through the use of forums, blogs etc that can get involved in the production process.

For lesser able candidates a lack of relevant examples was something that dogged responses, as did the description of the selling of newspapers and the products consumption (often solely in terms of readership profiles) in a very generalised way. Weaker candidates' responses were at times also 'common sense' based and lacked detailed evidence to support points made. A common misconception made by some candidates is that online editions of newspapers outsell the print counterparts.

At times there seemed to be a complete lack of understanding of the term technical convergence and some students didn't even mention technology at all, but had a very good understanding of the historical development of the press, for example News Corporation.

The Magazine Industry

This was tackled well by some centres and candidates who really engaged with the idea of 'technological convergence'. These explored in particular how online content and e-magazines have effected audience and institutions in a variety of ways, for example as 'e-zines'. Useful case studies included NME and its multi-platform nature, Monkey an entirely on-line based publication and several others that have established popular on-line content such as Heat and Vogue to expand their audience base and keep up with falling circulation figures. Candidates who answered the question well examined the contemporary features of the magazine industry, accounting well for the development on online magazines

The most able candidates could evaluate the benefits of the 'convergence' of print and web and many discussed the increased sense of interactivity and audience involvement in developing these magazines such as blogs, forums, podcasts and these were supported by detailed case studies of specific magazines.

Despite the current shifts in the industry to online content some centres failed to really engage with contemporary issues and weak responses seemed to rely purely on textual analysis of magazines. These seemed like responses to the legacy spec as opposed to the new G322. Some choices of magazines were slightly out dated (some that had folded a couple of years ago) and meant that candidates were ill prepared for the question which required engagement with contemporary issues.

Video Games

In this session there were some very good responses to video games.

When commenting on video games many candidates prefaced their answers by talking extensively about the interactive, multi-use nature of games consoles, talking about internet access for multi-user play, and free game downloads, about film viewing via DVD/BluRay and storage for music, video and pictures. Certain games were popular like GTA which related how cinematic graphics and free roaming game play allowed the convergence of genres – racing & gangster to make successful products. There were some popular and positive responses by candidates with focused case studies, such as Grand Theft Auto 4 & Rockstar games. Candidates were able to comment on GTA franchises and the relationship with the Nintendo Xbox and the Sony PS3. The Nintendo Wii was a popular source of evaluation in relation to the question set.

Good answers contained detailed information concerning the use of new media technologies in the development of games, institutional distribution and marketing. The distribution discussions in the better candidates' responses considered how social networking sites were utilised in the pre-publicity of the games release. These answers also used terminology to enhance their points; considering synergy, convergence and audience expectations. Candidates appeared to have been fully briefed on the need to place their product in both an institutional and cultural context. There were some very encouraging responses to this question. More able candidates referred to the online capabilities of the consoles, which allowed for credited marks.

The majority of weaker responses focused on a particular piece of gaming software such as Call of Duty 4 or Halo 3. With such a narrow focus it was therefore very difficult for candidates to address technical convergence. As a result candidates wrote at length about the game play, the marketing and release dates without mentioning technical convergence.

Radio Industry

There were a very small number of responses on radio as an industry. The stronger candidates' responses addressed technological convergence well in illustrating the need for local and national radio networks to develop internet facilities, such as Channel 103, Radio Suffolk, BBC Radio Jersey and Radio 1. The candidates could address the need to cater for DAB and internet interactivity such as the use of podcasts, audience ability to download radio programmes, as well as institutions being able to archive materials.

These stronger candidates could also identify how radio stations broaden their brand identity or widen audience appeal through internet news and competitions, the use of online video, live radio broadcast and audience use of MP3 players, iPods and the argument for how portable these devices were. Weaker candidates would often simply offer a profile of a radio station and did not attempt to offer an understanding of technological convergence.

Summary Advice offered for the next exam session:

- For question one candidates need cover all four technical aspects in the discussion of the issue of representation
- Do develop candidates understanding of sound and editing for question one
- Examine a range of drama extracts in the classroom
- Develop candidates' skill of textual analysis exam
- The exam demands an understanding of key media concepts and therefore it is good practice to keep key vocabulary list for candidates
- Lots of timed practice in the classroom is needed
- Do use the mark scheme with students in the classroom to show how marks are awarded for candidate responses
- For question two, keep the case studies contemporary within your media area and do study at least **two** detailed examples
- Do address the issues raised on page nineteen of the specification and revise these with students
- Candidates should get the facts right for the institution and audience that they study – factual accuracy is important in this paper
- Do practice time management if a candidate offers a brief or short answer then they will not gain as many marks for a full and detailed response.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Media Studies H140 H540
June 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
G321	Raw	100	82	72	63	54	45	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
G322	Raw	100	75	67	59	52	45	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
G323	Raw	100	75	67	59	52	45	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
H140	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H140	10.6	32.9	60.7	82.3	93.6	100	12234

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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