GCE

Media Studies

Advanced GCE A2 **H540**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H140**

OCR Report to Centres June 2017

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Media Studies (H540)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Media Studies (H140)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	**Page**

G321 Foundation Portfolio in Media

General Issues

Almost all centres put the work of candidates online, with central hubs from which all candidates' blogs could be accessed. This practice enabled moderation to run smoothly. Best practice featured the candidate numbers of those in the sample on the hub, with each blog featuring the completed construction (e.g. film opening or magazine pages) at the top followed by clearly signposted responses to evaluation questions. Candidate record forms were best when completed in detail, with reference to both the criteria and individualised comments about the candidates' work.

Research and Planning

Best practice encouraged an equal measure of research and planning and advised candidates to see this as an ongoing process, representing all continuous stages of the project. The best work was comprehensive and showed strong evidence of candidates reflecting on the process of the production in their blogs, starting with the general and moving in to the particular, focusing on texts which clearly related to their finished products. The best audience research was carried out systematically throughout the process, and used qualitative methods such as interviews and discussions, rather than just the traditional questionnaire. Where a degree of independence was encouraged, understanding tended to be demonstrated more fully on the part of candidates. Tasks building skills, including parodies and re-makes of existing texts, often worked well as part of the process, enabling candidates to overcome common pitfalls and leading to much better final pieces.

Print

There was some very effective branding across the three magazine components, with the best work fully embracing the brief.

Overall, front covers were the strongest element of magazine work with contents pages most likely to fail to conform to forms and conventions, particularly in the use of images. The quality of double page spreads was variable; the best followed forms and conventions closely and featured striking images while the worst showed lack of awareness of the required point size for magazine copy and often failed to show understanding of basic elements such as the use of columns.

The best work offered variety in terms of original images, including in terms of costume and background, and specifically in relation to the contents page, in featuring a range of artists. Those magazines making use of different shot types with actors styled to make them readable as music artists tended to be the most effective. Candidates who included evidence of their complete photo shoot as part of the planning process, showing the development of their thinking, tended to produce the most effective work. Those candidates who paid attention to details of page layout, use of space and font colour produced some of the best work.

Strongest work tended to come from centres where the skills for print work had clearly been taught; candidates could not be expected to arrive on the course knowing how to use page design and imaging software. The best final productions were the outcome of a rigorous sequence of activities which developed candidates' skills. Likewise research which involved looking at the contemporary market and not simply at historical examples of magazines was most effective.

Radio

A small number of centres submitted radio work, with some good examples of appropriate stories and a clear attempt to combine relevant sounds with good mixing of different layers and some good integration of internal and external sound clips. As with other briefs, the requirement to research existing local radio products carefully prior to construction is particularly important in order to establish the codes and conventions associated with this form of radio show. At times, the less successful candidates had researched radio conventions too broadly and this led to final constructions that were not as successful in reaching the needs of their intended target audience. In general, sound quality was much better than in previous sessions.

Video

As always, there was some outstanding work, with minute detail evident in the planning, with annotated drafts, treatments, risk assessments, call-sheets and different types of storyboard. Strong research featured detailed evidence of a range of opening sequences having been studied appropriately and of conventions of titling having been taken on board. Where the research and planning is weak, the productions do tend to suffer, and again this is an area where teaching can prepare candidates in a systematic and rigorous fashion for the challenge of producing the openings.

It was refreshing to see a good range of genres mobilised for this task. In many cases, there was evidence of strong, controlled camerawork and editing with effective use of titles throughout. Those candidates who had considered lighting and created their own soundscapes combining diegetic and non-diegetic sound to suit their original footage helped raise their projects to new heights. Openings which drew upon sufficient work on genre research and comparable texts tended to be the most effective.

With regard to overlong work is worth noting that in future specifications work will not be credited beyond the stated lengths so centres will need to ensure that production work is edited to meet the requirements of the brief.

Evaluation

At the top end, there were some really creative pieces with candidates using a range of approaches to address the questions. The best work came from centres where sufficient time had been allocated to the tasks, rather than seeing them as an afterthought. In many cases it was clear that candidates had considered the seven questions throughout the project, rather than just at the end. In such cases, they were well prepared to fully address the areas under consideration in creative ways.

It has been very gratifying to see how centres have embraced the spirit of this unit and indeed of the whole specification over the last few years.. Thank you for your support.

G322/3 Key Media Concepts

A successful examination series which yielded a broad range of responses from candidates in address of the questions set. The Question 1 extract was an excellent choice, with plenty of textual evidence for all the candidates to engage with.   Ordinary Lies was a dramatic and poly-semantic text which candidates analysed, and evaluated well. The extract provided a plethora of opportunities for a sophisticated analysis of gender that could go beyond a traditional patriarchal consideration, with some positive representations of women. There was also a general recognition of the stereotypical representations of the stronger males and the weaker females, for example, with some of the more able candidates looking to discuss a hierarchy of the genders. Good coverage of the technical codes was exhibited by most of the candidates, and higher achieving candidates were able to bring this out in their answers in a sustained and detailed response. Lesser achieving candidates responses tended to focus on ideas of character and confirmation of stereotype presented through specific micro elements, and these were basic in response. These candidates would often provide a narrative of the extract and would not include comment on all technical aspects. In contrast higher achieving responses often approached the text in a more conceptualised way, exploring the relationship and interplay between micro-features and the subversion of some aspects of gender representation. Nonetheless, on the whole candidates engaged well with the extract.

In previous sessions, the technical area that has been answered least well has been editing, but for this series the extract allowed for a detailed examination of editing, particularly with regard to shot/reverse shot, match on action, and eye line matches, which candidates clearly engaged with. Candidates also made good mention of mise-en-scene, particularly costume, and setting/location to some success, for example in the use of shot reverse shots in the scene taken from the car, and the airport interrogation room - which seemed to reap the most benefits in terms of camera and mise-en-scene. Arguably the sound and editing aspect was considerably improved this year, the clip very clearly facilitating candidates' analysis and explanation of the extract. Sound analysis seemed to work quite well in terms of candidates understanding how sound, through the use of non-diegetic and diegetic devices, associated with the actions of different genders.

Many candidates incorrectly described straight cuts as jump-cuts, and often did not recognise the use of cutaways. The description of camera position as high and low were liberally applied at times where candidates describe the camera looking up or looking down, rather than discussing camera angle or movement. There is still a major misunderstanding about what a jump cut is. This is not a jump cut, merely a transition via the use of a cut. Another misnomer is in the use of hand held shots. There were several instances of this, for example 'was shot on handicam' when it should have been termed a Steadicam.

There were a lot of theoretical approaches applied to the extract including Laura Mulvey, Levi-Strauss, Propp, Stuart Hall, Gauntlett and many others. These were often of little relevance and were not needed to provide an excellent Level 4 response.

Question 2

Question 2 was a clear question which addressed the area of marketing as a media process. When candidates focussed on the question set they were awarded higher notional marks. There was plenty of evidence of write 'all I know' about film marketing, and often with plenty of use of exemplification, but often in a list like and scatter gun approach to the process.

Many candidates were able to make reference to the question throughout their responses and remained focused, making valid points about recent institutional issues and supporting them with contemporary, specific textual examples which demonstrated a real engagement with their case study. A few candidates made reference to their own personal media consumption in relation to

the question to varied effect with their own experiences sometimes enhancing the discussion though, more often than not, serving as a under developed anecdote to the issue of marketing.

Film

The majority of candidates used the film industry as their case studies and focused on the issues related to online marketing, 3D cinema, streaming, film exchange and online distribution. The best answers set in context the rapid changes taking place in this industry from the traditional ways of marketing media through to the digital formats used today, and the better candidates gave an insight into the future challenges the industry faces. These responses could also make a connection between the company/organisation and digital technology and the ability to financially deal with. There was a firm grasp on key marketing concepts and terminology such as branding, cross-media convergence, synergy and symbiosis. The more able candidates demonstrated excellent application of these key terms to contemporary case studies of established and lesser established texts, including discussion of *Netflix* as an emerging film text producer.

Higher achieving candidates demonstrated plenty of evidence of sophisticated discussion of film, for example, about *Ex-Machina* (2014) which contained well-researched analysis of the ways in which social media had been used innovatively. In addition, stand out case studies included *Deadpool's* (2016) use of humour and irony in their marketing campaigns; *Lego Batman* (2017) and it's building on an existing fan base; *Star Wars : The Force Awakens* (2015) mighty merchandising campaign, and *Spectre/Skyfall's* use of tie-ins to maximise impact on audience recognition. Other good case studies included *I Daniel Blake* (2016).

There was an extent to which many candidates were unable to present detailed case studies which answered the question. Many centres had clearly taught the same case studies that had been used for a number of years, and many lacked the relevance that more contemporary case studies would have had to the question, for example, *The Boat that Rocked* (2009), *This is England* (2006), *The Dark Knight* (2008), *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) and *Shifty* (2008). These texts made it hard to tackle the more recent proliferation of social media and, therefore, the candidates answers lacked the range of points, or were not recognising that 'free' use of social media in viral marketing campaigns.

Music

Again a popular media area to discuss marketing as a vital process, for example, Beyoncé's use of social media - in particular Instagram, *Twitter* and *Facebook* - to launch two albums (including Lemonade), raising plenty of 'hype' was a frequent and popular example. Ed Sheeran's return to music after a year off was addressed with his use of *Twitter* and social media more widely was tackled well. Most candidates identified and argued how useful it is to have free advertising platforms for up and coming independent artists. The strongest candidates' responses were a detailed consideration to the process of marketing for the record label and artists; and the most able provided articulate explanation of marketing process and relationships with other media in product synergy, and the music industries symbiotic relationship with online marketing strategies.

Newspapers

The question on occasion was well addressed by candidates and The Guardian and Sun newspapers constituted much of case study evidence used,with a lot of discussion about the decline in print media, but with lesser achieving candidates there was very little awareness of how newspapers actually do market themselves. When candidates considered how publications promoted and publicised the brand through online advertising, and in the case of the tabloids through celebrity endorsements; and then evaluated the need for the newspaper to commodify news stories, and they were rewarded with a good mark. There was plenty of evidence to

suggest that some candidates erred from the focus of the question and were not prepared with the material needed to discuss marketing as a process with newspapers.

Magazines

Responses to the question set appear to have progressed from previous sessions as there was evident lesser reliance on textual analysis and theory of magazine spectatorship, and a greater understanding of the topic of institutions and audiences. Predominantly, candidates focussed on the strategies, especially online if magazines are marketed in relation to the genre of the publication, such as beauty and cosmetics in lifestyle magazines, such as Vogue, along with good evident case studies on NME & Kerrang as music publication which on the whole provided candidates with a great opportunity to address the question set. Candidates engaged with marketing as a 'vital' process in the sales of the publication and supported arguments with plenty of exemplification. The greater achieving candidates examined the relationship between online publication (including discussion of social media and apps), and traditional print publications. Lesser achieving candidates provided a more basic discussion of contrasting magazines which provided occasional use of marketing examples.

Videogames

The discussion of marketing by the candidates was strong and who frequently engaged with video game marketing. The most impressive answers were able to discuss issues surrounding the relationship between audience and institution and at the point of exchange. The best answers used up to date, contemporary and therefore relevant case study examples. Plenty of candidates discussed the GTA franchise, although some focussed on older examples of marketing of GTA4, rather than more contemporary examples. Call of Duty franchises also referenced a lot, as well as Unchartered. In terms of new media products, some good discussion on indie games including Braid, and to a lesser extent, Pokémon Go's revival. There was plenty of evidence that candidates were well rehearsed with the discussion of marketing as a vital process to the selling and success of video games.

Radio

There were a small number of candidates who addressed radio for Question 2. There were some encouraging responses including examples of BBC vs local radio. Those candidates that achieved well understood how the BBC was bound by a public service remit and marketing was different to commercial radio stations, especially when tied in to publicity and promotion and online social networking. Lesser achieving candidate responses lacked awareness of how radio does market itself. A lot seemed to be known about the audiences and some market research undertaken to programme according to audience profile especially for local radio with some depth to the exemplification of marketing.

G324 Advanced Portfolio in Media

This report incorporates comments made by the whole moderation team for this unit.

Once again, moderators were privileged to see some strikingly creative, original, informed and technically impressive work submitted by candidates. It was obvious to moderators that, as in previous years, a number of candidates demonstrated the potential to have highly successful futures in one of the many thriving branches of the UK media industry. The days of candidates working with basic software packages like Movie Maker and Publisher are finally over, and Premiere Pro, Final Cut (Express and Pro), Audacity, Cubase, Garageband, Photoshop, InDesign, AfterEffects and Dreamweaver are the norm.

Administration and Presentation

The administration of most Centres was excellent, which greatly aided the moderation process. Most work arrived promptly although a handful of Centres were significantly late and risked not being moderated in time for results to be processed.

Many Centres ignored OCR advice and sent work using a 'signed for' service, leading to delays and inconvenience; moderators were also understandably unhappy when insufficient postage was paid necessitating sometimes lengthy trips to delivery offices and the underpayment being made up out of their own pockets.

It would seem that moderators discovered more clerical errors than in previous sessions, either adding up the component marks incorrectly when using the non-interactive form or transferring the incorrect marks onto Interchange.

The most common platforms used for presenting work were Blogspot, WordPress, Weebly and Wix. Thankfully there seemed to be fewer VLEs this session, with all their incumbent issues. Blog organisation was generally better than ever, with a growing practice of dividing the research and planning according to the three production tasks (which is also an excellent way of ensuring full coverage for each of these). Common issues from the past were still in evidence, however: blogs without a means of accessing work by date or by category; group blogs without an indication of the relative contributions of members; and content not accessible for a range of reasons.

In most cases, blog hubs were created with links to individual candidates' blogs, making the work easily accessible. It would help further, though, if Centres labelled links to candidates' work on the blog hub with their candidate numbers, as the moderation process only deals with candidate numbers. Once again, there were a few candidates who had created blogs with long URLs and without having a central hub for links this made accessing materials more challenging, with moderators having to type in individual blog addresses; some URLs hadn't been transcribed accurately which necessitated contacting the Centre or carrying out an internet search to find the correct blog; issues such as copying the same blog address onto several candidate sheets, despite them producing different blogs, were common – one Centre copied an incorrect blog address onto all 15 sample coversheets.

There were comparatively few issues with regard to accessing blogs, although in some cases material seemed to have been blocked or removed prior to moderation – this was particularly the case when Google Drive was used as a repository - and Centres are asked to check access rights to all external sources used, since it is not appropriate for the moderator to seek approval from candidates. At least one candidate had not completed uploading evaluation material before moderation, meaning the Centre had to be contacted for clarification. Several videos uploaded onto YouTube had been blocked due to copyright infringement but, in most cases, the Centre sent back up discs.

A few Centres submitted work on USBs – this is not an acceptable format; others submitted paper copies of print work and this is not wanted or needed in this digital specification. One Centre sent work on a USB and as Premier Pro files, which is obviously not acceptable (see Specification p34 for acceptable universal formats).

More Centres were using the interactive cover sheet provided by OCR, which was excellent and ensured accuracy in the totalling of marks. Some Centres, though, preferred to handwrite their comments, which is acceptable, though in some cases these were not always legible; and in a small number of cases there were errors with the totalling of marks allocated, which also delayed the process as marks needed to be amended by the Centre before moderation could proceed. Centres should also clearly indicate on the front of the cover sheet the candidate numbers of those who had worked together in a group. Coversheets need to be provided as hardcopy, not in a electronic/digital format. At the time of writing this report, the interactive coversheet can be found at http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/81495-unit-g324-coursework-coversheet-interactive-ccs334i-.pdf

The Centre Authentication form CCS160 is to be kept in Centres now; this is a change of instruction from previous sessions.

A couple of Centres were part of a consortium of schools and had not undertaken appropriate moderation making it extremely difficult to keep rank order. A few left registering as a consortium until very late which caused difficulties in allocation of all the Centres in the consortium to the same moderator.

Assessment

The comments on coursework cover sheets varied considerably across Centres. The best and most detailed made close reference to the assessment criteria, clearly explaining how the candidate had fulfilled the requirements of the particular level; and, where the candidate had worked in a group, comments were made to clearly explain their contribution to the research, planning and construction of the three texts. It was pleasing to see obvious evidence of internal standardisation and reference to exemplar work. However, a significant number of Centres made no reference to the assessment criteria in their comments, instead offering subjective opinions about the aesthetics and quality of the completed productions to support the marks allocated. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when the criteria were applied objectively, and comparison was made to the agreed national standard, it was clear that productions fell short in the required skill areas for the marks the Centres had allocated, which consequently led to adjustments being made. Occasionally, some comments on coversheets did not match the mark band the Centre put the work in; in a very small number of cases the comments written by Centres were extremely brief or non-existent for some aspects of the work, which does not aid supportive moderation. It was also disappointing to see so many cover sheets being submitted to moderators with exactly the same comments for all candidates who had worked together in group, even where there were differences in the marks allocated.

It was disappointing for moderators that this session was generally characterized by Centres over-generously marking candidates' work, significantly so in a number of cases, which led to some considerable adjustments to the marks allocated. In previous sessions' Centre reports, and the Principal Moderator's reports, Centres have been advised where application of the criteria and marks allocated have been inappropriate with advice given about how submissions could be improved to ensure the candidates can achieve the highest possible marks. It was therefore concerning to see so many submissions being allocated marks for excellence in all areas when the work was clearly of a basic or low proficient standard.

Research and planning

With regard to research and planning, most Centres ensured candidates conducted detailed and focused research into existing media texts, relevant to both the main production and both ancillary texts.

However, a number of Centres were still setting 'the history of music videos' type tasks, for example, without a clear rationale for doing so. Others seemed to encourage the regurgitation of the work of theorists such as Todorov, Propp, Goodwin or Mulvey, without application or relevance; for example, Propp and Todorov are not relevant to film trailers and, given the possible references to theorists in the forthcoming specification, many teachers of the subject are possibly going to have to go through a steep learning curve on media theory. Also, there is life beyond Goodwin when it comes to theories of pop music videos (furthermore, judging by the photos on some websites, candidates tended to be rather confused between him and the Australian operatic tenor of the same name!).

For some Centres, though, it still appears that ancillary texts are under researched (and lacking in sufficient planning); the evidence provided of research into the relevant genres was either very brief or missing completely. This is something which needs to be addressed; it is important that candidates have a thorough understanding of the codes and conventions of the relevant genres of product they are going to produce. Producing a conclusion to the research, which summarises the relevant codes and conventions, would be extremely beneficial to candidates as this would provide them with a 'checklist' against which they can monitor their own production work to ensure they are creating effective generic products which compare favourably with professional practice. There was a big difference between Centres in the use of ICT: some candidates took great care in the presentation of the work with edited videos, test shots, animation, whilst others paid lip service to the criteria, using Prezi and Emaze to house text with little skill in using the ICT. Some candidates submitted substantial notes from class, apparently supplied by the teacher.

As has been mentioned a number of times previously, research into a potential target audience is an extremely important aspect of this component in ensuring that the planning and construction phases are clearly focused on making the products appealing, relevant and interesting to the target audience. It was therefore disappointing to see that a significant number of Centres didn't conduct research into the target audience at all, or it was done in a very superficial way. This research is part of the assessment criteria and so where it is not conducted it should be reflected in the marks allocated. In addition, this underdeveloped – or non-existent – audience research seems to have led to weak evaluation question 3 responses in many cases; clearly these two areas should be more explicitly linked in terms of tasks set in some Centres.

Evidence of planning was varied this session. The best was extremely thorough and clearly showed candidates' engagement with their selected brief. There was evidence provided of some very detailed planning of mise-en-scene, with location recces being conducted as well as careful consideration of costumes, make up and props. The best portfolios included auditions and casting videos and tested out cinematography techniques prior to production. It was pleasing to see many candidates producing risk assessments for filming, following industry practice. However, there were issues in the planning submitted by some Centres: a significant number of candidates working on the music promotion brief did not provide evidence of asking permission to use the track they were promoting; there was a distinct lack of drafting ideas in too many cases (storyboards, scripts, shotlists); some showed poor organisation of time and others failed to undertake productive gathering of audience feedback. At the mid and lower range of the scale, planning was being paid lip-service but rarely contributed to the development and improvement of the outcomes.

Storyboards for moving image productions continue to be an area of concern. There was some evidence of excellent visualization of productions in the detailed storyboards produced by some candidates, with detailed written text explaining the action, camera movement, sound and

transitions. However this was clearly in the minority of cases. In the majority of cases storyboards were significantly lacking. It was common for moderators to see, for example, storyboards for a music video or short film consisting of no more than 12 frames and with no written text. There was also a number of storyboards submitted which had been created using stills from the filmed footage. By their very nature, storyboards have to be created before the construction process begins and so producing them after the filming has been conducted could in no way be interpreted as effective planning and candidates should not be rewarded as such.

It was pleasing to see some Centres clearly asking candidates to produce planning for the ancillary productions which was as detailed as that for the main task. However in some cases it appeared almost as if the ancillaries were an afterthought, with little or no evidence provided of their planning.

Separating planning from research is always helpful – or at least labelling and tagging the work within the blog. However, reorganising the order of the whole blog is not recommended as the ability to track a candidate's journey through the various stages or research, planning, production and evaluation is valued by moderators.

Many candidates used Prezi for showcasing their research and planning (and their evaluation responses – see below). Other presentation packages used included Pintrest, Animoto, Scribd, Slideshare, Emaze, Padlet, Giffy and Pixlr. These were often used effectively by students, where they were deployed appropriately, although sometimes it seemed they had sometimes been used for the sake of doing so rather than as an integral part of the blogging process. Unfortunately, some presentational tools, particular those which appeared to be Flash-based (for example, Joomag and PowToon) were difficult if not impossible to access on PCs running Windows 10 utilising Chrome – even with an IE simulator - or Edge; Centres might want to check that sites are accessible on a range of browsers in order to assist moderation.

Construction

The most user-friendly blogs made it easy for the moderator to find the final three constructions, either by reposting at the top of the blog or by labelling and tagging.

The music and film promotion briefs continued to be the most popular with Centres, followed closely by the short film brief. In this session, though, it was pleasing to see submissions across a wide range of briefs including the production of radio drama and regional magazines being tackled by a few candidates. With the games industry the biggest earner of all the creative industries one might expect quite a number of candidates to choose the games options and this year moderators did see a slight increase.

A small number of Centres submitted work which covered a number of different briefs (in one case there were seven different briefs on offer) and in such cases it was apparent that Centres struggled to support their candidates equally for each brief, either in terms of resources or research of the form, and it was also noticeable that in most cases there were significant issues with these Centres' allocation of marks for construction. It is extremely difficult when assessing construction work across a range of media to ensure that there is consistency and an accurate order of merit. It would be sensible for Centres in this situation to consider reducing significantly the number of briefs available to candidates. Not only would this make the marking process easier in terms of ensuring consistency and accuracy, but it would also be extremely beneficial to staff in terms of workload, monitoring candidates' work throughout all aspects of the component.

As noted above, moderators have continued to see some exceptional work at the top end, and there appears to be a correlation between this and candidates' autonomy in searching out ways to create professional video images using consumer technology; this has enabled them to use DSLR cameras and colour correction technology, like Da Vinci Resolve and After Effects, for

example, to a near professional level simply by using video tutorials from YouTube. This level of candidate engagement and enthusiasm, on a purely technical level, has been great to see.

In terms of moving image work, best texts followed conventions closely, maintained suitable pace to suit the form and aimed for professional standard in the texts, whilst still focusing on the assessment criteria (this avoids candidates justifying certain poor parts of their text because one real one text does something similar). Conversely there was still some work coming through without a tripod or shot in the dark without suitable equipment. Centres must ensure that they have the equipment to facilitate the briefs chosen. Several moderators also noted wearily that there were still far too many shots of cars/ shots out of cars/ motorways especially at night/ motorways in reverse etc; we recognise that during the period candidates are working on this unit they are likely to be taking and passing their driving test but that does not make a driving sequence compulsory! For such shoots all health and safety and risk assessment forms should be completed and teaching staff should be fully aware of what students are planning to shoot.

There were some excellent music videos produced by candidates. The best productions made effective use of a variety of shot types and movement, in particular of the performance aspect, and effective editing to the beat with accurate lip synching throughout; in some cases the outcomes could be regarded as being close to professional. What became apparent in these cases was that students performing at this level had access to excellent resources and knowledgeable staff. The weaker videos tended to be over-reliant on narrative with poor regard to mise en scene; these seemed not to consider the promotional function of music videos. Most music videos balanced narrative and performance elements, with many conceptual pieces being seen and some very adventurous location work being undertaken (one piece being shot in Spain, for example). A lot of videos were shot at night, which demonstrated ambition, although it seemed that quite a few candidates were using cameras which did not quite have the quality of lens to manage this effectively, with the image quality of some videos suffering as a result, something Centres might wish to take into account when advising candidates. Miming was somewhat ineffective in many cases this year (both in terms of lip-syncing vocals and playing instruments). However, some very impressive music videos were seen which demonstrated a clear understanding of the conventions of the form, with candidates exploring a range of genres and styles. Few "pure" performance-based videos were seen this year, with most pieces focusing more on narrative or the creating of abstract imagery (quite a few subjects being covered in paint, for example) many of these being for solo artists. As noted, a number of videos were more conceptual than narrative, with some interesting abstract pieces being presented. Less successful music videos again tended to demonstrate errors which have been outlined in previous reports: over-long takes, basic camera-work, poor syncing, editing which did not match the rhythm of the song, content which did not match generic expectation, repetitive structure or a lack of thought in terms of mise-en-scene, weak lighting etc. In general, these issues had been reflected in the comments and marking, although some work was over-rewarded, mainly when placed at the top end of level 4 despite demonstrating obvious structural or technical issues. Some Centres might consider carefully how suitable some song lyrics are for public examination purposes; free choice of song needs to be balanced with an awareness of the appropriateness of songs with often misogynistic lyrics, for example.

With regard to film trailers, there was a wider range of genres to be seen. The best productions were clearly grounded in the complete narrative which candidates had planned for the film. There was excellent variety of shot types used and action within shots, and the pace of editing was effective, mirroring industry practice. Many of the trailers had made some attempt to create their own soundtracks, often very successfully, and AfterEffects was often used to create special effects, demonstrating high levels of control and creativity. However, a number trailers tended to focus on genre identity at the expense of plot, resulting in sequences of scenes which did not really provide an idea of what the story of the film might be. Editing was sometimes less controlled than has been seen in the past, particularly with intertitles, which regularly whizzed in and out at a pace impossible to read or which were repeated several times during a trailer. Spelling within the intertitles was sometimes very poor, suggesting a lack of proofing or drafting. As in previous years,

there was a significant over use of the green MPAA classification card, which is difficult to justify in terms of context, as it relates to products specifically for an American audience.

There were a number of highly successful submissions for the short film brief; the best followed the examples of the form explored during research: tight, simple, effective narratives with a clear structure (one of the places where a consideration of Todorov is really effective) and a logical, earned ending (if not necessarily predictable). However, many pieces suffered from the need to balance narrative with a limited timeframe – quite often pieces included a "twist" ending which simply came out of nowhere and thus undermined the logic of the film; or created meandering, quite self-indulgent pieces; or included endings which did not really explain the preceding narrative and which could only be understood by referring to the planning sections of blogs - candidates should understand that there is a difference between an ambiguous/ unexpected ending and an incomprehensible one. A large number of short films ran substantially over the recommended 5 minute duration and the vast majority of these would have benefited considerably from being edited to the time stipulated in the specification. In future specifications work will not be credited beyond the stated lengths so centres will need to ensure that production work is edited to meet the requirements of the brief.

Of the TV documentaries seen, the best had applied detailed research with careful planning leading to work, which achieved verisimilitude (to the extent that professional actors had been used to create voiceovers). A significant number of documentary submissions tended to be limited to issues relevant to candidates and their peers, in order to be able to film most material within the Centre; stronger pieces tended to come from looking at a wider subject matter, from outside the school or college environment.

Most productions, though, would have clearly benefitted from a greater variety of shot type. With music videos, filming the performance more than once using different camera set-ups would have helped to create a more effective production and enabled more creativity with the editing. Centres should consider advising candidates to film more than they think will be required for the production, and to utilise a variety of camera set ups for the same scene or sequence - this gives candidates more choice when it comes to editing, enabling them to create more effective productions with appropriate pace. Many Centres used drones and GoPros to creatively explore unusual and professional looking cinematography (although health and safety considerations must be taken into account using these technologies, of course). For film trailers, using shorter shots and greater variety of content would have helped to create more effective pace in the edit and also to have avoided following the narrative order of the film and revealing too much of the narrative. There were a number of Centres that used an overly substantial amount of found footage in trailers and documentaries in particular. Accuracy of lip synching was also an issue in many videos, which wasn't generally reflected in the marking of work. Short film and documentary productions often suffered from poor audio recording – microphone provision needs to be considered carefully when setting this brief and ADR might also be considered.

Print productions generally demonstrated effective understanding of the genre, though more consideration of layout, content of images and font sizes would have strengthened much work. There were a few problematic regional magazines, however, which were really more like lifestyle or special interest magazines, and a handful of unrecognisable local newspapers that suggested the candidates had undertaken insufficient research of the form (and which were very often created using inappropriate software, such as Word).

With regard to ancillary texts, the digipak for the music promotion brief remains the elephant in the room for this component. It was extremely pleasing for moderators to see more Centres asking candidates to use freely available templates for the construction process, which ensured accurate sizing and orientation of panels as well as functionality of the completed product. However, in a significantly large number of submissions there was again the issue of candidates not actually producing a digipak or producing a text which consisted of only two panels – a front and a back. This issue has been raised in moderators' reports to Centres and Principal Moderator's reports in every session. Centres need to ensure that effective and focused research is conducted into the genre in order to ensure candidates have a clear understanding of what they have to produce;

many seemed to lack understanding of the details or content of digipaks this session – indicative, perhaps, of it being a physical format with which candidates are increasingly less familiar. A CD Jewel case is not a digipak, being of different dimensions and functionality; and a digipak consists of a minimum of four, equally sized panels and, to be a functioning cover, needs to have a spine. Centres should also note the brief is for the production of materials for an album, not a single or EP. Some Centres also need to note that the other print ancillary for this brief is for a magazine advertisement for the digipak, not a poster as indicated on numerous cover sheets; and not a poster for a tour as many candidates produced. Fewer websites were seen by moderators this session, surprising considering their prevalence in recent years. Many were quite skimpy in content and were over-reliant on templates for their effectiveness, with little evidence of customisation or verisimilitude; these tended to be Wix-based. Web pages lacked content or depth and there were several examples of sites where candidates had simply posted images/lyrics/tracklists/tour dates with little or no context or additional content. At least one site was seen which included a navigation bar with no working links. There was an imbalance here between the websites and digipaks produced, and Centres are advised that an equal amount of content/ engagement is needed for both ancillary pieces. Synergy between sites and other products was often effective (for example, music videos embedded in the appropriate page on the site).

Some excellent film posters were produced which really grabbed attention and had a real feel of the genre and narrative of the films. In general, though, greater creativity in the construction of images would have been beneficial, as would consideration of fonts and font sizes in particular; moreover, film posters in the main in the UK are landscape format, something missed by the majority of candidates. They were producing either "London Underground" posters or magazine adverts when making posters. There were some excellent double page spread film review pages using the house style of Empire and, conversely, also some very basic work in this form.

It was very noticeable that candidates who had conducted detailed research into the relevant genre and had planned the construction thoroughly achieved the most effective construction of ancillary texts.

Evaluations

Evaluations were once again the most problematic and inconsistently realised (and marked) aspect of the unit. Some candidates were almost exhaustive in their analysis, producing very detailed deconstructions of their work which must have taken a huge amount of time and effort to create, with some really cogent analysis and insight and with carefully considered use of digital technology to present their responses. However, candidates from several Centres once again produced brief essays or short (usually group-driven) films/ presentations, some of which were, as a whole, shorter than just one of the preceding research and planning posts despite, on some occasions, being marked as being the same or even better than the entire rest of the blog. It was evident that many Centres still do not recognise the importance of the evaluation, despite the age of the specification and the number of times this has been mentioned.

The quality of presentation was disappointing in this session. Some took a very uncreative, text-heavy approach and although this means some detailed analysis it does not always hit all the assessment criteria; others took a more creative approach but ended up with quite brief responses. The best responses made effective use of a different method of presentation for each question and sometimes more than one, such as in response to Q1 a video for the main task, annotated image for one ancillary and Prezi for the other. However in most submissions it was more common to see repeated use of Prezi, PowerPoint or Powtoon; and responses basically taking the form of essay prose with some image illustration. This is an issue that Centres can quite easily address with candidates in order to ensure that the work is presented more creatively, and so ensuring candidates can achieve a mark in level 4. Most Powtoons tended to be highly superficial and lacking in customisation – the platform has real potential but moderators did not often see this fulfilled. Very long unedited video commentaries were unhelpful – posting a separate

video for each question, with illustrative material and captions etc, is a far more helpful approach, making the response easier to navigate but, more importantly, enabling the candidate to demonstrate a higher level of understanding. Emazes were often far from 'emazing' – frequently consisting of just five or six brief text-based slides.

There was a small number of Centres where candidates produced group evaluations, and these were problematic. In some cases a group had divided up the four questions and each candidate had produced a response to one question. This was extremely problematic as it meant that each candidate had an incomplete evaluation, as the specifications require each candidate to respond to all four questions. Centres are advised to instruct candidates to create their own individual evaluations (which also helps candidates prepare for G325) but, if group evaluations are produced, then it is important that every candidate contributes to each of the four answers. The individual contribution should then be clearly stated in the Centre's comments on the coursework cover sheet. It is also important in group presentations that each individual candidate is identified in video presentations with the use of graphics so the moderator can clearly understand who is speaking.

With regard to Q1, candidates answered generally well with regard to the main task production. The very best used a documentary approach which allowed candidates to demonstrate their work in conjunction with the work which had inspired them. Weaker candidates only considered their videos and did not mention their ancillary products. Centres should also note that it is not a requirement for candidates to address all the 'use, develop or challenge' aspect of the question. It is most common for candidates to 'use' conventions of real media texts in their work and so this should be the area explored in detail in the response.

Most moderators observed that Questions 2 and 3 continued to pose problems for those candidates who had produced the least research and planning into the ancillary products and target audience.

Responses to Q2 were generally strongest when candidates identified features of the three texts which created synergy across the package of texts. There was at time poor choices in the selection of ICT form to present this response, for example using an audio commentary to compare 3 visual pieces without the visual examples.

The most successful answers to Q3 explored the entire process of production, with candidates reflecting clearly on how they had used feedback during as well as after completion of their work, with links made both to research/ planning and productions. However, this question was problematic for some Centres where candidates had not gathered audience research during the pre-production stage or where the question consisted of them screening their work and obtaining peer feedback; this does not really address the essence of the question.

Q4 was often successfully covered, with some excellent responses exploring both the technologies used and the processes candidates had gone through to use them. Such answers linked clearly to research, planning and production, with detailed reflection and consideration. The weakest responses were, once again simply lists of technologies used with little or no analysis or discussion; sometimes weak responses only discussed the technologies used for construction rather than all aspects of candidates' work. Q4 is an ideal opportunity to consider issues of convergence, but such debates were rarely seen.

One team leader recommended the following – and it seems a neat summary of the whole team's advice:

Best practice is:
- Q1 consider conventions of all 3 texts
- Q2 look at the synergy in detail

- ● Q3 gain feedback at each stage for all 3 texts (and evidence it) and discuss redrafts made after gaining feedback
- ● Q4 reflect on specific use of each technology
- ● Provide illustrative material for EVERY point made
- ● No text only answers
- ● No talking to camera only answers

Finally
Next session is the last for G324. The moderation team is sad to see the end of a unit that has pushed the boundaries of what candidates can explore and produce - but we remain excited to see one more year of the extraordinary work we have been privileged to see over the life of this Specification (and hopefully without any of our bugbears, as outlined above.)

G325 Critical Perspectives in Media

General Comments:

In general, the performance of candidates was in keeping with the previous year.

Following something of an apparent 'blip' last year, candidates' use of contemporary media examples appeared to be back on track with the greater majority of candidates deploying recent case studies in support of their responses in Section B. Question 1a elicited some strong responses, with candidates discussing concrete, specific and relevant examples of research into real media texts and the influence upon their own outcomes.

Candidates should be encouraged to engage with relevant debates for Section B, with a critical appreciation of events, developments and theoretical standpoints. Responses of all levels are undoubtedly enhanced where candidates are confident in their own judgements and can objectively reflect upon the mediated world.

While Centres had evidently devoted attention to time management techniques, with few candidates failing to respond to all questions, a proportion of candidates attempted a 'scattergun' approach to theory, as in previous sessions. In general, those who planned their responses often reaped benefits, producing a more structured and logical discussion.

Avoidable shortcomings in otherwise proficient answers remain – these are described below.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.
1a)
As in previous years, stronger responses devoted equal time to AS and A2 productions (and other media work if applicable) and progress over time was clearly integrated throughout the answer. In general, the majority of responses explored real media texts through descriptions of generic conventions. Top level responses progressed beyond discussion of broad genre traits and were able to focus on a range of specific, detailed examples from real media and explore the impact that this research had on their own outcomes. Higher level responses were also able to evaluate progress over time throughout their response. Some candidates chose to describe an increased proficiency in using media software, cameras and other technical equipment but failed to explain the relevancy of these activities in the context of the question focus. A number of candidates also described audience research processes, such as questionnaires and feedback forums, but again failed to discuss any potential relevancy of these activities in relation to research into real media texts.

Question No.
1b) The majority of candidates discussed their A2 main task production and many also explored their ancillary products. Top level responses confidently presented a range of theoretical and contemporary concepts and applied them to specific instances from their own productions. In general, a pleasing variety of critical ideas was discussed. However, there was some evidence of the 'prepared response' where candidates discussed narrative, representation or genre theories without reflection on any potential relevance to the concept of audience. A number of candidates omitted to reference theoretical concepts altogether, instead presenting broad descriptions of their audience profiles – this generally produced weaker links to examples from the candidates' own productions and a more limited scope for discussion. A minority relied solely upon descriptions of audience research activities, rather than taking the objective and critical position necessary for this question. Some responses applied more dated ideas such as the 'hypodermic syringe' model; this was limiting where the candidates did not also counter these theories with more recent thinking. Some candidates also struggled to decide whether the

audience were 'active' or 'passive' with a resulting loss of clarity in the response. Candidates should be encouraged to define, apply and discuss theoretical concepts rather than putting theorists' names in brackets without any accompanying exploration.

In **Section B: Collective identity**, contemporary media regulation, media in the online age and postmodern media were the most popular themes. Global media remains a minority choice. For all themes, top level responses contained contemporary examples, confident discussion of theoretical perspectives, fluent debate and informed personal engagement. As stated each year, please note applying classical media theories to current examples is a perfectly valid approach.

Contemporary media regulation was almost equally as popular as collective identity this year. Top level answers saw some sophisticated debate surrounding the creation of IPSO, the issues facing institutions such as the BBFC, PEGI and OFCOM, plus debate around human rights legislation, media ownership and the implications of online media for audiences and regulatory bodies. However, there is still a minority relying upon discussion of historic newspaper libel claims, Bandura experiments and the Jamie Bulger case as the main thread of their response. Weaker responses omitted theoretical perspectives entirely, simply describing case study examples. *The Human Centipede*, *The Dark Knight* and *GTA* were some of the case studies discussed by a number of candidates as in previous years; however, some candidates offered these as their only examples at the expense of more contemporary ones.

Global media was chosen by a very small number of candidates, with popular case studies including Disney. The strongest of these carefully weighed up arguments and supported them with a range of contrasting case study examples.

Media and collective identity was the most popular topic with youth, gender and British Muslims dominating the answers. There were also some informed and interesting responses focusing on the representation of transgender communities and working class youth. Top level responses were able to discuss and apply concepts such as mediation, stereotyping and issues around the construction of identity. Some candidates were able to handle more than one collective identity to add several dimensions to a cohesive discussion but weaker responses saw candidates take a more fragmented approach at the expense of creating links between theories, examples and debate; in general, the majority of candidates focused on one collective identity and debated its evolution over time. There was some evidence of the 'prepared response', with some candidates discussing 'positive and negative' representations without relating their discussion to the specific question focus. As in previous years, the handling of Mulvey's 'male gaze', in some responses, was oversimplified and misunderstood. Again, as in previous years, too many candidates spent over half of their response discussing historical texts such as Quadrophenia, which was linked to the London riot reportage without acknowledgement of the contextual differences. Texts such as *Attack the Block* and *Fish Tank* were also discussed but stronger responses also debated more contemporary texts including *I, Daniel Blake*, *Benefits Street* and some of the reporting on the Manchester and London terror attacks. Some interesting theory was drawn from Buckingham, Gauntlett and Giroux and very well-placed comments were made on self-constructed identities through online publishing, Zoella for example.

Postmodern media saw candidates explore a pleasing range of theories with some adept handling of complex ideas including the theories of Lyotard, Baudrillard and Jameson. Successful examples included the *Lego Movie*, *Black Mirror*, *Extras* and *Lady Gaga* music videos. *Deadpool* proved to be a popular and highly useful example but some overreliance on this text was also seen amongst the responses. As in previous years, stronger responses were able to move between micro textual examples such as bricolage and parody with macro societal themes such as mediated reality and the death of grand narratives. Some candidates concluded with discussion of concepts of 'pseudo-modern' media.

Media in the online age responses demonstrated, generally, a keen level of personal engagement. As in previous years, the music industry was a popular area for debate, with

discussion of artists' rights and the development of i-Tunes and Spotify. Many candidates were able to also explore how TV, film and music have been transformed by the internet along with patterns of consumption and distribution. Lower level responses saw the omission of theory and relied solely upon a description of case studies. In some cases, candidates presented a response that dealt only with the benefits of the online age to institutions at the expense of a discussion about audiences. However, the age of the prosumer was well examined in many cases and candidates were generally able to present and develop positives and negatives to the advancement of online media in relation to audiences and institutions while remaining focused on the demands of the specific question. The impact on audiences was sometimes forgotten in the conclusions of essays.

We media and democracy
Some candidates struggled with linking examples to the idea of democracy and, indeed, some struggled to define the concept of democracy which then set the tone throughout their response. However, some top level responses weighed up debates around conflicting ideas about whether media can be democratic or not, given institutional and regulatory concerns. Some discussed instances where we media had benefitted society and where it had been detrimental, leading to discussion of the rise of citizen journalism, or 'churnalism' and 'fake news'. In most cases, theoretical ideas included those of Gauntlett, Morozov and Gillmor. Strong responses also responded to the role of media in contemporary campaigns such as the US presidential elections and the UK general election.

General advice for section B is consistent with previous sessions – answers should be balanced, academically informed, current and forward thinking and, wherever possible, a sense of candidates' reflecting on their own media culture should emerge in their writing. It should also be noted that candidates must refer to more than one media area, with online media (as a convergent form) being the only exception.

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

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning
Telephone: 01223 553998
Facsimile: 01223 552627
Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored