

**GCSE**

**Media Studies**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J526**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2017**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates, which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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

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### Media Studies (J526)

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# B321 Individual Media Portfolio

## General Comments

Moderators commented on the very high standard of work in this unit this year. Many centres demonstrated excellent practice, enabling their candidates to access the assessment criteria through imaginative, well structured courses. There was excellent evidence of creativity, particularly through the use of candidates' impressive use of original images in the Production Exercise. Centres ensured through careful choices of texts and topics that candidates were able to demonstrate their understanding of **Media Language** and **Representation**, the two concepts that are tested in this unit.

This year many centres gave their candidates a degree of autonomy in the selection of texts for study for the Analytical Assignment. This ensured that the candidates could demonstrate a high level of understanding and engagement and produce very impressive portfolios, while meeting the assessment criteria.

Advertising and Film Genres were the most popular topics this year, followed by Popular Music. Whilst the topics are set by the exam board and must be adhered to, centres are able to devise their own tasks for the comparative analytical assignment and for the Production Exercise. Centres are also able to use the exemplar tasks suggested in the specification, at the end of this report, or in the OCR GCSE Media Studies textbook.

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

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

## The sections of the portfolio

Moderators report that some centres do not make the final assessed Production Exercise distinct from drafts, holding up the moderation process. Centres are reminded that there are three distinct sections required for the portfolio and that these should be clearly separated and presented in the following order:

- Comparative Analytical Assignment
- Production Exercise
- Evaluative Commentary, followed by evidence of research and planning material.

## Assessment

Marking was mostly very sound, with few adjustments made to the centres' marks. Where problems did arise, it tended to be because:

- Analytical Assignments lacked detailed analysis of the techniques used to construct representations

- Evaluative Commentaries offered accounts of the production process, but there was little analysis of the representations candidates had constructed
- Evaluative Commentaries lacked reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the finished production.

### **Organisation and annotations**

Most centres were well organised. Cover sheets had been filled in correctly and teacher comments were very helpful in supporting the moderation of their work.

Where centres sent work that was disorganised, with cover sheets that contained errors or were not filled in at all, the moderation process was held up and moderators found it more difficult to see how the marks had been arrived at. Moderation was also made more difficult where there were no annotations on the work itself, as was often the case with work presented on a disc. This made it more difficult to agree the marks. Centres are reminded that there is an expectation that all work should be annotated throughout the portfolio.

Best practice was seen where centres indicated on the work itself where candidates had met the assessment objectives. This was very supportive of the moderating process. If work is sent on a disc, it is required that centres send hard copies of the cover sheets with detailed summative comments.

Centres are reminded again that the use of three sided plastic wallets is not permitted, as this holds up the moderation process (see page 2 of the Controlled Assessment Submission Instructions). Work should be presented in A4 format, rather than A3.

### **The Analytical Assignment**

There was almost always a good focus on the challenging concept of representation and increasingly centres ensured that candidates considered various aspects of media language such as camerawork, mise-en-scène and editing. Candidates clearly engaged with their topics and were investigative and insightful.

This was particularly the case where candidates had been given the opportunity to select their own text/s for study. In contrast, where candidates had been taught just two advertisements for the Advertising topic, this inevitably led to some fairly pedestrian responses.

Successful tasks included those which asked candidates to compare the changing representation of women in advertising looking at a range of advertisements from the 1950s through to the present day. This allowed candidates to address the social factors which contribute to representation very effectively. The changes in societal values can then be traced across the decades. These types of responses were almost always successful but were particularly effective where:

- Candidates analysed the micro-elements (camerawork, mise-en-scène, sound, editing)
- Where candidates were able to show some autonomy, perhaps in their choice of contemporary texts.

Centres impressed where they had equipped candidates with a critical vocabulary which enabled them to confidently analyse their chosen texts successfully. The use of appropriate theory, when applied judiciously, elevated analytical essays, but where candidates had struggled to understand theory it proved to be an obstacle, rather than a key to success.

In Popular Music, most texts analysed were fairly contemporary and featured representations of ethnicity. In Film Genres, gender was successfully considered by comparing *Star Wars* and *The Hunger Games*.

Best practice could be seen in those centres where:

- the task demanded a clear focus
- examples had been discussed and analysed in class
- candidates were well grounded in the ways in which media language constructs representation
- candidates had a good grasp of media terminology
- candidates were then asked to select their own texts.

There was generally very good use of media terminology, with fewer examples of centres where candidates appeared not to have been taught the correct technical terms.

### **The Production Exercise**

There were some innovative, creative Production Exercises, where candidates demonstrated an excellent understanding of representation. There were many very impressive examples of original photography, enabling candidates to demonstrate a strong sense of engagement, creativity and individuality.

Most of the production work demonstrated a clear link with the Analytical Assignment and a consideration of representation. For CD covers the crucial aspect is *mise-en-scène*. A good location, a musical instrument and a thoughtful pose were the main ingredients of a successful response – allied to appropriate codes and conventions – and the correct dimensions! Film posters often made good use of found backgrounds to enhance the original images of ‘the actors.’ There was some very effective manipulation of images here.

A degree of autonomy might also be allowed here too. There may be a few within a class who will create an engaging print advertisement for a perfume – but it is unlikely that thirty will all achieve the same quality. If sufficient effort is placed on research and planning, there is no reason why individuals cannot work on different productions according to their own interests or enthusiasm.

In a few cases, the set task did not facilitate candidates' understanding of representation. For example, where print adverts were produced without a human representation, candidates found it difficult to write about representation in their Evaluative Commentaries. Centres are reminded that the purpose of the Production Exercise is to demonstrate the candidates' understanding of both Media Language and Representation.

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

### **The Evaluative Commentary**

The Evaluative Commentaries increasingly tied the Production Exercise to the concept of representation. However, too many candidates glossed over explanations of how and why they had constructed particular representations. In many cases more explanations were needed as to why candidates had made certain choices when constructing their texts.

More reflective Evaluations were more common – but the quality of reflection still varied considerably, with some very thoughtful evaluations while other commentaries contained very

little reflection. Centres are reminded that a 'sound sense of reflection' is required in the evaluation in order for candidates to achieve a Level 3 or above.

Best practice was seen where centres tested their productions on their intended audience and incorporated feedback into their evaluations. This enabled candidates to comment constructively on strengths and weaknesses of their work in light of critical feedback.

### **Evidence of research and planning**

There was an improvement in this area this year, with the majority of centres including good evidence of research and planning. On the whole, fewer centres included multiple copies of questionnaires and the majority managed to increase the depth and breadth of research.

As always, detailed annotation of existing texts by candidates was a successful approach to research and clearly informed the production work. This was most successful where autonomy was encouraged and candidates were allowed to choose their own texts to analyse, rather than reproducing teacher-led research.

Best practice in planning was seen where original and rejected images were presented and commented upon and then stages of manipulation were presented. This gave real insight into the process.

### **Conclusion**

Moderators stated that they had enjoyed the moderation process this year, as the majority of centres demonstrated good practice in their delivery of the course and ensured that their candidates successfully fulfilled the requirements of the three sections of the portfolio. Centres are to be congratulated for the successful planning, delivery and assessment of this unit.

### **Summary of best practice**

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

### **Examples of successful tasks 2017**

#### **Topic 1: Documentaries**

- Compare the representation of teenagers and teachers in *Educating Yorkshire* and *Spellbound*. Produce a photo-storyboard for a new documentary on education that represents teenagers in a particular way.

- Compare the representation of masculinity in the sports documentaries *Dog Town v Z Boys* and *Jump London*. Produce a DVD case for a new sport documentary with a specific representation of masculinity.
- Compare the representation of age in *Barely Legal Drivers* and *Children on the Front Line*. Produce a magazine advertisement promoting a new documentary that represents teenagers positively.

## Topic 2: Film Genres

- Compare the ways that the directors of *Billy Elliot* and *The Full Monty* represent unemployment and poverty. Create a film poster representing poverty and unemployment.
- Compare the representation of gender in action films, choosing from *Mad Max*, *Expendables 3*, *The Devil's Backbone*, *Transformers* and *Lethal Weapon*. Create two film posters, with contrasting representations of gender.
- Compare the ways male and female protagonists are represented in *V for Vendetta* and *Avengers Assemble*. Create a poster for a new superhero film with a particular focus on the representation of gender.
- Compare the representation of women in two science fiction films by analysing three key scenes, choosing from: *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, *Ex Machina* and *The Matrix*. Produce two posters for a new science fiction film with a prominent female character.

## Topic 3: Popular Music

- Compare the representation of gender in two music videos, selecting from Beyoncé's *Run the World (Girls)*, Taylor Swift's *Blank Space*, and Pink's *So What*. Create a CD cover for a new music artist or band.
- Compare the ways in which teenagers are represented in *Teenage Dirtbag* by Wheatus and *Ill Manors* by Plan B. Produce a CD front and back cover for a new artist with a specific representation of teenagers.
- Examine the representation of young people in music videos, comparing *Love Story* by Taylor Swift with *Brave* by Sara Bareilles, together with one music video of your own choice. Produce a CD front and back cover for a new artist with a specific representation of young people.

## Topic 4: Celebrity

- Compare the representations of Miley Cyrus in the first episode of *Hannah Montana* and in the music video *Wrecking Ball*. Create a double page spread and a front cover of a new celebrity magazine.
- Compare the representation of One Direction in the American media with their representation in the UK media. Produce the home page of a website for a new celebrity.

## Topic 6: Soap Opera

- Compare the ways in which disability is represented in two contrasting soap operas: *Hollyoaks* and *EastEnders*. Produce a digital storyboard for the opening sequence of a new soap opera with a positive representation of disability.

- Compare the ways in which working class young people are represented in *Waterloo Road* and *EastEnders*. Produce a magazine front cover and contents page to subvert traditional representations of young people.

### **Topic 7: Sport**

- Compare the representations of a sports personality of your choosing in print, website and television reports. Create the cover of a new sports magazine and an interview with a new sports star.
- How have representations of the Paralympics in 2012 changed since the first official Paralympics in 1960? Produce a storyboard for an advertisement for the next Paralympics.

### **Topic 8: News**

- Compare the representations of war and the soldiers taking part in it, showing how far they have changed over time and how far they have stayed the same. Produce either: two newspaper front pages for different audiences, offering different representations or: produce two news bulletins from two different radio stations, covering the same story but with different representations.
- Compare the representation of young people in the London riots of 2012 in the *Daily Mail* newspaper and the *Independent* website. Produce a radio news bulletin representing young people in a particular way.

### **Topic 9: Advertising**

- Compare the ways gender is represented in cosmetic advertising in the 60s, using *Brylcreem*, the 80s using *Blue Stratos* and the 2000s using *Davidoff*. Create an original print cosmetic advert that shows understanding of gender representation.
- Compare and contrast the representation of women and families in two television advertisements from different time periods. Produce two print advertisements with contrasting representations of women and families.
- Compare the representations of women in contemporary lipstick advertisements. Creating a print lipstick advertisement with a clear focus on representation.
- Compare the representation of women in a series of cleaning adverts from the 1950s to today. Produce a billboard advertisement for a new domestic product aimed at males.

### **Topic 10: Video games**

- Compare the representations of women in two video games, choosing from: *Tomb Raider*, *Assassins' Creed* and *Mario Brothers*. Design a magazine advertisement for a new video game featuring a prominent female video game character.
- Compare the representations of gender in *Halo* and *Mirror's Edge*. Design a video game cover and a magazine advertisement for a new video game with a character that challenges stereotypes.

## **B322 Textual Analysis and Media Studies Topic (Moving Image)**

### **General Comments:**

The extract was a sequence from the 2015 film *Spy* (director: Paul Feig), starting at 45 minutes 36 seconds with a shot of Rome and the caption 'Rome\_Italy', ending at 49 minutes 54 seconds after the line 'Well buongiorno boys, if I'm not out in 10 minutes it's because I won the place'.

This extract contained the codes and conventions of the action-adventure genre (hybridised with comedy), a sequence of scenes with distinctive use of media language, and a representation strategy with clear use of stereotypes and counter-stereotypes. It proved accessible to candidates and a rich source of analysis.

Most candidates were well-prepared for the examination, completed all the questions, and allocated their time effectively.

### **Comments on Individual Questions:**

#### Question No. 1 Genre

This question proved slightly less accessible this year but most candidates were able to distinguish at least two conventions in the extract. Answers commonly cited the following conventions: characters such as the hero, the villain, and the helper(s), a race against time, jeopardy, peril, or danger, the exotic location, and the mission. Some answers successfully explained narrative elements such as the hero asking for a gun or the dangerous car journey in terms of conventions such as 'conflict expressed through violence' and 'jeopardy and peril'.

Weaker answers might refer descriptively to elements from the spy genre without linking these to action-adventure more generally (e.g. 'there were spies talking using headphones') or insisted that the 'car chase' was a convention of the genre as a whole. Some candidates attempted to analyse the extract using Todorov's or Propp's theory – this was rarely a successful strategy as it commonly diverted attention from identifying generic conventions (though such answers often touched upon conventions in passing).

#### Question No. 2 Media language

Most candidates attempted all four bullet points for this question, showing understanding of the distinction between soundtrack, editing, mise-en-scène and camerawork and providing specific examples for each. Some weaker answers tended to confuse editing and camerawork, discussing, for example, examples of cross-cutting and shot-reverse shot under camerawork. Better answers discussed the connotations of the examples they had chosen. Weaker answers speculated about the effects their examples would have on audiences, and very weak answers stated how they fitted generic conventions, or failed to address effects at all.

#### Soundtrack

This was generally answered successfully. Candidates commonly cited the following examples: the different connotations of the use of music during the car journey, as the villain arrives, and/or as the hero is transformed, and the use of sound effects such as screeching tyres to connote danger. Answers referring to dialogue often struggled to establish connotative effect.

### Editing

This was generally answered successfully and is no longer the weak area that it was in previous years. Many candidates discussed how the fast-paced editing during the dangerous car journey connoted excitement or peril, how the slow motion used during this journey emphasised spectacle or established comedy, how the deliberate jump cuts as the hero emerges after her makeover signify her transformation or the triumph of the moment. Better answers dealt effectively with the effects of the cross-cutting between the hero and her helper (e.g. the connotations of calm and peril created by the difference between the two locations), or the shot-reverse shot between the hero and her driver (e.g. comic connotations), but some candidates struggled to move beyond the descriptive with these elements (e.g. 'the shot-reverse shot enables the audience to see both sides of the conversation') and many struggled to discuss the effects of the slow motion sequences. Some candidates erroneously described a cut between different locations as a jump cut.

Some weak answers discussed sound under editing or speculated about use of CGI.

### Mise-en-scène

This was generally answered successfully. Many candidates discussed the meaning of the hero's and villain's costumes and props and the contrast in lighting and setting between the streets of Rome and the spy headquarters.

### Camerawork

This was generally answered successfully. Many candidates discussed the low angle and the tracking shots of the car, emphasising its speed, the close up of the hero's horrified facial expression during the car journey connoting peril or comedy, the over the shoulder or point of view shots from inside the car connoting excitement or danger, the long shot of the villain connoting surveillance and threat. Many candidates who successfully described the establishing shot of Rome at the beginning of the extract then struggled to explain any connotative effect beyond stating that 'it shows the audience where they are' – this is a common problem with the establishing shot.

### Question No. 3 Representation

This was a rich extract for representation analysis and many candidates successfully explored the stereotypical and anti-stereotypical representation of gender and the stereotypical representation of Italians. There were many thoughtful discussions of the complexities of the gender representation and better answers showed an impressive level of critical autonomy. Those candidates who chose to further analyse the representation of spies and criminals tended – understandably – to produce a more descriptive account which might veer away from representation analysis into generic conventions, but even here there were some excellent accounts.

Better answers discussed wider representation and ideological issues, weaker answers discussed representation in action-adventure films and often failed to move beyond characterisation and generic conventions. There were very few very weak answers that failed to address representation issues at all.

Responses to this question are now approaching the appropriate length for a 20 mark essay – there were fewer examples of very short answers this year.

### Question No. 4(a) Institution

Candidates did not seem to be disadvantaged by the new format of this question this year. Most candidates attempted both aspects of the question – the branding and the scheduling – for both programmes.

The format of the table after the question was different from previous years because the question did not require an explanation of all three scheduling elements – channel, day and time – for each programme. This meant that responses could access the top mark band without discussing the day a programme was scheduled, or by discussing multiple scheduling across one channel. Some candidates chose to include the full scheduling details of their two programmes in the table, even though this was not required, without either adverse or advantageous consequences.

Better answers linked the programme to the scheduling, and clearly linked the channel brand to the programmes, by explaining how the programme carried similar values or addressed the same target audience or met the channel's PSB requirements. Weaker answers might state aspects of the channel or the scheduling or the programme without establishing this link (for example, stating that the programme was scheduled at prime time or before the watershed without explaining why this was in relation to this particular programme).

Programmes with regular scheduling often worked best for this question, as did channels with strong brand images (e.g. ITV, Channel 4), clearly defined target audiences (e.g. Dave, E4, CBBC) or strongly defined PSB ethos (e.g. BBC 1 or BBC2).

Use of very old programmes with only historical scheduling often produced weaker answers, as did use of programmes such as *Pointless* that are not primarily comedic.

Contrasting programmes on contrasting channels often worked the best for this question, for example:

- *Horrible Histories* (CBBC) and *Q1* (BBC2)
- *Benidorm* (ITV) and *Q1* (BBC2)
- *Inbetweeners* (E4) and *Outnumbered* (BBC1)
- *Would I Lie to You?* (BBC1) and *Benidorm* (ITV)
- *Citizen Khan* (BBC 1) and *Family Guy* (ITV)
- *Miranda* (BBC 1) and *Benidorm* (ITV)
- *Gavin and Stacey* (BBC 1) and *The Big Bang Theory* (E4)

#### Question No. 4(b) Audience

This question proved less accessible this year. The new format of this question required candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of audience pleasures to a specific context – the type of audience addressed. Better answers discussed how two (or more) exemplified pleasures addressed mass or niche audiences and so accessed the top mark band. Such answers might use the terms 'mass' and/or 'niche' or might discuss particular characteristics of the audiences thereby implying mass or niche audiences. Thus, some answers successfully discussed how family members might gain pleasure from 'Outnumbered' or how young socially-awkward audiences might gain pleasure from 'The Big Bang Theory'. Some answers suggested a lack of understanding by stating that their programme engaged 'mass and niche audiences'; occasionally, however, this could be done very well, such as analyses of *Gavin and Stacey* where the candidates linked transgressive pleasures to younger/niche audiences and emotional and narrative pleasures to a mass audience.

Some very detailed discussion of pleasures failed to consider the niche/mass audience aspect of the question so could not access the top mark band. Candidates should be advised to read the question very carefully and respond to all its constituent elements.

Candidates seemed well prepared on audience pleasures; fewer candidates this year simply listed different forms of comedy. There were few very weak answers and only a very small proportion of candidates failed to answer this question.

Examples of programmes that worked well:

- *Outnumbered* (adult parent/family audience or mass audience)
- *Would I Lie To You?* (mass audience)
- *Inbetweeners* (niche young audience)
- *The Big Bang Theory* (niche young audience)
- *Miranda* (mass audience).

## B323 Textual Analysis and Media Topic (Print)

### General Comments:

The extract was the front cover, three contents pages and the editor's letter page of the March 2016 edition of the British 'Gentleman's Quarterly'. This extract contained the codes and conventions of the lifestyle magazine genre, distinctive use of media language, and a representation strategy with clear use of stereotypes and counter-stereotypes. It proved accessible to candidates and a rich source of analysis. Most candidates were well-prepared for the examination and most completed all the questions, allocating their time effectively.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

#### Question No. 1 Genre

Most candidates were able to distinguish at least two conventions in the extract. Answers commonly cited the following: the main image of a celebrity, the direct address, the personalised editor's letter, and the hybridity of contents. A few weaker answers referred to magazine conventions such as the masthead and the presence of cover lines or simply described the extract.

#### Question No. 2 Media language

Most candidates attempted all four bullet points for this question, showing understanding of the distinction between layout, typography, colour and language use. Better answers discussed the connotations of the examples they had chosen. Weaker answers speculated about the effects their examples would have on audiences, and very weak answers stated how they fitted generic conventions, or failed to address effects at all.

#### Layout

This was generally answered successfully but some weaker responses failed to refer to specific pages or struggled to establish connotative effect. Candidates commonly analysed: the connotations of sophistication and maturity from the ordered, spacious, or minimalistic layout of the contents pages, the connotation of reverence arising from the whole page devoted to David Bowie, and the cluttered front cover connoting abundance.

#### Typography

This was generally answered successfully but a number of candidates misidentified serif and sans-serif fonts or might have identified these correctly but failed to give a specific example so the accuracy of their knowledge and understanding of typography could not be determined. Candidates commonly analysed: the bold sans-serif font used for the GQ masthead connoting strength or masculinity, the use of serif fonts for the main cover lines or the editors' letter or the contents page headings connoting sophistication and maturity, the editor's handwritten signature connoting a personal touch.

#### Colour

This was generally answered successfully. Better answers discussed the connotations of specific colours in the context of the magazine (e.g. that the red background for 'women we love' connotes passion), weaker answers discussed unrelated connotations (e.g. that red is the 'colour of the devil', that black was used to connote mystery).

#### Language

This was generally answered successfully. Better answers gave quotations as examples of linguistic register or devices and discussed connotation rather than effect on audience (choosing

examples that facilitated this). Commonly discussed examples included: use of a formal register to connote seriousness, use of direct address connoting a personal relationship, use of rhetorical questions to connote expertise, and use of puns to connote playfulness.

#### Question No. 3 Representation

This was a rich extract for representation analysis and many candidates successfully explored the stereotypical and anti-stereotypical representation of gender. Better answers could provide either a detailed analysis of the representation of one social group, usually men, or a wide-ranging analysis of number of social groups – usually, but not always, those in the bullet points.

Many candidates discussed the stereotypical representation of muscled masculinity (and the objectification of the Beckham body), and better answers often contrasted this with the anti-stereotypical image of David Bowie in dress and make-up. However, a few candidates misunderstood this latter image as a representation of an older woman and a number of candidates commented on what they perceived as the compulsory heterosexuality of the extract – such candidates were not penalised for lack of cultural knowledge but these candidates may have benefitted from using the reading and note-taking period more effectively.

Many candidates discussed the stereotypically objectified image of a woman in a bikini.

Candidates commented on the ethnically mixed imagery, anti-stereotypical inclusion of a BAME ‘bright young thing’, and the stereotypically patronising representation of ‘victims’ in the Philippines with a first world celebrity.

Age was mostly discussed in relation to the ‘surprising’ fact that a middle-aged (or ‘old’) man like David Beckham, with clearly obvious wrinkles, was still being used as a model.

#### Question No. 4(a) Institution

Candidates did not seem to be disadvantaged by the new format of this question this year. Most candidates attempted both aspects of the question – the branding and the scheduling – for both programmes.

The format of the table after the question was different from previous years because the question did not require an explanation of all three scheduling elements – channel, day and time – for each programme. This meant that responses could access the top mark band without discussing the day a programme was scheduled, or by discussing multiple scheduling across one channel. Some candidates chose to include the full scheduling details of their two programmes in the table, even though this was not required, without either adverse or advantageous consequences.

Better answers linked the programme to the scheduling, and clearly linked the channel brand to the programmes, by explaining how the programme carried similar values or addressed the same target audience or met the channel’s PSB requirements. Weaker answers might state aspects of the channel or the scheduling or the programme without establishing this link (for example, stating that the programme was scheduled at prime time or before the watershed without explaining why this was in relation to this particular programme).

Programmes with regular scheduling often worked best for this question, as did channels with strong brand images (e.g. ITV, Channel 4), clearly defined target audiences (e.g. Dave, E4, CBBC) or strongly defined PSB ethos (e.g. BBC 1 or BBC2).

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*Benidorm* (ITV) and *Q1* (BBC2)

*Inbetweeners* (E4) and *Outnumbered* (BBC1)

*Would I Lie to You?* (BBC1) and *Benidorm* (ITV)

*Citizen Khan* (BBC 1) and *Family Guy* (ITV)

*Miranda* (BBC 1) and *Benidorm* (ITV)

*Gavin and Stacey* (BBC 1) and *The Big Bang Theory* (E4)

Question No. 4(b) Audience

This question proved less accessible this year. The new format of this question required candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of audience pleasures to a specific context – the type of audience addressed. Better answers discussed how two (or more) exemplified pleasures addressed mass or niche audiences and so accessed the top mark band. Such answers might use the terms ‘mass’ and/or ‘niche’ or might discuss particular characteristics of the audiences thereby implying mass or niche audiences. Thus, some answers successfully discussed how family members might gain pleasure from ‘Outnumbered’ or how young socially-awkward audiences might gain pleasure from ‘The Big Bang Theory’. Some answers suggested a lack of understanding by stating that their programme engaged ‘mass and niche audiences’; occasionally, however, this could be done very well, such as analyses of *Gavin and Stacey* where the candidates linked transgressive pleasures to younger/niche audiences and emotional and narrative pleasures to a mass audience.

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*Would I Lie To You?* (mass audience)

*Inbetweeners* (niche young audience)

*The Big Bang Theory* (niche young audience)

*Miranda* (mass audience).

## B324 Production Portfolio in Media Studies

### General Comments:

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

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

### Portfolio Evidence

The Controlled Assessment work submitted for this unit was of a generally competent standard overall. The concepts were tackled well. Where candidates had provided separated sections of their portfolios for Research and Planning, and Evaluation, they were able to demonstrate that they had met the requirements of the Specification clearly. In the best instances, they had also provided a Contents list with page numbers and an Appendix (which brought discipline to their approach, as well as helping the process of moderation).

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

On occasion, some candidate work was unavailable or lost. These Centres were reminded to keep work in a secure location and make relevant copies (e.g. especially of the Research and Planning stage).

Most Centres were well organised and presentation was good, with Cover Sheets completed accurately, with thorough and comprehensive teacher comments. However there were some arithmetical errors. One of the biggest issues was generic teacher comments without any personalisation regarding elements of the candidate's work, such as the candidate's input to the group during the Production. There were some examples where teacher comments were missing entirely on the Controlled Assessment Cover Sheet (CCS339).

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

Some Centres submitted an additional Controlled Assessment proforma sheet including justifications which showed how marks were awarded by the Centre. Another contingency evident in submissions was all work was backed onto a DVD disk (Research and Planning, Production, and Evaluation).

### Brief Selection

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

Teachers need to refer to specific pieces of evidence in a candidate's portfolio when completing the Controlled Assessment Cover Sheets (CCS339), making sure they have referred to the appropriate Assessment Criteria (ref Spec P33-43).

Some Centres had made judgements appropriately, applying the Assessment Criteria as intended. However others had increased the marks submitted, particularly in the Production element with little justification. For these, it would be wise for Centres to review the exemplar portfolios on the OCR website in order to better gauge the national standards expected for this Unit Specification. See the OCR CPD Hub: <https://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk>

Most Centres had encouraged their candidates to demonstrate initiative in exploring and presenting their response to a Set Brief. Candidates who were allowed to do this provided evidence to satisfy the requirements of the Assessment Criteria.

### **Key Concepts**

Most Centres ensured that candidates had addressed all of the Key Concepts with references to Language, Genre, Audience, Institution and Representation. There were some that encouraged candidates to complete separate research into, for example, focusing on Genre as a discrete topic/practice and then exploring existing related genres and their codes and conventions or alternatively looking into Representation as a discrete theoretical area and then applying what they had learnt through relevant examples of gender, race, age etc. Some Centres applied research into the comparative texts, through detailed written analysis or through annotation of relevant examples.

In terms of theory, the most common areas researched or explored were Narrative, Representation and Genre. There was good quality target audience research, both pre-production breakdowns of questionnaires and post-production evaluation/reflection/opinion gathering.

### **The Sections of the Portfolio**

Centres are reminded that there are three distinct sections required for the portfolio and these should be clearly separated. The portfolio needs to be labelled and presented in the following order for each candidate:

- Research and Planning (plus an optional Appendix)
- Production
- Evaluation

The Appendix can contain items such as drafts, research sources, and shared materials. Sources of information (particularly websites) were at times inconsistently referenced within the portfolio submission. Good practice was in evidence where teachers ensured each folder submitted included an Index with Contents and page numbers as well as the Appendix.

All Centres were reminded of the changes in Specification from the 2014 entry by the 'Notice to Centres' (November 2015). In particular Section 4.2.2 (P.26) makes clear what teachers can, or must not do in terms of assisting candidates (for example the ban on using templates).

### **Research and Planning**

There was generally competent evidence of Research and Planning this year. In most Centres, there appeared to be a sense of independent Research and Planning taking place with a good sense of ownership of work conducted.

There was a range of Research and Planning tasks completed by Centres. There was successful research into specific genres which underpinned the candidate's understanding of the area they were focusing on. Media Language terminology and ideas were applied throughout the candidate's portfolios. Centres set tasks that were well structured to ensure that candidates used this terminology appropriately. Some candidates successfully used questionnaires and graphical results into the target audience (e.g. demographics and psychographics) when exploring their concept. Blumler and Katz's theory and Dyer's theory were referenced. Institution was varied and inconsistent in submissions with some sources of information missing from the portfolios.

Most Centres demonstrated that candidates had been encouraged to Research through looking into various Key Concepts (e.g. Representation theory, Institutional information or analysing

comparative texts) and then to use this information to inform the Planning stage. There were also examples where Centres had allowed candidates to Research into comparative texts which were not ideal or suitable in relation to what they were actually producing. For example, analysing the front covers of magazines but not double page spreads; and/or analysing music videos but not printed magazine or advertising material for a music advertising campaign.

There was also evidence of Production Logs which showed time management during the various stages of the Production. Some candidates produced detailed storyboards which were hand drawn clearly linking to the Production process. There was also clear evidence of SWOT analysis, shooting schedules, script writing, shot listing and mind mapping.

The analysis of similar media texts was an area of considerable strength for the majority of Centres with clear analytical skills demonstrated and detailed annotations evidenced. Summative paragraphs and summaries helped explain how the candidates intended to use their planning to shape the Production and describe the 'creative journey' that they were embarking on.

Mise-en-scene (including costumes, props, colour, figure, lighting, objects and setting) was also an area where considerable inventive skills had been demonstrated. Some Centres showed safe working practice. However in some instances, Centres had allowed candidates the use of suspect items without apparent regard for health and safety, and/or evidence of appropriate risk assessments. Location agreements, risk assessments, and reces should be included in this instance.

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

There were also examples of folders where sheets would be better placed within the Appendix (e.g. questionnaire sheets for target audience). Some Centres only managed to undertake the Research and Planning section of the portfolio; the rest of work was not produced.

## **Production**

The Production was of variable quality across the board and largely depended on the resources available to the Centre. Some submitted Productions on DVD discs which were clearly labelled with clear DVD menu navigations. The vast majority of candidates worked as groups, although there were a number of Centres, mainly working on print briefs (e.g. New Magazine), where candidates worked individually.

Candidates seemed to engage with the majority of tasks set. There were some very creative and thoughtful Productions that looked near professional. Candidates with low marks for their Research and Planning or Evaluation components sometimes produced some interesting and engaging Productions. There were many instances where Centres had encouraged and facilitated candidates in developing relevant technical skills. Candidates had clearly taken satisfaction as they had responded to the Set Briefs in a variety of creative ways.

Some Centres encouraged candidates to create a range of products (such as a New Magazine, Computer/Video Game Cover, Music Video, and Opening Sequence from a Film). The majority of Centres had encouraged candidates to make good use of codes and conventions. A range of techniques were also displayed including framing shots, photo manipulation and mise-en-scene which showed an excellent understanding of media language.

Most Centres encouraged quality photography practice and work was printed in colour where needed. This was supported by good evidence at the Planning stage. For example when planning photography shoots and then evaluating the results in a selection process for the most suitable examples to use. There were examples where candidates had included pages of photographs within their portfolios without any comment/annotation or evaluation. Within the New Magazine, there was variation in the candidates' ability to produce quality copy suited to the magazine genre.

Candidates who produced footage/original images in external locations benefited massively. However some lacked original photography within the New Magazine and Print Advertising Productions and these featured poor image manipulation. There needs to be sufficient use of original images, their selection, digital processing and export for use in DTP to allow the candidates to demonstrate their achievement as a number of the Assessment Criteria depend on this (ref Spec P33-34).

Some Centres need to review aspects of content submitted within the Production work. Some included inappropriate content for rebellious characters (e.g. use of guns and graphic violence) within the Video Briefs: Music Video and Opening Sequence from a Film. Some of this content is aimed at an audience of over 18. Centres needs to adhere to BBFC regulations and not permit candidates to analyse films that are rated 18.

Centres should also monitor the use of language throughout the Productions and potentially use bleeping or silences for inappropriate language. Some Video Productions also featured problems with sound levels (e.g. distortion).

In some instances, Centres had to be reminded about health and safety and the need for in-depth risk assessments when filming in dangerous locations and using weapons as props. These were reminded that it is best to avoid using such locations and props if filming cannot be demonstrated to be safe.

For the Print Briefs, Centres should be aware of the risks in allowing candidates to feature in images that expose them, making them possibly vulnerable to a number of potential child protection issues.

For the Video Briefs, some Centres submitted a teacher statement regarding suspected problems with the limited selection of locations and sound when producing the Production. These Centres should check all their resources before selecting an appropriate brief. Some Productions were also over the maximum duration length (three minutes).

For the most part, the Productions were of good quality and represented a lot of hard work, creativity and motivation. There was good attention to detail and to codes and conventions with a sense to make the products look as authentic and convincing as possible. Editing was generally good. There were examples of quality moving image pieces (e.g. film, television and music), with attention to settings, costumes, props, characterisation and enigma codes. For more in-depth information on the Production Briefs see Section 2.

## **Evaluation**

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

The Evaluations showed reference to the monitoring of decisions using some media terminology. In the best cases, the Evaluation focused on the production process, the apparent codes and conventions, and identifies the strengths/weaknesses of the final product.

Most Centres included word processed, printed Evaluations. The work was generally individualised and autonomous. There were also examples of PowerPoint presentations which showcased the Productions and the other components of the brief to the rest of the class, to encourage target audience research, as well as improve the candidate's evaluative skills and knowledge. This also encourages good presentation of work. Both Word and PowerPoint Evaluations submitted by candidates used sub-headings effectively.

Some Centres used an Audio Director's Commentary during the Evaluation. This enabled the candidates to successfully evaluate their Productions and was presented as a DVD extra.

Evaluations were generally produced well, with a good sense of analysis and objective evaluation. However, there were also a lot of examples where the Research and Planning was being repeated, sometimes in great detail. For some Centres there were still some examples where Evaluations were more descriptive of the process than truly evaluative and objective, looking critically at the finished Productions. Some Centres presented PowerPoint Evaluations which lacked detail. These were brief in most cases and they did not refer to the Assessment Criteria necessary. Audience feedback was also notably lacking. In some instances, candidates

titled the final section the Planning and Evaluative Commentary (B321) rather than the Evaluation. There were also some very short Evaluation submissions and some Centres failed to submit the Evaluation.

### **Authentication and Group Work**

Most Centres wrote fairly detailed summative comments which highlighted individual candidate achievement and linked to the Assessment Objectives. There were some annotations on the candidate work and on the Controlled Assessment Cover Sheets (CCS339) to describe how marks had been awarded. Clear teacher comments/candidate descriptions provide essential background information in the process of assessment, as well as making it easier for moderators to verify the Centre's submitted marks (particularly within group work).

In the best instances, comments were clear, related to the evidence submitted, the Assessment Criteria, and importantly were personal to the individual candidate. In other cases, comments were either omitted completely, or were copied from the Assessment Criteria and did not advance the moderation process at all. Some Centres submitted an additional controlled assessment proforma sheet to show how marks were awarded by the Centre. Generally, there were detailed teacher annotations and assessment decisions during the Research and Planning, and Evaluation stages.

Where candidates had worked in groups, it was generally made clear who had taken responsibility for what and who had succeeded. Marks were differentiated well in this respect. It is important for candidates and Centres to identify, where appropriate, the individual's contribution when working in a group. Each candidate is assessed upon their own individual contribution even when working in a group. Teachers need to use the Controlled Assessment Cover Sheet (CCS339) boxes to help differentiate an individual's contributions to the moderator (ref Spec P41). If individual contributions are not outlined, it can make it more difficult for a moderator to support Centre assessment decisions. Some Centre's Controlled Assessment Cover Sheets (CCS339) included multiple spelling errors within the teacher feedback.

Evidence of Research and Planning, as well as the Evaluation should be individual to each candidate. Centres should instruct candidates clearly about the individuality of their portfolios, and the need to identify their sources (especially websites).

### **Formats for Submission**

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

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

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

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

### **Resources**

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

## **Summary**

There was a good range of creative work and an improvement in the overall standard seen for this unit. The majority of Centres demonstrated good practice in their delivery of the course and ensured that their candidates successfully fulfilled the requirements of the three sections of the portfolio (Research and Planning, Production, and Evaluation).

## **Best Practice**

- Cover sheets are accurately filled in, with marks, briefs, texts and summative comments that relate to the individual candidate and support the marks awarded
- Work is presented in the correct order: Research and Planning (incorporating a Production Log with a possible Appendix of materials); the Production; and the Evaluation
- Work is clearly organised, with the final Production clearly identifiable from drafts (e.g. Contents page with page numbers)
- Teacher annotations clearly show how marks have been awarded
- Similar media texts analysed using media language and possible target audience explored
- Evidence of detailed research into the target audience (e.g. questionnaires) with results presented orally or on camera
- Audio Director's Commentary used during the Evaluation stage (especially effective for a Video Brief)
- Evaluations show reference to the monitoring of decisions and revisions to the Production using media terminology

## **Comments on Individual Briefs:**

All the Set Briefs were attempted by candidates this summer. Set Brief 7: Opening Sequence from a Film appeared to be the most popular brief. The Film popularity was followed by Set Brief 2: New Magazine, Set Brief 3: Print Advertising, Set Brief 5: Music Video, Set Brief 6: Extract from a New TV Programme, Set Brief 12: Music Promotional Package, Set Brief 1: Local Newspaper, Set Brief 4: Computer/Video Game Cover, and Set Brief 11: New Entertainment Website. There was a clear range of work with examples of excellent work including:

### **Set Brief 1- Local Newspaper**

Print newspapers featured a clear register of language and appropriate codes and conventions including fonts, columns and sub-headings.

### **Set Brief 2- New Magazine**

Print magazine extracts where candidates had researched and provided individual material for an identified audience, and used DTP software to create an appropriate layout. There was good use of original photography and image manipulation. Candidates researched adequately into layouts, house styles, camera shots and codes and conventions and therefore looked authentic and convincing. Magazines were on a variety of genres, although the fashion/beauty and lifestyle magazines were generally the most popular.

### **Set Brief 3- Print Advertising**

Print advertising campaigns where candidates had demonstrated original photographic flair, manipulated the images using the appropriate software, and laid out the advertisements using the relevant codes and conventions. There was excellent evidence of similar media texts analysed during the Research and Planning stage, and detailed draft sketches of print advertisements (e.g. hand drawn and digital) with annotations.

**Set Brief 4- Computer/Video Game Cover**

Some print game covers featured a range of original images, and candidates produced clear front covers with backs and spines.

**Set Brief 5- Music Video**

Music videos showed good attention to detail, enthusiasm of codes and conventions, and suitable choices and creative selection of mise-en-scene (including locations, props, costumes, actors, colour and lighting).

**Set Brief 6- Extract from a new TV programme**

A variety of approaches to the television productions which included - TV documentary and children's TV. 'Previously' section adopted by Centres fitted with the selected genre.

**Set Brief 7- Opening Sequence from a Film**

Some film openings showed creativity and flair on the part of candidates, and were presented in a variety of genres. There was inventive use of camerawork, editing techniques and mise-en-scene. There were some original narratives created with good use of characterisation and enigma. Specific genre codes and conventions were displayed. There was also a good use of camera angles and movement with excellent narration. There were some competent horror and thriller examples produced. Some Production work had received feedback from Local Film Festivals.

**Set Brief 8- Magazine Radio Programme and Set Brief 9- Radio Drama**

Radio work included topics such as news, sport, health, music, celebrity and local events. There were also some scripted radio dramas with sound effects. Relevant codes and conventions were displayed (e.g. sound effects, transitions, idents). There was evidence of a variety of content, audience involvement and jingles. The language was excellent and the register was appropriate.

**Set Brief 11- New Entertainment Website**

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

**Set Brief 12- Music Promotional Package**

The Cross Media Set Brief also gave candidates the opportunity to bring together a number of media as part of a coherent promotion package (including examples of CD front and back covers, album cover, magazine insert/articles, websites, gig/tour posters and video adverts). In many instances, there were original and creative adverts created for the campaign. Some packages included advertising/marketing including television advertisements as part of their campaign. There was a good sense of brand imaging and consistency within a campaign.

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