

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

**MEDIA
STUDIES**

H409

For first teaching in 2017

H409/02 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 2 series overview

The Evolving Media paper offers candidates opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the changing media landscape using the set products. This year saw a wide range of responses covering the full spectrum of marks. There was certainly an improvement in candidate engagement with some excellent responses which reflected the full theoretical framework.

Candidates at the top end engaged in depth with each question and integrated a variety of knowledge and understanding, using the case studies fluently and lucidly to express their ideas. Candidates at the lower end of the mark range still made errors relating to generalisations or were too descriptive, using irrelevant facts, theorists and information. There were general improvements in the approach to Question 4, with candidates attempting to evaluate the usefulness of the theory more effectively than in previous sessions; there were also some strong responses for Question 1 (film industry).

Timing seemed like less of an issue this year with most candidates completing the paper in full. This could be down to centres diligently working with their candidates to develop strong essay technique. Many candidates demonstrated a systematic approach by opening their essays with clear and concise introductions, structuring their points in a coherent manner, and generally providing well-rounded conclusions that directly addressed the given question. This was particularly noticeable in Question 3, where candidates displayed an awareness of the bullet points outlined in the question, using them as a guide to structure their paragraphs effectively. Additionally, the strongest responses were those that did not rely solely on the OCR support materials and provided insights that had clearly been researched independently or were drawn from effective teaching of this component.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responded to each question using a sense of structure and purpose that addressed the question • used a variety of appropriate media terminology • engaged fluidly and in depth with the questions using the case studies • had spent time practising essay writing for this level of qualification • referenced the theoretical framework fully to access a wider range of marks • wrote in depth and avoided redundant and irrelevant commentary, focusing on the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not read the question fully • made generalisations without referencing case studies • wrote a rehearsed response or focused on knowledge of the case study which was not relevant to the question • wrote short or descriptive commentaries • did not use subject terminology • were less confident in essay writing.

Section A overview

Questions focus on different media industries. This year the focus was on film and radio. Question 1 allowed candidates to explore changes in production, distribution and circulation methods using both set films as vessels to showcase their knowledge. Similarly, Question 2 was focused on how audiences use technologies to access radio shows, using the *Radio One Breakfast Show (R1BS)* as their case study (micro) to explore the radio industry (macro).

Question 1

Media Industries and Audiences

- 1 The processes of film production, distribution and circulation have changed since the 1960s. Explain how these changes have influenced films. Refer to Disney's 1967 and 2016 versions of *The Jungle Book* to support your answer.

In your answer you must also consider how economic contexts can influence films.

[15]

This year, candidates demonstrated clear engagement and proficiency in tackling Question 1. The 'changes' angle of the question provided them with an opportunity to showcase a wide range of knowledge, and it appeared relatively straightforward for them to support their arguments with economic contexts relating to budgeting, costs and financial returns.

The most successful responses broke down each element and compared the differences, keeping the economic contexts in mind. Knowledge of the case studies was generally very secure this year allowing a large number of candidates access into Level 2. Shortcomings on this question were often due to candidates focusing too much on marketing and representation which did not allow them to address the question in full. The case studies allow for exploration of the macro film industry and important changes across several decades.

Centres are reminded that there are changes to the set media products for Film for first teaching September 2023, first assessment 2025. Further information can be found [here](#).

Assessment for learning



There is often confusion about the differences between distribution, circulation and film marketing. While all of the above are relevant to the film industry, too often candidates talked in depth about film marketing strategies and issues of representation which is not what the question was asking. Similarly, there are some inconsistencies in the use of horizontal and vertical integration.

Key point

This question specifies that you must consider economic contexts. Too many candidates ignored this element, not considering the financial aspect, which is essentially the reason for media products to be made in the first place. Candidates who engaged with economic contexts were more likely to reach Level 3 than those who provided a blow by blow comparison of the differences between the films across a 50 year period.

Question 2

- 2 Explain how audiences use media technologies to consume radio shows.
Use *The BBC Radio One Breakfast Show (R1BS)* to support your answer.

[15]

Candidates generally demonstrated a good understanding of how technology impacts the audience's consumption of radio shows, and compared to previous sessions showed a slightly improved response to a question on radio. A significant portion of candidates did not include any specific examples from the show itself, which is clearly required by the question. Candidates who did include examples often used outdated references that were not entirely relevant to the points they were attempting to discuss. For this reason, many candidates did not progress beyond the middle of Level 2 because they were speculating about how audiences *could* use technology without evidencing this from the show using concrete examples. Additionally, some candidates went off track by providing lengthy narratives about the BBC's Reithian values and regulation, which had no relevance to the question at hand. Teaching candidates the importance of clincher sentences that link ideas back to the question will generally raise student attainment.

Exemplar 1

The development of modern technology has dramatically changed the consumption of radio shows as it attempts to proliferate within a society that prefers streaming - causing the downfall of radio and increases the need to diversify.

BBC has diversified to adapt to modern audiences (especially since their target audience is 15-34 year olds) by creating the BBC Sounds ~~app~~ app; this app has allowed audience figures to remain for BBC Radio 1 Breakfast show (R1BS) as it makes listening much more flexible since teenagers often wake up later - therefore they miss the live show. This app meets the social demands of on demand content and digital convergence (especially since the radio can now be listened to on multiple platforms compared to traditional radios). This app is likely to contribute to R1BS being the UK's number one breakfast show with 9 million ~~weekly~~ ^{monthly} listeners.

The adoption of digital convergence allows audiences to be able to listen to the radio on multiple platforms. R1BS has 3.5 billion views on their YouTube channel which demonstrates their popularity on modern technologies. This appeals to modern audiences as clips are often snippets of the show, making it more appealing as attention could be lost during the 3 and a half hours that the R1BS goes on for (often showing

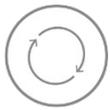
the best bits to hook the audience). The popularity of social media Tik Tok highlights the stereotype of modern audiences having low attention spans, therefore making YouTube clips appealing. This clips also use algorithms based on previous YouTube videos watched which makes the video appear on a recommended page based on what has been watched before, making it more likely a chance to watch the video as it is likely to include something that they enjoy.

The rise of social media platforms makes modern audience expectations met as they can interact with content (prosumers: Shirky) and 'speak back'. RTBS has 80 million views on their Face Book page, demonstrating a high value for shareable and interactive content where they can comment opinions or generate discussions (social interaction: Blumler and Katz, uses and gratifications). This was not able to have been done in the past with conventional radio listening that was very passive as audiences would only listen and not interact (until the adoption of phone-ins, eg. RTBS '10 minute takeover'). This allows radio shows to become more social and attractive to audiences as their opinions feel important.

Overall, ~~the~~ the vast amount of media technologies has introduced multiple ways to consume radio content in modern society - making radio shows prevented from aging out due to the multitudes of modern media platforms.

Here you can see the how the candidate engages with the question. This would potentially reach Level 3 if they had included detailed examples from the show. The candidate does explore platforms well and uses *R1BS* data to highlight and explain the effect on audiences demonstrating a clear understanding in the main.

Assessment for learning



In the era of social media where students might not engage with radio, it is recommended to play clips and extracts from **current** episodes of the show so that candidates have working examples to integrate into their responses. Too many candidates are still referencing a show from 2018 or an example that no longer exists on the show (highlighting how the show changes).

One useful activity that centres could explore is examining the variety of features employed by Greg James in *R1BS* to target different audiences, particularly focusing on the consumption elements. For instance, discussing how features like 'Yesterday's Quiz' encourage active participation. Having current up to date information on the case studies will allow students to be more fluent and confident when answering this or any subsequent question.

Teaching students that Reithian principles are the foundations of the remit will eliminate the frequency of candidates who recite a prepared reductive explanation of what the BBC, and in particular Radio One, are tasked with doing.

Section B overview

Questions focus on long form TV drama (LFTV) with an opportunity to compare English and non-English language series and use a theoretical idea to explore its usefulness for understanding LFTV. This section is generally tackled very well by candidates and knowledge of the case studies was detailed and secure in most cases. There were also more higher-level responses for Question 4 this year due to candidates evaluating and challenging the theory in relation to LFTV drama, an area that was lacking in the previous exam session.

Question 3*

Long Form Television Drama

- 3*** 'No matter where they are produced, the representations of characters and events in long form television dramas are always influenced by historical contexts.'
How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you must:

- explain the contexts in which long form television dramas are produced and consumed
- explain how media contexts, particularly historical contexts, may have influenced representations in the set episodes of the two long form television dramas that you have studied
- refer to academic ideas and arguments
- make judgements and reach conclusions about the reasons for similarities or differences in how historical contexts may have influenced representations between the two episodes. **[30]**

Candidates who grasped the distinctions of the question were able to produce insightful and perceptive responses. The inclusion of the word 'always' in the question was particularly relevant as it allowed candidates to present arguments from both sides. Higher-level responses saw candidates discuss, at length, the multitude of representations and how these are influenced by various contexts. Those candidates who demonstrated a balanced and well-structured argument were generally successful in achieving the highest marks. Because the statement referenced historical contexts, candidates explored other contextual factors in their arguments which allowed for higher attainment in AO1.

Many candidates demonstrated a successful approach by opening their essays with clear and concise introductions, structuring their points in a coherent manner, and providing well-rounded conclusions that directly addressed the given question. There were still a number of responses that included clumsy generalisations about gender, especially in the 80s where some candidates believed it was uncommon for women to work. Less successful responses tended to rely on basic historical references and did not consider theoretical perspectives. However, even with stronger responses, the majority of candidates applied a range of random theories in a cursory fashion. Centres should encourage candidates to apply fewer, but more relevant ideas in a more detailed way.

Centres are reminded that there are changes to some of the set media products for Long Form Television Drama for first teaching September 2023, first assessment 2025. Further information can be found [here](#).

Exemplar 2

	<p>With the statement given I agree with parts but not fully convinced. The two long form television dramas to represent this statement are Stranger things and The killing.</p> <p>In stranger things there are many historical contexts given throughout the first episode. As the programme starts we see a suburb town based in the 1980's, this is shown by the outfits characters are wearing, and the homes and the technology shown. In stranger things the main character is Eleven a mysterious girl with powers there are many characters that show different stereotypes for example mikes mother a house wife that keeps everyone on time, making food and cleaning there then there is Will's mother who is wreckless, never home, single mother and has a job. In the 1980's when it was set women were known to stay home, keep the house clean and make sure the house was kept clean.</p> <p>Then there is the killing a murdermystery series set in Denmark. The killing doesn't have as many historical contexts shown throughout the first episode as it is more about death and solving things that have happened. In the first episode we see a detective called Sarah lunt we see her as a protagonist, Sarah is leaving Denmark to go on and live in sweden with her family but comes across one last case before she leaves. Throughout the killing we see many ideologies such as demery democracy, Racism and individualism. Politics is shown throughout the whole of the episode</p>
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Exemplar 3

	<p>A long form television drama (LFD) is a series of connected audio-visual narratives which are broadcasted on television.</p> <p>One English-language LFD is Homeland. Homeland is a remake of Israeli LFD, 'Prisoners of War' and was produced by the writers of hit LFD, '24'. Its post 9/11 narrative achieved success for its producer, which is a SHOWTIME, which is a subsidiary of FOX, which is now owned by Disney - showing conglomerates in the LFD industry (Curran and Seaton). The pilot episode was the most successful for the network in 18 years. Contrastingly, one foreign language LFD is The Killing. This was a multi-^(PSB) story Nordic Noir produced by DR, a public service broadcaster in Denmark. As a PSB, DR earns most of its revenue from Danish income tax. This means it has a similar remit to the BBC of educating, informing and educating the public. This also leads to the programme being a far smaller budget to Homeland. Both shows have been aired on British TV; on BBC4 (The Killing) and Channel 4 (Homeland) respectively. In the modern context of streaming culture, both shows are available for streaming ^{on} BBC iPlayer or Netflix.</p> <p>To an extent, no matter where they are produced, the representations of characters and events in LFDs are mostly influenced by historical context. This can be seen in the use of links to historical events and characterisations in Homeland and the Killing, which Baudrillard would claim as being hyperreal. Although, there are some limitations to this argument as it can also be argued that both shows take original characterisations and plot points.</p>
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Here you can see two very different approaches; one systematic and detailed analysis, the other a descriptive and uncertain narrative discussion. The second, more successful response offers a detailed and sustained argument with representation of events and characters clearly explored. There are a range of theory and ideas explained and challenged with reference to contexts showing a depth of understanding and breadth across the theoretical framework. The less successful first response is narrative led and descriptive though it does cover contexts in a limited fashion. The response compares representations of character but is basic and ambiguous, including in its use of examples and terms.

Assessment for learning



Do not let candidates underestimate the importance of planning their essay. There are key words and phrases that can be extracted from the statement, and four bullet points that can guide candidates to structure a detailed response that addresses the full theoretical framework. Too often candidates veer off topic and do not address the question.

Question 4

- 4 Evaluate the usefulness of **one** of the following theories in understanding long form television drama:

EITHER

- Hall's Reception Theory

OR

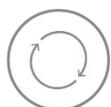
- Shirky's 'End of Audience' theories.

[10]

Question 4 was broadly well answered with responses using examples from one or both LFTV drama shows. There was some confusion between Hall's reception theory and Hall's ideas about representation. Also, despite having lots of crossover, many students wrote about 'End of Audience' theory, as though it was Jenkins' fandom theory.

Less successful responses did not apply the theories to LFTVD and did not evaluate their effectiveness resulting in predominantly descriptive responses. While suggesting alternative theories is a commendable approach, some candidates spent more time applying and evaluating their own chosen theory, which deviated from the theory stated in the question. Teachers should guide candidates in maintaining a balance between exploring alternate theories and effectively evaluating the theory provided in the question, ensuring a more focused and comprehensive response.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be actively encouraged to carefully read and understand the command word 'evaluate'. It is crucial for them to provide specific evaluations of the limitations of the theory being discussed. A good starting point would be to assess the relevance of the theory to the LFTV media form, since many theories may not directly apply.

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