OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Examiners' report

DIGITAL MEDIA

05843–05846, 05875

Unit 1 Summer 2024 series

Contents

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 responses 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.

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Unit 1 series overview

It was clear that candidates are engaging with digital media issues and showing understanding of audience engagement with digital media texts. In Section A many candidates did well, explaining data effectively and showing understanding of social class and its relationship with wearable technology. In Section B, while many candidates displayed a strong understanding of conglomerates and independent companies and were able to explain the purposes of audience research, there were some challenges explaining mode of address, with some candidates struggling to articulate how media products speak to their audiences.

Examiners noted that some candidates were hindered by a lack of exam technique which caused them to misunderstand or not read questions properly, which can jeopardise marks. Centres are reminded about the importance of embedding exam technique into teaching and learning.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- interpreted the data well - had good knowledge of ownership and conglomerates - had a good understanding of digital advertising and pop-up ads - had a good understanding of how audio is linked to genre and demonstrated the ability to explore how audio worked to create meaning within specific genres in selected media products - demonstrated the ability to evaluate the ethical impacts and effects on audiences, and to debate this through discussion of contemporary media texts.	- found it difficult to explore how audio is used to create meaning about genre in specific media products - were unable to explain mode of address - did not understand the phrase 'specialist providers' and were unable to provide examples of companies associated with games production/distribution - provided an example of a job role in the magazine industry but were unable to explain its importance in producing a magazine - did not evaluate ethical impacts of contemporary media products but relied on describing outdated case studies.

Section A overview

Responses to this section indicated that candidates were drawing on their LO4 and LO5 knowledge to demonstrate their ability to interpret and evaluate data, and their understanding of media ownership.

Question 1 (a)

1

(a) Identify **three** interpretations that can be made about the **relationship** between age and the devices used to go online.

1 ....

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2 ....

....

3 ....

....

[3]

Most candidates could interpret the data and determine which devices were used most/least by different age groups, gaining full marks for the question. The most common misconception was that 'all age groups use smart phones the most' when in fact 65+ used computers most. A few candidates focused on the socio-economic groupings or the percentage of internet users, and so were not answering the question.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Explain **one** possible reason for social grade DE having the lowest use of wearable technology.

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....

.... **[3]**

This was answered well, with most candidates able to show awareness of social grade DE being a bracket where income is low and that people in this bracket wouldn't see wearable technology as a priority. Those candidates who did well were able to supply specific examples of wearable technology and link it to the data and the social grade DE. Less successful candidates often assumed that this social grade was made up solely of the elderly.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Explain **one** possible reason why smart speakers are used less than a tablet device by all age groups to go online.

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.... **[3]**

Many candidates did well on this question, with relevant points made regarding the portability of tablets and greater access to more content due to the visual aspects of tablets. Examiners noted that some candidates lacked understanding of the potential of smart speakers, and others lost marks by providing generalised statements such as 'tablets are more popular'.

Question 2 (a)

2

(a) Identify **two** interpretations that can be made about the Top 10 Apps in the UK.

1 ....

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2 ....

....

[2]

Most candidates could interpret the data effectively. The most popular responses were YouTube had the highest reach and Google Play has the least time spent per day. Some candidates spent a lot of time explaining why this may be the case, which was not required for this question. One common reason for not getting full marks was saying that Facebook was the least used, overlooking the actual answer being Facebook Messenger, suggesting that some candidates were rushing and not reading the entire data.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Identify and explain **two** reasons why media industry ownership models might be linked to the Top 10 Apps in the UK.

1 ....

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....

....

2 ....

....

....

....

[4]

Successful responses to this question acknowledged Alphabet and Facebook having a conglomerate structure and the ways in which they made use of horizontal integration. Some candidates were unable to access the full marks since, while being aware of entertainment conglomerates such as Disney, they lacked awareness of other conglomerates, particularly in the technology sector.

Exemplar 1

1 Facebook (Meta) are a large conglomerate with a lot of money to invest in their subsidiaries or to buy other companies. Whatsapp and Instagram were bought by Facebook (Meta) so they could have control over some of the largest platforms.

2 The conglomerate (Alphabet/Google) that owns the majority of the top 10 apps such as Youtube, google maps, gmail etc also owns one of the major mobile operating systems (Android) as well as creating their own hardware such as phones and tablets that come with these apps pre-installed.

[4]

This exemplar demonstrates clear understanding of ownership models and how they can be applied to the question. The response identifies both Facebook and Alphabet as being conglomerates and uses the data provided to explain why they are conglomerates. Further explanation and use of examples such as Alphabet using Android systems and Facebook controlling platforms via acquisition underpin this understanding and help the candidate to achieve full marks.

Question 3

3 Explain **two** reasons why the top five programmes watched in the UK between 17th April and 22nd April 2022 were on ITV.

1 ....

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....

....

2 ....

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....

....

[4]

This was generally answered well. Many candidates commented on access to ITV and its streaming and catch-up services with a lot of responses also acknowledging scheduling. The most common responses for this question referred to the idea of prime time and the understanding of families or adults sitting down in an evening to watch television. There was also a good awareness of audience loyalty to media products such as soap operas, with candidates being able to explain that audiences may be familiar with previous episodes.

Section B overview

Responses to this section demonstrated that candidates understood the difference between conglomerates and independents and were able to explain the purposes of audience research. Less successful responses showed a lack of knowledge of specialist providers in the computer games industry and were unable to explain mode of address. For the extended response question (Question 6) examiners noted that while candidates were able to identify genre theorists, they struggled to explain how audio creates meaning about genre, especially in those texts for which genre was hard to define.

For the extended response question (Question 9) the emphasis was on contemporary case studies, which, for the purpose of the exam paper, was deemed to be in the last 20 years. The use of non-contemporary case studies such as the Jamie Bulger murder (1993) and the Columbine Shootings (1999) restrict the ability of candidates to respond to the question of ethical impacts of contemporary media products, and centres are encouraged to find more recent case studies. For both extended response questions, it appeared that some candidates seemed to lose marks due to a lack of exam technique rather than lack of theoretical knowledge, often spending a lot of time defining and explaining a theory, rather than explaining how it specifically relates to their chosen case study example.

Exam techniques for extended response questions
It was noted by examiners that some candidates often struggled to construct their ideas coherently in the extended response questions. Some candidates referred to a key theory, but then did not follow it up with an example. Alternatively, other candidates would refer to an example but then not properly link this to a theory.
As the two extended response questions combine to make up 43% of the total marks for the paper, it is recommended that centres spend time helping candidates to develop essay writing and time management skills, as well as teaching them the theoretical concepts which will help to improve their confidence when approaching these questions.

Question 4 (a)

4

(a) Identify **three** differences between **conglomerate** and **independent** media companies.

1 ....

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2 ....

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3 ....

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[3]

Responses to this question demonstrated good awareness of independent versus conglomerate ownership with most candidates able to pick up two or three marks. The most common responses referenced conglomerates owning subsidiaries, independent companies having less funding and the fact conglomerates can do everything in-house. The more successful responses could apply key terms, such as horizontal and vertical integration as well as joint ventures for independent institutions to use.

Question 4 (b)

(b) Identify **one** media conglomerate that you have studied and explain how they use their **structure** to promote their products.

Media conglomerate: ....

....

....

....

....

.... **[3]**

Disney was a very popular choice here. More successful responses used terms such as horizontal integration and cross-media ownership, applying it to conglomerate-specific subsidiaries. Most candidates were able to pick up two marks here for the name and then a brief description. Less successful responses weren't specific to their chosen conglomerate, so responses were quite generic and they were unable to access the full range of marks.

Question 5 (a)

5

(a) Identify **four** specialist **providers** in the computer games industry.

1 ....

2 ....

3 ....

4 ....

[4]

This question was answered well overall. There was good knowledge of a wide range of video game specialist providers. The most common choices were Nintendo, Sony, Xbox, EA Sports and Rockstar. Some candidates offered video game titles or stated PEGI, the regulatory body, as a specialist provider. Another common error was to mention job roles involved within the industry.

Question 5 (b)

(b) Identify **one** job role in the magazine industry and explain its importance in producing a magazine.

Job role: ....

....

....

....

....

.... **[3]**

Many candidates were able to identify roles such as editor, graphic designer, copywriter, journalist, etc. More successful responses tackled the 'importance' part of the role and showed clear understanding. Less successful responses were quite simplistic and didn't fully address all parts of the question. There were also some responses which described marketing and distribution of magazines, provided post-production jobs (printing/publishing) or jobs that are not specific enough to magazine industry (models/makeup artist), suggesting they didn't read the question closely enough.

Question 5 (c)

(c) Identify **two** potential benefits of **cross-media** promotion.

1 ....

....

2 ....

....

[2]

This was generally a well answered question with most candidates identifying wide audience reach, increased profit and use of synergy as benefits of cross-media promotion. Candidates lost marks by either repeating their answers, for example 'wider audience reach' and 'more people can access the product', or by providing very generic, vague responses which did not address the question.

Question 6*

6* Discuss how **audio** is used to create **meaning** about genre in a media product you have studied.

Use examples to support your answer.

....

....

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....

....

.... **[15]**

This question threw up a variety of mixed responses. There were some excellent answers which used audio-specific terminology such as diegetic and non-diegetic sound, dialogue, soundtrack, and jump scares linking them to the genre theories of Neale and Altman in an exploration of texts such as *Star Wars*, *Scream* and *Dr Who*. Some candidates chose to focus on more than one product, which limited the amount of detail they could apply. Less successful candidates didn't fully address the question, struggling to discuss sound elements and apply genre theory to media products and instead resorted to generic analysis of other elements such as camera work, mise-en-scène and narrative.

Exemplar 2

Different audio techniques are used in the 'Blue Story' trailer to convey to the audience the film's genre. Regarding to Metz's genre stages, 'Blue Story' is a hybrid of a UK crime drama and a musical. The music played throughout the trailer is a poetic rap piece performed by the creator 'Rapman'. This helps convey to the audience the genre of the film, as it has features of a crime drama such as the rap music, and the poetic vocals similar to a musical. The trailer's goal is to sell the movie to its target audience. Including these conventions that is commonly seen in a crime drama helps the audience familiarise themselves with it and compare it to other crime dramas (Neale's repetition and difference theory). Another audio code is the use of sound effects to enhance the visual codes of violent weapons. Audiences will hear gunshots and stabbing sounds and make a connection to the genre. This also links back to Altman's visceral audience pleasure. The difference (trade) Hearing these audio codes will make address the target audience interested in the film since they are familiar with the repitrouire of elements (Lacey).

This extract from a response is a good example of how to link genre theory to audio and sound, in a hybrid genre text. The candidate starts by addressing the question immediately. They then go on to acknowledge the fact that the media product they are using is a hybrid genre, and they accurately apply Metz's genre theory which discusses the ways genre change cycles over time to support this point. They provide a specific audio example from the text (a poetic rap piece) which they relate to audience expectations of genre and specifically both the crime genre and the musical genre. They then underpin this idea with a reference to the genre theory of Neale. They identify sound effects as important signifiers of the genre and link this to Altman's theory of audience pleasure. They underline this point by explaining that this relates to the repertoire of elements genre theory by Lacey.

Question 7 (a)

7

(a) Explain the term mode of address.

....

....

....

.... **[2]**

This was clearly a challenging question for many candidates. Successful responses understood that mode of address relates to how a media producer engages with and positions their audience, with direct/indirect and formal/informal methods as well as tone. Most candidates, however, did not understand the meaning of the term.

OCR support

(i)

A large number of candidates were unable to explain the term mode of address. A definition of this term is provided on page 8 of the Media Products and Audiences Delivery Guide, (https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/317549-media-products-and-audiences.pdf) which can be found in the planning and teaching section of the Cambridge Technicals in Digital Media website. https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/cambridge-technicals/digital-media/planning-and-teaching/#level-3

Question 7 (b)

(b) Identify **three** purposes of conducting audience research.

1 ....

2 ....

3 ....

[3]

Most candidates picked up full marks for showing understanding as to why a company would complete audience research. There were a wide range of responses with more successful responses focused on understanding 'trends', with data and research being a method to gain feedback about a product. The most common reason for candidates losing marks here was due to repetition.

Question 8 (a)

8

(a) Explain why **pop-up adverts** are used by media producers.

Use examples to support your answer.

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....

....

.... **[3]**

Many candidates were able to get full marks for this question demonstrating clear understanding of what a pop-up advert is and how it is used by media producers. More successful responses provided an effective example as well as a clear explanation of how these adverts get in the way and force audience interaction, even just to close them. Some candidates also made reference to cookies and how these are being used to tailor these pop-up ads to users' interests. Less successful responses were those candidates who missed the 'use examples' part of the question and so couldn't get full marks.

Question 8 (b)

(b) Identify **one** method of digital advertising, other than pop-up adverts.

Explain why this method is used by media producers.

Method of digital advertising: ....

....

....

....

....

.... **[3]**

Successful responses to this question were those which focused on digital advertising such as social media, influencers, YouTube adverts, emails, etc. Less successful responses were those which didn't engage with the digital part of the question and identified trailers, billboards (rather than digital billboards) or television adverts without applying this to adverts posted online. Common explanations centred around the fact that digital advertising can target specific groups and the use of social media influencers to expand a post's reach. There was also effective reference to digital billboard, banners on websites and digital adverts before videos on platforms such as YouTube.

Question 9*

9* Evaluate the potential **ethical** impacts and effects that contemporary media products have on their target audiences.

Use examples to support your answer.

[20]

Candidates offered a wide range of interesting responses providing insightful ideas and a confident use of theory, such as moral panics, cultivation, desensitisation, etc. There was also some relevant use of representation theory such as Mulvey's male gaze. Contemporary case studies such as Molly Russell, *Squid Games*, *Barbie*, Andrew Tate, the Lynx adverts and various TikTok challenges, were popular choices with some candidates, concentrating their response on one case study, while others used a range of examples. There were often some interesting debates around *Call of Duty* and *GTA 5* with candidates presenting both sides of an argument.

There was still a lot of use of Jamie Bulger and *Child's Play 3* as a case study which is very outdated and so not relevant to the question. Additionally, many candidates often use these examples incorrectly, paraphrasing and sometimes even changing the events. It must be emphasised that there are far more recent examples to choose from.

While there seemed to be some good understanding of ideas around the mental impact that media products have on audiences, a few candidates struggled to explain the ethical impacts of texts.

Exemplar 3

After Web 2.0, the internet has become "the wild west" as it allows for media content and products to be created by anyone. User generated content and unregulated media can result in ethical impacts for a target audience.

For example, Roblox is a multiplatform role playing game aimed towards children. The game itself is PEGI classified as a PEGI 7, however the games themselves are user generated. Because of the scale of the games platform, it would be impossible to regulate each individual game. This results in a potentially dangerous scenario where the target audience of children could be exposed to harmful and unethical content. Passive audience (Hall), which is likely to be Roblox's young target audience, will lack media literacy which can lead to them being unable to decipher between reality and fantasy (Gauntlett's pick & mix theory) and understand that media is a construct. For example, a child could play a Horror game such as 'Doors' and become desensitised to the horror and gore, relating to Gerbner's cultivation theory. This can have a negative impact on Roblox's young and impressionable target audience

This extract from a response is an effective example of how to structure a Question 9 extended response. In the opening paragraph the candidate identifies the area for discussion which is the ethical impact of user generated content on audiences and especially younger audiences. The example being used is *Roblox*, and the candidate acknowledges that although this is regulated by PEGI, the fact that many of the games on the platform are user generated means that it is open to abuse and the inclusion of potentially harmful content. This point is supported by relevant references to passive audience theory and how it can be applied to *Roblox's* target audience, many of whom are children. This is further explained through the application of Gerbner's Cultivation theory, and the argument that repeated exposure to violent images can cause the audience to become desensitised, which in turn can have a negative impact on the young and vulnerable audience for this platform. This extract is well written making full use of theories and applying them in a relevant manner to the chosen example.

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