

CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS LEVEL 3 (2016)

Examiners' report

DIGITAL MEDIA

**OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical
in Digital Media**

Certificate: 05843

Extended Certificate: 05844

Foundation Diploma: 05845

Diploma: 05846

Extended Diploma: 05875

Unit 1 Summer 2025 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. 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

Section A was answered well with many candidates clearly able to interpret and explain data and demonstrate a good understanding of how and why audiences use different methods of viewing films.

In Section B, while many candidates displayed a strong understanding of ownership structures and production roles, many found it challenging to identify a magazine company and its products.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• interpreted the data well • were able to provide explanations of why film viewing methods have changed • had a good grasp of the ways sound can be used within media products and demonstrated the ability to explore how sound elements can be used to support the narrative within media products • were able to debate the effects of the media on 21st century audiences.	• found it difficult to explain how sound can be used to help audiences understand narrative in audio-visual products • were unable to identify a magazine company and its products • were unable to provide examples of secondary research methods • struggled to apply audience effects debates and theories to media texts.

Section A overview

It was pleasing to see that candidates were able to interpret data and engage with areas such as how audiences have changed their film viewing habits and the effect of the increase in film streaming on media audiences.

Question 1 (a)

1

(a) Identify **three** differences in the way females and males use media.

1

.....

2

.....

3

.....

[3]

Most candidates did well with this question and were able to successfully interpret the data and draw out comparisons between how males and females access the internet. The most common misconception in places was confusing the male/female data or not identifying differences, just stating facts e.g. 'both use a smart phone to get online'.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Explain **one** reason for the difference in the ways females and males access the internet.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

Most candidates were able to answer this question successfully often using the data to support their reasoning. Many candidates relied on traditional stereotypes e.g. women shop online, men play games, as the basis of their responses. A few candidates were able to explore more complex social and cultural differences in their responses. Less successful candidates struggled to explain the reason for the differences, or just repeated the data provided in the insert.

Question 2 (a)

2

(a) Identify **three** differences in film viewing methods between 2019 and 2022.

1

.....

2

.....

3

..... [3]

Most candidates were able to successfully identify the rise in streaming and the decrease in television and cinema consumption to get full marks.

Question 2 (b)

- (b) Identify and explain **one** reason for the difference between viewing figures for the cinema between 2019 and 2022.

Reason

.....

Explanation

.....

.....

.....

[3]

Most candidates were able to identify and explain one reason for the data, with many citing lockdown because of Covid during this period or advances in streaming and video on demand (VOD) services. Other responses included comments about pricing and convenience.

Question 2 (c)

- (c) Identify and explain **two** possible reasons for the changes in film viewing by streaming in 2022.

Reason 1

.....

Explanation

.....

Reason 2

.....

Explanation

.....

[4]

Many candidates were able to get at least 2 marks for the reasons with more successful responses focusing on cheaper subscriptions as an alternative to going to the cinema and the pandemic changing people's viewing habits in terms of cost and practicality.

Question 3 (a)

3

- (a) Identify **one** difference between 2019 and 2022 about cinema visits for **each** of the **demographic categories** below.

Gender:

.....

Age:

.....

Socio-economic status:

.....

[3]

Most candidates were able to identify differences in cinema consumption for the different demographics. Less successful candidates did not specify a demographic subcategory. The most frequent mistake was not reading the question carefully, which led to answers not focusing on cinema visits.

Question 3 (b)

- (b) Identify and explain **two** possible interpretations of the film viewing habits of 25–34-year-olds in the home.

Interpretation 1

.....

Explanation

.....

Interpretation 2

.....

Explanation

.....

[4]

Most candidates were able to successfully draw out data related to home viewing (e.g., DVD, streaming, TV). Those achieving full marks were then able to explain reasons for this that mostly revolved around wider social and political contexts (e.g., prices and cost of living) and changes in media consumption and distribution habits (e.g., streaming, binge watching). The most frequent mistake was not reading the question carefully, which led to answers focusing on a different age range than the one specified.

Section B overview

Responses to this section demonstrated that candidates understood key concepts such as narrative theories, and the media effects debate. Less successful responses showed a lack of knowledge about magazine companies, and secondary research methods.

Question 4 (a)

4

- (a) Identify **three** differences between private conglomerate structures and public service models of media ownership.

1

.....

2

.....

3

.....

[3]

Most candidates could get at least 1 mark on this question, usually by referring to the licence fee. The more successful candidates identified that public service broadcasters have a remit to entertain, educate and inform, while conglomerates operated through subsidiaries with a motive to make a profit. Less successful candidates incorrectly stated that PBS providers were government owned and funded. One common misunderstanding was that the only PSB provider in the UK is the BBC.

Misconception – funding of public service models



An explanation of the funding for public service models is provided in the Key Terms section of the [Media Products and Audiences Delivery Guide](#) which can be found in the Teaching section of [Teach Cambridge](#).

Public service ownership is explained in the Unit 1 LO 1.1 section of the [OCR endorsed textbook](#).

Question 4 (b)

- (b) Explain how **one** magazine company you have studied used synergy to promote their publishing products.

Magazine company:

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [4]

Many less successful responses identified a magazine rather than a magazine company. There were also instances of candidates offering newspapers such as *The Sun* or *The Daily Mail* as magazine companies. The more successful candidates were those who identified companies such as Condé Nast and Bauer Media and were able to provide examples, for instance identifying that Bauer Media were able to promote their music magazines such as *Mojo* on their Absolute Radio Station.

Misconceptions – reading the question



Examiners noted that one main reason that some candidates did not get marks for this question appeared to be because of not reading the question properly; candidates discussed how magazines such as *Vogue* or *Kerrang!* used synergy within their publication to sell the magazine.

Centres should make sure students are taught exam techniques such as reading the exam question carefully and underlining key words in the question.

Misconceptions – ownership structure



Centres should teach the ownership models as well as the products themselves. See the Exemplification section for LO 1.1 in the [Unit 1 specification](#) for further guidance.

Question 4 (c)

(c) Identify the **two** types of **integration** that can form part of a digital media company's structure.

- 1
-
- 2
-
- [2]

Most candidates were able to successfully identify vertical and horizontal integration to get full marks for this question.

Question 5 (a)

5

(a) Identify and explain **one** role involved in the production stage of film production.

- Role
- Explanation
-
-
- [2]

Most candidates did well on this question. The most common responses were camera operator or director. Some candidates were unable to access the full 2 marks because the explanations were not always accurate. Some candidates mis-read the question and gave pre- or post-production responses or offered an action (e.g. filming) rather than a job role.

Question 5 (b)

(b) Explain the **storyboard** artist's role at the **pre-production** stage of film production.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Most candidates were able to achieve at least 1 mark for this question. The more successful candidates were able to explain how the storyboard artist is responsible for drawing a storyboard to plan each scene in relation to the mise-en-scène, camera directions and timings. Some responses showed confusion between pre-production and post-production, with candidates explaining editing rather than the intended role. Others simply stated, 'they draw the storyboard', which does not fully explain the role.

Question 6*

6* Discuss how **sound** can be used to help audiences understand narrative in an audio-visual media product you have studied.

Use examples to support your answer.

[15]

This question threw up a variety of mixed responses. There were some excellent essays which used audio-specific terminology such as diegetic and non-diegetic sound, dialogue, soundtrack, and jump scares linking them to the narrative theories of Todorov and Propp in an exploration of texts such as *Star Wars*, *Attack the Block* and *Stranger Things*. Some candidates focused on more than one product, which limited the amount of detail they could apply. Less successful candidates did not fully address the question, struggling to discuss sound elements and apply narrative theory to media products and instead providing generic analysis of other elements such as camera work, mise-en-scène and editing. The most successful candidates were able to structure their answers using a clear reference to specific examples from a media product, followed by an analysis of how this created narrative meaning.

To prepare for the requirements of this question candidates must be familiar with specific media theories and theorists whose discourse revolves around contexts of representation, narrative, and genre. While a broad range of media theory and theorists are encouraged, centres are reminded that theory must be used accurately and within in the context of the question.

Exemplar 1

Firstly, in Stranger Things S1:E1 sound is used to introduce genre. In the opening sequence an alarm sound effect plays alongside the sound of the scientist running away from an unknown threat. The Synaptic sense of danger introduces the horror aspect of Stranger Things whilst creating tension of the unknown and immediately hooking the audience in the already broken equilibrium (Todorov). ~~By~~ The Scientist is then caught by what we find out to be the demogorgan and ~~the~~ the sound of him struggling whilst being killed by the monster would create visceral pleasure (Altman) for the audience. Moreover the gunshot sound effects from the people in suits who are trying to capture Eleven effectively portray them as a villain (Propp) and Eleven's hospital gown ~~the~~ creates a binary opposite (Strauss) between power and vulnerability. This is later proven wrong when she fights back with her powers ^{for} which a distorted sound effect is used presenting her as an antihero (Propp). When Will Byers is caught by the Demogorgan, monster like sound effects are used to build suspense for the audience. When he picks up the phone and hears a kind of whispering sound effect, the audience would feel worry and sympathy for him ~~as~~ due to the emotional connection they have made to him.

(Altman's genre pleasures) and the ambiguity in the narrative when he disappears would leave the audience hooked. Similarly, eerie sound effects are used to distort the wind when Will enters the upside down which foreshadows his disappearance. The use of typical 80s music when in the normal world would create a sense of familiarity for a slightly older audience and connote safety. It also is enforced by the saturated colour filter used which simulates typical 80s television contrasting the absence of safety in the Upside Down creating a binary opposite (Strauss) to create a knowing dread for the audience which will hook them for the next episode.

Exemplar 1 was awarded the full mark of 15 out of 15. The response is well structured, with specifically selected examples 'the alarm sound effect', 'gunshots', 'distorted wind' and 'typically 80's music'. The candidate uses a range of media theory, theorists, and terminology (Altman, Propp, Levi Strauss; synaptic danger, sound effects; binary opposites and visceral pleasures), accurately and contextually, to support their points. There is good understanding of how these elements combine to help audiences to understand and respond to the narrative in the episode of *Stranger Things* which is being analysed.

OCR support



The use and application of production techniques and critical and theoretical analysis of media texts can be found in Chapter One of the [OCR endorsed textbook](#).

Question 7 (a)

7

(a) Explain **one** difference between a **mass/mainstream** and **niche** target audience.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

This question was answered well, with most candidates able to get full marks by showing an understanding that mainstream audiences are broader in demographics and interests, while niche audiences are smaller with specific interests.

Question 7 (b)

(b) Identify **two secondary** research methods that might support the production of a new video game.

1

.....

2

..... [2]

Candidates showed a good understanding of secondary research methods but often lost marks because they did not relate their answers to the context of producing a new video game. Where candidates were able to refer specifically to video games in their response they were able to access full marks. Some candidates offered one word answers which suggested they had not read the question fully, while others confused primary and secondary research types.

Question 8 (a)

8

(a) Explain how video-based social media can be used to advertise a product.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

There were many successful responses to this question, with short form media, Reels, TikTok, YouTube, influencers, and sponsors most referenced. Candidates were creative in describing how video-based social media can be used to advertise media products. Responses were clearly influenced by candidates' own media consumption, which was encouraging to see. The most effective answers also focused on the advantages of social media, including likes and shares.

Question 8 (b)

(b) Identify and explain how **one** traditional advertising method was used to market a media product you have studied.

Traditional advertising method

Explanation

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

This question was well answered. Billboards and posters were the most popular answers with products such as *Barbie* or *Black Panther* being common examples. Successful responses explained how the design or placement of the advert helps attract audiences and draw their attention to the product. Where candidates did not achieve full marks, it was usually because they did not refer to a specific media product they had studied. The most common incorrect answer was social media, which is not a traditional advertising method.

Question 9*

9* "In the 21st century, audiences are always affected by the media they consume."

Discuss how far you agree with this statement.

Use examples and your knowledge about the effects of digital media to support your example.

[20]

Overall, this question was answered well, with many candidates accessing the higher marks. Successful candidates were able to debate the statement using contrasting theoretical approaches (effects theories versus reception theories). They were able to draw on a range of relevant examples to expand on their understanding of each theory and link it back to the question. Some candidates were also able to incorporate the role of relevant regulatory bodies in this debate, including both how regulators can prevent individuals from exposure to harmful content, and in contrast, how their influence is weakening because of the internet, and therefore not able to prevent harmful content from reaching young people.

It is good to see candidates referencing a range of contemporary media products and case studies (e.g., *Blue Story*, *13 Reasons Why*, TikTok challenges, Andrew Tate, *Fortnite*, Molly Russell, etc.) and offering a wide range of interesting responses providing insightful ideas and a confident use of theory, such as moral panics, cultivation and desensitisation. The most successful responses began with a clear argument or thesis, which was supported throughout.

However, there is still a lot of use of historical examples such as Jamie Bulger and *Child's Play 3* which are very outdated. Additionally, candidates who do reference these historical examples often use them incorrectly. Some successful responses were able to use historical examples to show changes in audience attitudes, rather than simply discussing them instead of contemporary media products.

While most candidates approached the question from the point of view of negative effects on the audience, it was good to see some candidates presenting an argument for the media having positive effects on society, using examples such as the Me Too movement and Black Lives Matter as a way of exploring how audience attitudes can be changed by social media.

Relevant media theories and theorists for this question are those whose discourse revolves around contexts of media effects debates and the impact of media products on their audiences. While a broad range of media theory and theorists are encouraged, centres are reminded that theory must be used accurately and within the context of the question. Theoretical perspectives are used most effectively when applied within the argument, rather than listed separately. Some candidates presented a cascade of theorists without applying them to any media product or contextualised within the framework of the question, which weakened their analysis.

Exemplar 2

Mullvey - male gaze

Butler - Gender performance

Gerbner - Long time exposure - Robedon

Gillroy - Postcolonialism

Active audiences - Gillstone?

The relevance of the Media Effects debate has been challenged in the 21st century with the introduction of unregulated social media. Some theorists believe that an Active audience has been established, meaning viewers no longer need to be protected from negative representations or violence, however others argue that due to the media's large part in everyday life, the negative affects of media consumption could be drastic.

Representations on women in the media for example have not always been positive, often offering a stereotypical 'feminine' portrayal. Mullvey critiques this through the 'male gaze' theory which explores the sexualisation of women's bodies, dehumanising

than for the pleasure of men. This can be seen clearly on reality shows like Love Island in which the women wear small bikinis and are expected to be swim. Gerbner would also critique this, the long term exposure to this representation of women places unrealistic expectations on the young female audience and is open unescapable due to the presence of the ~~White Livingstone and Lunt~~ ~~now~~ contestants online. While Livingstone and Lunt would argue that placing regulations on social media would harm free speech, unrestricted advertisement of this harmful representation of women has a huge impact on users. Instagram for example has 2 million users ~~65% under~~ 60% under 35, increasing the impact on a vulnerable and impressionable group.

Furthermore, unregulated media allows for fake news to spread easily which can have an impact on real people's opinions and judgments. During his campaign for presidency, Donald Trump released a

a campaign with an AI video of Gaza being rebuilt by him and his party. This could have fooled older demographics who are more susceptible to scams and changed their political opinions. By releasing this on X, a mass audience was reached especially due to Trump's close ties to Elon Musk who owns the website, possibly leading his content to be pushed onto more users feeds*. Furthermore Billroy's postcolonialist theory would critique this content for its 'inaccurate representation of the people of Gaza showing them as stereotypically poor or dirty and adding to racist ~~stereotypes~~ ^{stereotypes}'

~~Overall, while~~ Finally, the negative affect of games like GTA can be seen in the games young userbase. Violence, drugs and the sexualisation of women are all common throughout the gameplay, narrative and characters. The Bobo doll experiment shows that exposure to ~~violence~~ ^{violence} can impact on viewers actions, especially

young children, as GTA has a playerbase with over half under 18, this exposure could negatively impact many of its young players.

Overall, while social media does allow for a somewhat active audience, it is clear that media still has a negative impact and a level of ~~responsibility~~ social responsibility from ~~media~~ media companies ~~are~~ or more effective regulation is needed to reduce the impact of media.

*making the consumption of this media more passive.

This response was awarded the full 20 marks available. It is well structured, with specifically selected examples supported by a range of media theory, theorists, and terminology used accurately and contextually, to support the candidate's points. There is evidence that the candidate can select relevant contemporary examples such as *Love Island* to support their argument, and that they are willing to challenge accepted viewpoints such as those held by Livingstone and Lunt. They have demonstrated a particularly good awareness of the effect on 21st century audiences of individuals such as Donald Trump and Elon Musk who can use media platforms to present their own opinions, the proliferation of 'fake news' and the challenges presented through the rise of Artificial Intelligence. There is a good link to Paul Gilroy's post-colonial theory which is used accurately in the context of the debate they are presenting. The reference to the Bobo doll experiment has been used intelligently and is supported by a relevant example.

Overall, this is a well-structured response which presents a debate for and against the statement that in the 21st century, audiences are always affected by the media they consume.

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