

Examiners' report

GCSE

MEDIA STUDIES

**OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in
Media Studies**

J200

For first teaching in 2017

J200/02 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. 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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Paper 2 series overview

Candidates were, in the main, well prepared for this examination.

More successful candidates allocated time effectively and answered all the questions, using the space provided in the booklet for each question to pace their responses effectively. Successful responses would usually avoid lengthy introductions, instead launching straight into answering the question. They would avoid discussing irrelevant areas of the theoretical framework.

Fewer candidates did not complete the paper than in previous years, but some seemed to struggle to maintain momentum towards the end of the paper.

There were many typed scripts this year. Some candidates hand wrote the responses to Questions 1 and 6 in the paper booklet then typed out the rest of their responses on separate sheets, which was unhelpful. Some candidates typed out the questions or spent too long on earlier questions and this often led to time issues.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- answered all ten questions - focused on closely answering the question - analysed the specific media area(s) required for each question - showed good knowledge and understanding of contemporary media contexts (for Question 9) and the radio and newspaper industries - constructed clear and logically structured lines of reasoning for extended responses which were well substantiated.	- did not complete the paper (especially Questions 9 and 10) - answered questions from previous exam papers - confused representation and media language analysis - showed limited knowledge and understanding of contemporary media contexts and the radio and newspaper industries - made incorrect or unsubstantiated assertions, often based on personal opinion.

Section A overview

This section comprises a mix of knowledge and understanding (AO1) and analysis (AO2) questions, including a comparative media language analysis of unseen products. Most candidates attempted all these questions.

Question 1

1 State which **one** of the following regulates some newspapers and magazines:

- Ofcom
- IPSO
- BBFC

..... [1]

This proved to be one of the most accessible questions on the exam paper, with roughly three quarters of candidates answering correctly. Ofcom was the most common incorrect response.

Question 2

2 Explain how **two** radio stations address the needs of their different audiences.

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..... [4]

Those candidates with knowledge and understanding of the radio industry generally performed well on this question, with a high proportion gaining the full four marks. Most candidates were able to name two radio stations and many could explain how they met the needs of their audiences. A common choice was to compare BBC Radio 1 with another BBC Radio station – often Radio 2, Radio 5 Live, Radio 1 Xtra, or the BBC Asian Network – but local and commercial radio also featured. Some candidates handled the question with general comments, but were unable to identify appropriate stations, sometimes treating this as a question about uses and gratifications theory. The *Radio 1 Live Lounge* was most common as one example, but BBC Radio 1 was sometimes used as the second example which was not rewarded.

Exemplar 1

BBC Radio 1 offers the needs of more modern and popular music to appeal to their younger audiences. Along with fact the hosts are within the ages the audience targeted are (15-29 years).

On the other hand, BBC Radio 2 addresses the needs of their audience by also having presenters of a similar age and play a range of modern and older songs the audience might of listened to during their youth.

This response earns the first two marks for knowledge by naming two radio stations then earns the second two marks for understanding by explaining how Radio 1 and Radio 2 address the needs of their audiences. The question did not require any statement of the demographics of these audiences, although this is heavily implied in this response.

Question 3

3 Explain how music videos use representations to promote their artists. Refer to the pair of music videos you have studied from the list below.

- 1 Wheatus – Teenage Dirtbag / Avril Lavigne – Sk8er Boi
- 2 Beyoncé – Brown Skin Girl / The Lathums – I'll Get By
- 3 Arlo Parks – Hope / Harry Styles – Adore You
- 4 Tinie Tempah, Jess Glynne – Not Letting Go / Paloma Faith – Picking Up the Pieces

[10]

This question was generally answered competently, with 6 or 7 marks being the most common marks given and very few responses in Level 1. The most successful responses combined explanation of representations with how these served to promote the artists, but many concentrated on one rather than the other.

There were still some media language analyses from candidates who were unclear about the distinction between media language and representation, but fewer than in previous years. Target audience is not required for music videos and this again proved sometimes a distraction although some candidates made appropriate use of the concept of 'ideal self' or 'ideal partner' to link representations to appeal, as this showed good focus on the representations.

The whole range of video choices were covered – although Wheatus and Avril Lavigne were most frequently chosen – and all seemed to offer comparable opportunities to answer the question. It was clear that occasionally too much time had been spent on one video to the detriment of its pair. There was evident enjoyment in addressing this question.

Exemplar 2

In the music video, 'Sk8er Boi' by Avril Lavigne, there are clear representations of both stereotypical and counterotypical characters. Lavigne herself is shown to be counterotypical, as she wears loose clothing and a tie, as well as a backwards cap and dark eyeshadow. This is reminiscent of the grunge style of the 2000's, but it also shows Lavigne to be different and ~~more~~ less typically pop-styled in order to attract a counterotypical crowd. However, the music video also shows a hetero-normative relationship, which is also extremely reminiscent of mainstream pop. Lavigne is also shown at a low-angle shot most of the time, representing her as dominant and counterotypical. This blend of representation is meant to promote Lavigne to both audiences. In the music video of 'Teenage Dirtbag', the video showcases again ~~the~~ stereotypes, ~~counterotypical~~ but also focuses on the less-represented ^{counter-types} like that of a 'Loser', e.g. a nerd. 'Teenage Dirtbag' shows the stereotypes of a 'jock' and a 'princess', but celebrates the counter-type of a loser. The video presents the jocks using a low-angle shot, showing them as dominant and popular, as the crowd parts for them. The video also shows them bullying the 'loser' character, pushing him and throwing things at him. This shows the 'jock' in a

bad light, but appreciates the struggle of the loser. At the end of the video, when the stereotypical 'princess' character deems the 'loser' worthy by offering him a dance, he is shown by the camera to rise to her level by standing up and taking her hand. This shows that the 'loser' can also be loved and become appreciated, therefore showing a counter-type of a loser. This ~~video~~ would promote Wheaties as a band that celebrates counter-types, therefore attracting that audience.

This response fits the descriptor in the mark scheme that 'answers at the top of the Level 3 band will explicitly address the 'promote their artists' aspect of the question with exemplification from both videos'. The Sk8ter Boi analysis emphasises representation rather more successfully than that for Teenage Dirtbag, the latter veering more into narrative and other media language elements, but there is enough for nine marks. This response shows how to discuss promoting the artists without slipping into speculation about the target audiences for the chosen videos, instead concentrating on the videos themselves.

Question 4

4 Refer to **Extracts 1** and **2** in the insert.

Analyse **two** uses of stereotypes or anti-stereotypes in these extracts from MOJO and BBC Music magazines.

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..... [5]

This proved to be one of the most accessible questions on the exam paper, with most candidates scoring three or four marks.

Some candidates were not aware that Patti Smith is a woman but still earned marks for effective analysis.

Occasionally even strong candidates would confuse stereotypes with genre conventions. Some less successful responses addressed the MOJO cover as a war magazine and some made unsubstantiated claims about the audiences of classical music and opera. There was some crossover of response between this and the following question with material duplicated and over-emphasis on media language.

Question 5*

5* Refer to **Extracts 1** and **2** in the insert.

How far does the media language in Extracts 1 and 2 reflect genre conventions?

In your answer you must:

- analyse the media language in Extracts 1 and 2 from MOJO and BBC Music magazines
- make judgements and reach conclusions.

[15]

As usual, Question 5 proved to be one of the best discriminators on the paper, with those capable of analysis on unseen extracts performing well. A surprising number of candidates did not answer this question.

Most candidates understood genre conventions to refer to the conventions of rock and classical music, but this was not a disadvantage as many did well with this approach. Some instead analysed the use of music magazine conventions, which had the advantage of not having to make statements about different types of music.

Less successful responses showed a lack of focus on conventions and tended to focus instead on representation issues such as stereotypes. Time was often wasted on irrelevant discussion of target demographic and description of whether the title of the magazine covers the main image or vice versa. The most common media language error in this question is still the misidentification of serif and sans-serif fonts. Some responses claimed that MOJO magazine had a 'darker colour palette', which implied a pre-learned response rather than unseen analysis.

Section B overview

This section comprises a mix of knowledge and understanding (AO1) questions and analysis (AO2) questions. The AO1 Questions 6 and 7 asked about newspaper media industries and Question 10 asked about the influence of media contexts on 1960s newspapers. The AO2 Questions 8 and 9 asked for media language and representation analysis of three articles from the online *Observer* newspaper. Question 9 was a synoptic question and also required application of knowledge and understanding of contemporary media contexts.

Question 6

6 State which **one** of the following decides what *The Observer* writes:

- the editor
- the owner
- the government.

..... [1]

This was incorrectly answered by over half the candidates. A substantial number thought that the government decides, suggesting a lack of understanding of the role of press freedom. The most common wrong answer was 'the owner' (incorrect, as *The Observer* has editorial independence).

Question 7

7 Explain **two** advantages of publishing online newspapers over print newspapers.

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[4]

This was the most accessible question on the paper, with over half the responses gaining four marks and very few gaining zero or one mark. There were some very creative responses demonstrating a broad understanding of the advantages to the publisher and the audience.

Question 8

8 Refer to **Extracts 3, 4 and 5** in the insert.

Analyse **two** ways that the media language creates a less serious tone in Extract 4 compared to the other extracts.

..... [5]

More successful responses to this question gave detailed analysis of the media language in one or more extracts whereas less successful responses simply reproduced the content of the stories to illustrate their seriousness or light-heartedness. Few responses did not make any points. The most common mark earned was three marks for at least one example of media language linked to tone.

Exemplar 3

The list of expensive clothing in the beginning is juxtaposed with the comedy of the clients having 'four legs and a tail'. The author intentionally abstains from mentioning that the clients are dogs until after the list is finished for comical suspense, as well as the name-dropping of famous fashion houses and celebrities, like Dolly Parton, for emphasis on how widespread the phenomenon is. This includes a photo of 3 dogs in jackets, who are posed to look intentionally cute, whereas in other articles, the photos are more seriously taken, show to be at eye level with the humans, which connotes more serious connotations than the comedic factor of the dogs' photo.

This response earns the full five marks by effectively analysing both the creation of tone and (more than) two uses of media language in the extracts, using specific examples and media language terminology. The response could have been a bit shorter and still earned full marks.

Question 9*

9* Extracts 3, 4 and 5 are articles from the online Observer.

How far do these representations reflect media contexts?

In your answer you must:

- analyse the representations in the extracts
- refer to media contexts
- make judgements and reach conclusions.

You will be rewarded for drawing together elements from your full course of study.

[15]

This proved to be the most demanding question on the paper. It was – like Question 5 – a good discriminator, testing the skill of analysis of unseen extracts. The most common overall mark, of those who attempted the question, was nine marks for adequate analysis, judgements and conclusions. Some of these responses concentrated on the contexts – citing consumerism for the dog clothing article, multiculturalism or racism for the Kureishi article and a variety of contexts for the Amazon strike article such as the cost of living crisis, poor working conditions in the modern economy or globalisation. Many were able to allude to these with a less subject-specific vocabulary. Other responses analysed the representations without linking to contexts. The most successful responses did both.

Some candidates responded as if this were Question 8; some media language analysis can be rewarded in a synoptic question, but it should not crowd out the specific focus of the question. Some were confused about the distinction between media contexts and *The Observer's* values (and were perhaps answering a previous exam question). The least successful responses were descriptive and lacked analysis.

Exam technique

Students should learn to treat Questions 8 and 9 as a pair: the media area addressed in one is likely to be different from that addressed in the other, so they should work out which question has which focus (or primary focus in the case of a synoptic question).

Misconception



Some candidates still refer to *The Observer* as a 'magazine'.

The reference to media contexts in Question 9 is to contemporary media contexts and is not an invitation to discuss 1960s *Observer* newspapers.

Question 10

- 10** Explain how social and/or cultural contexts influenced the media language and representations in newspapers from the 1960s such as The Observer. Refer to examples from the set newspapers you have studied in your answer. **[10]**

This final question was generally answered at least competently within Level 2 – for coverage of at least one context – and low Level 3 – for two contexts – being the most common marks. The requirement to cover media language proved the discriminator in Level 3, with relatively few gaining nine or ten marks by doing so, as the media language aspect of the question was absent from many responses.

Most candidates were able to offer examples of contexts which had clearly been studied in class. Less-sophisticated responses did not link these to specific eras of newspaper. Some candidates wrote generally about issues that arose in the 1960s without any reference to newspapers.

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