



GCSE Examiners' Report

MEDIA STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that 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.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

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Executive Summary

Unit 1: Exploring the Media

- **Overall performance:** The examination was accessible to most candidates, with many demonstrating insightful and perceptive responses. Time management has improved, showing good guidance from centres.
Section A: Representations: Candidates effectively analysed an unseen media text, a newspaper front page from the Daily Express. High-level comparison skills were evident, though some responses were limited by short answers and descriptions rather than analysis.
Section B: Music: Candidates showed good understanding of the music industry, with thoughtful responses on music videos and social media use by artists. However, some struggled with identifying specific radio programmes and analysing music magazine covers.
- **Common issues and key recommendations:** Centres should ensure candidates study specific, up-to-date media texts and understand the requirements for higher mark bands. Emphasis on detailed, analytical responses rather than descriptive ones is crucial for success.

Unit 2: Understanding Film and Television

- **Overall performance:** There was evidence of outstanding responses, particularly in exploring media language and stereotypes in television programs like Gavin and Stacey.
- **Common issues and key recommendations:** Some candidates struggled with identifying key stages of film production and differentiating between camera shots and angles. There were also issues with studying films outside the contemporary timescale. Ensure clarity on contemporary issues in television broadcasting, the importance of the license fee, and subscription television. Emphasise the need for studying contemporary Hollywood films and understanding key stages of film production. Encourage candidates to read the questions carefully.

Unit 3: Creating the Media

- **Overall performance:**
Production pieces in the top bands were of high quality. Many candidates referred to media theories in Research and Reflective Analysis - while not required, if applied appropriately, can underpin knowledge and understanding of media concepts.
- **Common issues and key recommendations:**
Research: Research is limited to lower bands for basic superficial textual identification and description. Encourage candidates to make explicit reference to representations, genre codes and audience.
Planning: Hand drawn draft design plans are not appropriate for print and online planning. For magazine front covers, include visual codes such price, date or issue number to demonstrate a good application of genre conventions. Ensure storyboards contain necessary descriptions.
Production: Candidates should apply genre conventions to their chosen production. Avoid overreliance on software templates and editing apps as it leads to a lack of originality and creativity.
Reflective Analysis: Candidates should focus on key elements of the production, making comparisons between the products they individually researched and their own completed Production. Encourage detailed reference to candidate's research and how this research has influenced their production.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Unit 1, Section A: Some responses limited by description rather than analysis.	Resource WJEC Educational Resources Website	Fact files and blended learning lessons on a range of newspapers.
Unit 1 and 2: Detailed answers are required for high tariff questions. Some candidates did not read the wording of the questions carefully.	Resource WJEC Educational Resources Website	Exam walk-throughs.
Unit 2: Differentiation between camera shots and angles	Shots.ppt (live.com)	Reading technical codes: the camera PPT.

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UNIT 1: EXPLORING THE MEDIA

Overview of the Unit

The examination paper was accessible for most candidates, and it was pleasing to see that many were able to respond to the resource material with some insightful and perceptive answers. Responses showed that many candidates had been well prepared by their centres, particularly on questions 1, 3 and 4. However, question 2 proved to be challenging for some candidates with questions on the radio music programme and music magazine they studied. A significant number of candidates were unable to access the higher mark band, as they were unable to state which radio programme they studied and were vague how the content targeted a specific audience. With the music magazine, candidates needed to demonstrate good textual analysis of how the cover attracts audiences, and sometimes responses were basic. The better responses referred to an edition studied. When studying music magazines, both print and its online version need to be studied. However, this year it was good to see that most candidates were able to attempt all questions, and that time management has improved, which demonstrated good guidance from centres.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Representations - advertising, video games and newspapers

The resource material, a newspaper front page from the *Daily Express*, Friday 3rd June 2022, which focused on the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, proved effective in enabling candidates to demonstrate their analytical skills. Equally, candidates were able to compare an event they had studied from a newspaper with the set stimulus material. It was good to see evidence of high-level comparison skills, using excellent knowledge and understanding of how representations of an event are selected and constructed. However, there were a minority of candidates that self-penalised by giving short responses with limited comparisons. Some of these responses were simply describing rather than considering why the events were represented in the way they were and what meanings were being constructed.

Section B: Music

This section also proved accessible in allowing candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the music industry. Candidates' responses demonstrated good understanding of how music videos represent their artist/band, what messages and values they were imparting. There were also good explanations how an artist/band uses social media, with specific supporting examples. The range of different music videos studied by contemporary artists/bands was good to see with many thoughtful and well considered responses. There were some candidates that were unable to access the higher marks in question 2. However, the knowledge and understanding of a wide range of media products by many, including radio programmes, music magazines, social media and music video was, at times, impressive and showed clear evidence of candidates being well prepared by their centres, selecting a range of texts that need to be studied for the specification.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: Representations – advertising, video games and newspapers

- Q.1. (a) The vast majority of candidates were able to achieve the full two marks for this question, identifying a correct camera shot and briefly describing how it was used. However, there were a few candidates that stated the shot of the queen was a close-up, when it was a medium close-up. However, they were able to state how the shot was used and therefore they were awarded for this.
- (b) This question proved accessible for most candidates. The question required candidates to briefly explain how images on the front page were used to represent the event. A range of interesting and well considered responses were made by many candidates, such as: the joy on the Queen's face showed how delighted she was with the celebrations; the smiling faces of the public again showed the joy; celebratory atmosphere that was full of warmth; the many who were taking photos/filming the event showed the uniqueness of the occasion; the British flags signalling a British event but also flags from Canada (part of the Commonwealth), alongside flags from Italy showing that the occasion was international. Patriotic colours (red, blue and white), the way in which the Queen was dressed showed the significance of the event and the sheer thousands on the mall by Buckingham Palace, again revealed the importance of the event. Most students were able to access higher bands, although there were some that wrote very little and therefore self-penalised.
- (c) Candidates were asked to explore how written language was used on the front page to represent the event. A range of answers were presented. Those candidates who were able to give a thoughtful, detailed response that focused how written language communicated the message/value of the event were able to access the higher mark bands. Their answers included discussing the significance of the words 'Historic Platinum Jubilee Edition' as a unique publication, and considered the connotations of the colour purple. The headline INCREDIBLE! with use of capitals and the exclamation mark showed the emotion of the event, making it stand out as something unique and important. In addition, many analysed words in the article, discussing their various meanings. Some candidates identified some written language but lacked detailed analysis, offering a satisfactory explanation. However, there were some candidates who described words without considering how the written language represented the event. Some simply wrote one sentence with a limited analysis and were therefore limited to marks in lower bands.

- (d) This question required candidates to compare the representation of an event in one newspaper they had studied with the representation of the Queen’s Jubilee in the resource material. There were some excellent, detailed responses that were able to compare how different newspapers represent events based on their political leanings, and identify whether it was a tabloid or broadsheet newspaper studied, hard or soft news. There were a range of different events that had been studied, such as: Trump’s election victory in 2016; ‘Megxit’ (when Harry and Megan left the Royal Family); the death of Prince Phillip; the death of the Queen; the tragic earthquake in Turkey; the Salisbury Poisonings; the shooting of the young girl Polina in the Ukraine/Russia war, and the Lionesses European football victory. Some candidates were able to give insightful analysis and compare these well with the resource material by exploring how the style of writing, images used, soft or hard news, impacted on how an event was represented, applying strong use of subject terminology based on a wide range of technical and symbolic codes. Some were able to apply theorists such as Barthes, considering symbolic and semantic values as well as cultural ones and Stuart Hall, particularly looking at the impact of stereotyping. The best answers, in addition, often explored the complexities of how news is conveyed in newspapers, understanding how who owns the newspapers can lead to biased representations.

Weaker candidates were limited in their responses, often not comparing, rather just describing the event and not considering why it was represented in the way it was, and how this compared to the Queen’s Jubilee. Many of these responses were short answers, sometimes just analysing the resource material with no mention of an event studied in class. Some students who compared a music magazine or even a music video with the newspaper were awarded only for their response to the resource material, as no real comparison could be made. This question was worth 15 marks and candidates need to consider the technical and visual codes used to construct meanings in their chosen newspaper studied, compared to resource material.

SECTION B: Music

- Q.2. (a) Candidates were asked to name the radio programme that they had studied. Many gave the radio station or channel (e.g. BBC) rather than the exact radio programme. However, the one mark for this question was to be able to identify one target audience for the radio programme, and many were able to do this. However, there were some incorrect answers that were too broad and therefore not awarded – e.g. “anyone” as a target audience.

- (b) Candidates were asked to briefly explain how the radio music programme they had studied targets one key audience. Those who stated a specific radio music programme were able to give clear examples of the programme style and content, how these target the intended audience, the presenter's ability to relate to the target audience, competitions held, celebrity guests, phone ins, and scheduling of the programme. Good examples used were Radio 1, Greg James, Radio 2, Zoe Ball, Greatest Hits, Simon Mayo, Drive Time Show, Heart with Amanda Holden and Jamie Theakston. These were awarded full marks. However, weaker candidates struggled with this question, often just stating one way in which the stated programme targeted a key audience or offered a generalised response where it was unclear which radio programme was studied. Sometimes the target audience was vague and not specific. A few candidates had not studied a radio music programme, but a radio talk show, or a radio news programme -this is rubric and cannot be awarded. A reminder to centres to please ensure that you study an up-to-date radio music programme- there were some discussing Nick Grimshaw as the current DJ for Radio 1 breakfast show even though he left Radio 1 in 2021 - they were not penalised on this occasion.
- (c) Candidates were asked to select one music magazine front cover they had studied and explain how it attracted audiences. There were a significant number of candidates who analysed incorrect magazines with artists on the front cover, but were not music magazines, such as Vogue, Diva, J14 (a teenage magazine for girls). These candidates were capped at basic. Centres are advised to ensure that a relevant, current music magazine is studied. Centres should be aware that NME is longer in print and only has an online version - both print and online needs to be studied. There were some good explanations using a specific music magazine cover - these candidates gave thoughtful responses that considered how the use of colour, images of music artists/bands are represented to attract an audience, and mentioned coverlines, promotions, typography, masthead, direct mode of address, freebies and competitions. Unfortunately, some candidates analysed a music video – this was rubric and could not be awarded.

Q.3. Overall, this question was answered well. Candidates were asked to explore how the gender of one music artist or band was represented in **one contemporary** music video they had studied. Unfortunately, there were several candidates that explored an historical music video. This was rubric and not awarded. Contemporary music videos accepted were from ten to twelve years old. Taylor Swift music videos were a popular choice as was Katy Perry's Roar, Beyonce's Formation, Lizzo's Good as Hell, Sweet but Psycho, Ava Max, Dua Lipa's New Rules, Dizzie Rascal's Our Town, Billy Eilish's What Was I Made For, Bruno Mars, This is America by Childish Gambino, as well as a number of music videos from Stormzy. There were some engaging answers that considered how the technical, visual and audio codes constructed meanings, such as the framing techniques that helped to position the audience, as well as symbolic codes.

Many candidates were able to apply appropriate media terminology for representation, discussing stereotypes, and how these were either challenged/subverted or reinforced within the video. It was good to see that some students were able to discuss dominant ideologies, contextualise them, and then analyse how far the music video conformed or subverted them. Many were able to apply theoretical perspectives, such as Laura Mulvey's male gaze and Strauss' binary oppositions. There were some candidates that struggled with the question, simply describing the music video without considering how the artist/band was being represented in the way they were. A minority did not state the name of the music video and artist/band and were limited in their findings. However, many candidates were able to access the higher mark bands, demonstrating good guidance and teaching, and that candidates had been well prepared for this type of question.

- Q.4 They were some excellent answers where candidates had studied the social media use of a particular artist/band and why social media was important to them, with good supporting examples of how different social media platforms were used as a strong marketing tool for the artist's image, and also as a platform for them to raise awareness of issues that they were closely connected to. These responses were detailed and relevant, awarded in the higher mark bands. Many discussed how Taylor Swift, for example, creates a sense of a community, with her fans being known as Swifties. Popular choices of artists/bands, in addition to Taylor Swift, were Lizzo, Stormzy, Beyonce, Bruno Mars, Harry Styles and Dua Lipa. Ensure candidates study up-to-date artists, as candidates are expected to study in detail the artist/band use of social media and its impact. There were some artists/bands such as One Direction who disbanded in 2016. Candidates were not penalised but often they were not able to give specifics and were therefore awarded up to satisfactory. Some candidates did not state a specific artist/band and their answers were generalised with no specifics of social media used, which again meant at best, they could only gain a satisfactory mark.

Summary of key points

Overall, the paper proved successful in allowing candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the key concepts within the specification for Unit 1: Exploring the Media. In most cases students were able to complete the whole paper with few questions not attempted. It is pleasing that candidates' time management was effective and manageable, with only a few candidates not completing the paper. There were many good examples where candidates had been well prepared, demonstrating excellent guidance and support from their teachers. These centres are to be highly commended, and candidates are to be congratulated for their detailed and interesting responses.

In summary, centres should:

- remind candidates of the marks awarded for each question to ensure longer, more detailed responses are given for questions allocated higher marks, particularly for 1d, 3 and 4
- ensure that a range of examples are explored for representation – both historically and contemporary, and that candidates understand what contemporary means, as there were several students who analysed an historical music video in error
- study specific artists/bands, specific radio music programmes. For Section B, music magazines, study **both** print **and** online versions and remind candidates to refer to these when answering examination questions.

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UNIT 2: UNDERSTANDING TELEVISION AND FILM

Overview of the Unit

The key assessment objectives for Unit 2 Paper Section A: Wales on Television and Section B: Contemporary Hollywood Film are:

AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies

AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies to analyse media products.

What content/topics/skills are tested?

The paper includes two sections, one on Television in Wales and one on Contemporary Hollywood film. The texts studied for both sections are chosen by Centres from the proscribed list in the specification and for the Hollywood film section Centres can choose any contemporary Hollywood franchise film produced in the last 10 years. (A small number of Centres must be reminded that franchises such as Harry Potter are now outside of the contemporary timescale).

Overview of general performance across the unit.

Overall, the general performance across the unit was very pleasing with evidence of some outstanding responses particularly on Section A question 1d. where candidates were required to explore how media language is used to construct stereotypes in a television programme they have studied (almost exclusively *Gavin and Stacey*). Many of the responses to this question were lengthy, detailed, well organised and well structured in addressing the key focus of the question. It was very pleasing to see very little evidence of incomplete scripts across both sections of the paper with the vast majority of candidates offering responses to all the questions set which suggests that candidates are managing their time in the examination most effectively.

There was evidence from the scripts that candidates performed well across the two sections of the paper with no question having a particularly detrimental effect on performance.

The assessment performed particularly well compared with previous series with some improvement in the quality of individual responses and given the evidence of the completion of all questions and in the length and detail, particularly in the higher tariff questions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: Wales on Television

- Q.1. (a) The question required candidates to name one online streaming service where audiences can watch television programmes. Most candidates offered a range of response from BBC iPlayer, ITV X, Netflix or Disney Plus to name a few. Unfortunately, a significant minority identified a broadcasting organisation such as BBC or ITV which was marked as incorrect.
- (b) For question 1b candidates were required to identify three advantages for audiences of watching television programmes online. The vast majority of candidates were able to respond with three appropriate advantages, such as: choosing own programmes, watching what you want and when you want; availability on a range of platforms such as mobile phones, laptops or iPads or gaming consoles. Some candidates addressed the advantages by exploring wider uses and gratifications for audiences. The vast majority of candidates achieved the maximum of three marks.
- (c) For this question with a tariff of 6 marks candidates were asked to briefly explain the impact of digital technology on television organisations. This question worked particularly well with many candidates writing in sufficient detail to identify the impact. Several answers perhaps lacked the specific focus on the organisational impact and often referred to the impact on audiences and therefore inferred organisations would benefit through increased audiences share. Many candidates explained the impact of new technologies on the marketing of television programmes for their organisation and the use of social media to promote television programmes on Facebook, Twitter and TikTok. Some candidates explained the impact of digital technology through both positive and negative effects, explaining the competition for audiences between more traditional broadcasting organisations like BBC, ITV and S4C with the newer streaming services and the effects on the license fee, funding and subscription. Some also explored the impact on the quality of television production through digital filming, audio recording and editing.
- (d) Overall it was very impressive to see the length, quality and detail in the response exploring how media language is used to construct stereotypes in the television programme they studied. The vast majority of candidates used the programme *Gavin and Stacey* with the majority being able to identify a range of stereotypes of Wales, gender, age, social class and national identity. The very best responses used the bullet points on the question to organise their responses in exploring age and gender, but many also included reference to stereotype of Welsh and English people, the Welsh working class and the English middle-class families. There was much reference in the higher band performances of using theorists and media theory to structure their response demonstrating whether this be Barthes semiotics, Propp and character functions. Todorov and narrative structures, Hall and representations, Levi Strauss, and Balsom and Welsh identity.

Most candidates addressed the topic through the codes and conventions of characters in situation comedy rather than the visual and audio codes suggested in the bullet points on the paper. There was some evidence of misinterpreting the concept of media language and focussing purely on lexical codes rather than the broad codes and conventions of technical, symbolic or visual codes. Where candidates did focus on language codes this was appropriate as they explored aspects of the dialogue by and between characters and how these constructed stereotypes. It was evident from many candidate responses that centres had prepared them very well for this section and there was evidence of some outstanding responses awarded at Band 5 with excellent, perceptive explorations of stereotyping in the episode of *Gavin and Stacey*, demonstrating excellent detailed knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies in detailed and thorough analysis of the television programme studied.

Section B: Contemporary Hollywood Film

- Q.2. (a) This question raised some issues regarding the identification of one key stage of the production process. While a number of candidates had a clear sense of the three key areas of film production, namely pre-production, production and post production, a significant number of candidates identified aspects of distribution or marketing as part of the production process. Whilst technically not viewed as a production process many candidates will have been taught the importance of distribution as part of the wider film industry. It was then decided to award candidates who identified aspects of film distribution, therefore the vast majority of candidates were awarded 1 mark for this question. Many candidates identified casting, costume and scriptwriting in pre-production, filming in principal photography, and editing in post-production.
- (b) Most candidates could explain why their chosen part of the film production process was important, with popular answers including the importance of casting or scriptwriting, the importance of set construction and finding locations, or use of CGI and special effects and sound in post-production.
- (c) Candidates generally performed well on this question, offering quite detailed if brief responses explaining how stars are used in the marketing of a film. The majority of candidates could offer detailed knowledge of stars in films, explaining their roles and personas. Candidates awarded the higher band marks explained in some detail the range of marketing techniques used by film distributors through stars in posters, trailers, on social media, on TV chat shows, interviews, premieres and promotional events.

- Q.3. Most candidates could offer a reasonably detailed response identifying camerawork used in a key sequence from their chosen film. It was surprising to see evidence of quite a few candidates confused as to the difference between camera shots and angles. Some candidates had studied a film outside of a contemporary timescale (i.e. a contemporary film is deemed to be less than 10 years old and many candidates had studied *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* which was released in 2011). As stated in the specification:

'Learners must study one film made within ten years of the start of teaching the qualification that is part of a Hollywood film franchise'

WJEC GCSE Media Studies Specification p16.

However, there was evidence of some excellent responses clearly identifying a key sequence from a contemporary Hollywood franchise film and exploring a wide range of camerawork including a variety of camera shots, angles and movements. Popular choices of films to study included *Black Panther*, *Avengers Infinity War* and *Spiderman, No Way Home*.

- Q.4. It was very pleasing to see much evidence of full and detailed answers to the final question on the paper, as in past examination series candidates were often limited by the time remaining to complete a more developed response. Indeed, time management of the examination seemed much improved with candidates benefitting from writing more detailed responses on the final question. The vast majority of candidates provided a response, although some found it challenging to explore the opening sequence of the film studied. Most candidates could explain the appeals of a sequence from their chosen film, most often exploring aspects of narrative and character and star appeals. Candidates achieving Band 4 and 5 marks often combined the detailed explanation of narrative and character moving beyond plot description to analysis exploring aspects of cinematography, mise en scene and the genre signifiers.

Overall, a most pleasing examination series. There was clear evidence of an improvement overall in performance and testament to the excellent work by teachers and learners in preparation for the examination. There was evidence of some excellent performance by candidates demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of media studies with detailed and accurate knowledge demonstrated through the responses to the questions set in both television and contemporary Hollywood film. Candidates were able to apply the knowledge learnt to the questions set through their analysis of the media products in film and television. The examination paper proved accessible to all learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding all levels of ability.

Areas for consideration

- Ensure candidates understand contemporary issues surrounding television broadcasters and the growing complexity of the television landscape.
- Engage learners in the debates over the licence fee and subscription television.
- Ensure the Hollywood film text is contemporary (within 10 years).
- Learners should be aware of the key stages of film production.
- Ensure learners know what constitutes a camera shot/ distance, angle and movement.
- Learners must study a range of key scenes from the film studied.

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UNIT 3: CREATING THE MEDIA

Overview of the Unit

Moderators saw examples of candidates' work from the full range of set Production Briefs available. Film print option was most popular, although more candidates than in previous series opted for the AV (Audio-Visual) film option with some success. Advertising AV and Print options were more popular than in previous series. The AV music brief resulted in some original productions in a range of genres constructed to appeal to their intended audiences. The Print magazine brief continued to be a popular choice for candidates across the range. It was pleasing to note the quality of the production pieces for many candidates at the top of the range. Fewer candidates opted for the Online options.

Most centres tasked candidates to produce appropriate Research, Planning, Production and Reflective Analysis components in line with the specification requirements.

More candidates than in previous years referred to media theories in Research and Reflective Analysis reports. It is not a prerequisite to achieve even the highest Band marks, but if applied accurately and appropriately can underpin knowledge and understanding of media concepts. Assessment and awarding of marks for work referencing aspects of media theory should consider how accurately and appropriately such knowledge and understanding has been applied.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Research: Characteristics of successful pieces of work

Candidates who selected two relevant well-chosen texts to research and then applied their findings in their planning and production were often the most effective and assessed in the higher Bands. Effective Research was then used again to reflect and analyse the candidate's own production with a clear focus on well selected aspects of the findings from the key media concepts of genre representation and audience from the candidate's research.

Successful Research used the word count (550-750) to focus on the three areas of study: Research was presented as continuous reports using subheadings of the key concepts to structure the response. Some candidates used screen shots with annotations whilst some used a mix of both. Good practice was noted by moderators where candidates highlighted key media concepts of genre, representation and audience.

Successful work explored representation through analysis of stereotypes and how they enable audiences to interpret media texts. Representation of social, cultural and industrial contexts of texts, explored in historical and contemporary advertisements, was used with success.

The analysis of how media language was used to target specific audience through language codes on magazine covers, DVD front and back covers and film posters was popular. Successful approaches considered how language was selected to address the audience, for example, through mode of address, use of standard or non-standard English formal/informal language and considering the effect on the audience of the film or magazine title itself. Successful analysis of genre included identification and analysis of typical codes of the selected texts, and accurate application of the correct terminology associated with the relevant conventions of the texts. Further analysis of how and why the codes identified communicate meaning to the intended audience underpinned excellent responses. Candidates who explicitly identified the intended audience of the text and added further exploration and analysis of how the audience is targeted through a range of devices how endorsement and accolades in film posters is used. Good practice was noted by moderators where candidates highlighted key media concepts of genre, representation and audience. Technical vocabulary was also put in bold within the reports. Effective AV Research for camerawork focused on the key media concepts by examining, framing and composition aspects of camerawork, analysis of a range of shots and shot types (including distance, length, angle, movement). Editing research focused on continuity and techniques e.g. montage, use of transitions to communicate meaning and occasionally post-production effects where appropriate. Sound research focus on how diegetic and non-diegetic sound communicates meanings through sound effects, soundtrack, dialogue or the quality of sound. Research of mise-en-scène was also considered.

Planning: Characteristics of successful pieces of work

Moderators saw a range of appropriate well-considered planning drafts. Candidates applied knowledge and understanding gained from their Research to plan their Production and constructed draft plans to deliberately appeal to the specified audience, representations of people place, and selected a range of highly appropriate genre conventions. Successful drafts met the specification requirements fully.

Print and online planning requirements of a draft design per page used appropriate software (not hand drawn) and typically included well-constructed found images, with appropriate and creative design and layout features showcasing a balance between selection and placement of text, images, graphics and whitespace appropriate for the chosen form and genre. Magazine planning drafts, for example, included the front cover masthead, cover lines, main cover image or star, colour themes and pricing planned effectively to construct the brand and magazine ideology. Thoughtful and creative **layout and design of contents pages and additional pages showed a sense of branding, appeal to audience and ideology was evident across all draft planning.** Film posters and DVD front and back covers demonstrated appropriate design and layout, making good use of star shot and secondary images, location shots, mise-en-scène, lighting, industry details and age restrictions. A sense of planning as part of a campaign was also present in the most successful planning.

Successful storyboards were long enough (approximately 15-20 frames in length) to create the film sequence, meet the specification brief and demonstrate media language. Camerawork planning established aspects of genre, representation and audience address. They typically included a range of numbered frames, shot types, which matched the description accompanying the shot. Length of shot was sensible and recorded on the storyboard and timely for the film sequence. Dialogue and other sound codes were included which developed narrative, engaged the audience and established genre and representations of people and place effectively. Editing was also explicit for paired work where the candidate had opted for the editing role.

Production: Characteristics of successful pieces of work

Successful production artefacts met the production briefs in full and executed the productions in a highly creative and technically competent throughout the production in a consistent way.

The use of original footage, sound, images and text was highly appropriate and applied media language to communicate meaning to the audiences, construct representations of people, places events and issues in an excellent way. Genre codes were considered carefully, informed from Research, planned effectively and applied appropriately to the Production itself.

A common factor of the most successful pieces was the engagement of the candidate in their chosen genre, form and content of the production.

Print work showed consideration to and excellent execution of image, framing, focus, resolution and lighting. Choice of fonts size, colour and positioning of text were skilfully selected and designed, appropriate for form, genre and audience appeal. A further characteristic of successful print productions was the deliberate choice of language used to engage the intended audience. Similar characteristics were evident for the online option, though fewer were seen at moderation. Appropriate and functional interactive technical interactive features would be expected as well as the use of video footage to compliment any still images.

Successful AV productions were engaging for the audience and exhibited high production values. These were often highly creative, technically excellent, with a range of shots, effective lighting and pace of editing suitable for the genre and narrative. Sound codes were also secure across the productions and often executed in an excellent way to drive the narrative and synchronize creatively and technically with the film footage.

Reflective Analysis Characteristics of successful pieces of work

In successful Reflective Analysis, the word count of 500 words to 750 words was used to good effect and the report maintains a clear focus on how research evidence informed the production, giving due consideration and evaluation of the candidate's use of concepts in their own practical work. Application of knowledge and understanding of media language, representation and audiences is appropriate and relevant and consistently applied. Importantly, the report is coherent, uses a range of accurate media technical language, and media theory where relevant to communicate ideas effectively.

Detailed reference to candidate's research and how this research has influenced their production is exemplified with appropriately selected examples of the media concepts produced.

Research: Common candidate misconceptions and areas for improvement.

The inclusion of secondary research such as film synopsis, reviews and questionnaires, is NOT a requirement of this specification and cannot be awarded any marks. Research requirements are clearly set out on page 21 of the specification. Most research reports presented for moderation were appropriate, however the message to centres remains consistent; it is imperative to review task setting to ensure candidates access the criteria within the mark grid.

Research is limited to Band 1 and 2 when it relies on basic superficial textual identification and descriptions of how media language is used to target specific audiences and discussion of representations is simple labelling or descriptive prose and makes no explicit reference to representations, genre codes and audience (Band 1-2).

Research which shows generic knowledge and background information of chosen text is self-limiting.

Research is individual - texts are selected by candidates to demonstrate and underpin their knowledge and understanding of the form, genre and intended audience of the brief they have selected to produce. Candidates cannot reference, for example, the same film and DVD posters; it is difficult for individual candidates to demonstrate the ability to research media products for their intended audience and show their research is relevant and appropriate if the cohort have studied the same research text.

If word count is excessive, candidates' findings should be synthesized via the key concepts and limited to the word count to meet the assessment criteria. Note: The Specification, states where a production exceeds the limits by more than 10%, the teacher/assessor should not mark the additional work submitted beyond this limit as candidates can only be credited for work that falls within the 250–500-word count.

In the AV briefs, it is important that Research focuses on and reflects camerawork or editing for paired work. If an individual production is planned, both camerawork and editing can be researched.

Planning: Common candidate misconceptions and areas for improvement

Extraneous planning activities including montages, scripts, character costume designs and edits for photographs are not required, are not in the specification and cannot be awarded marks within the mark grid. Centres who awarded marks for this type of planning, assessment would have been generous. Centre reports will highlight this issue if relevant.

Candidates who submit out line flat plans which include descriptions of contents would be limited to Band 2 since planning is only partially relevant and appropriate.

Candidates who annotate draft plans are also limited to Band 2. Although both approaches demonstrate candidate's thinking behind their decision making, the work cannot be awarded in the mark scheme.

Some candidates included explanations of their planning within their research, rather than present the evidence in a separate component in the NEA portfolio. This was problematic for the candidate to access the mark scheme for Research and Planning.

Incomplete planning cannot be awarded marks higher than Band 2, and where this was the case marking was generous.

Hand drawn draft design plans are not appropriate for print and online planning. Although original images are not a requirement for Planning, candidates are required to use appropriate software. Page 23 of the specification states: learners need to have access to suitable software and resources for their production work, which includes planning. Should candidates not use software for their planning, this must be considered when awarding marks.

Not Including visual codes such price, date or issue number front cover of magazine to demonstrate a good application of genre conventions is an area for improvement which was noted by several moderators this series.

AV storyboard templates should include information regarding shot number, type, timing, transition details and technical/sound codes. There is no specified number of frames required for planning, but the advice is approximately 15-20 frames.

AV storyboards should not use post-production stills/ screen grabs. Where this is the case, they can be awarded more than Band 2 since the storyboards are partially relevant and appropriate.

AV storyboard timings should match the allocated time requirements set out for individual briefs.

Candidates working as a pair must produce individual AV storyboards. Teacher coversheets should detail the roles undertaken: camera work/ editing.

Production: Common candidate misconceptions and areas for improvement

Productions must meet the requirement of the specification brief and must be complete to access marks from Band 3.

Print and online Productions must use technology; they cannot be hand drawn.

AV productions can be individual or produced as a pair. If individual, then camerawork or editing is assessed. Individual productions will be assessed for both camerawork and editing.

Production should use original photography for the majority of the production. If this is not the case, marks are limited to Band 2.

Candidates should ensure they construct appropriate genre conventions to their chosen production, and these are sustained across the whole production including, for example appropriate layout and spacing, representation of people in relation to the research texts. Creativity and technical skills are an important skill to demonstrate in the Production artefact. Consideration to the amount of dead space, cropping issues and images that are pixelated will impact the marks awarded for technical and creative skills. In AV, productions which contain limited shot types, lack of transitions and have poor sound quality will not access above Band 2 or 3.

An overreliance on software templates for print and online productions and editing apps in AV should be discouraged as it leads to a lack of originality and creativity.

Reflective Analysis: Common candidate misconceptions and areas for improvement-

Learners should use the word count (500 to 750 words) to analyse and evaluate their production in relation to the two products they researched. Reports which are short will be self-penalising; likewise excessive wording will be capped at 10% over the word maximum allowance, and not assessed further.

Simply explaining and describing the production process or offering suggestions for improvements as a next step do not meet the assessment criteria and will therefore impact of the available marks to be awarded. Candidates should aim to highlight the use of media concepts in productions by focusing on how key genre conventions have been incorporated in their production and refer to how representation issues raised by the production have been constructed. They should also use the report to evaluate how genre conventions and other key features were used to target the specified audience. Candidates are encouraged to be selective and focus on key elements of the production, making comparisons between the products they individually researched and their own completed production. Lack of detailed reference to candidate's research and how this research has influenced their production will impact performance.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking- annotation/comments/accuracy) and moderation – best practice.

Most centres' assessment was secure, and moderators agreed with the centre's judgments regarding the Bands candidates had been placed. Centres with generous assessment will be advised in their centre reports. Generally, over rewarding of work is a result of assessment criteria not reflecting the evidence in the work presented. Moderators saw a few examples of generous marking in all four elements of the NEA portfolios. Generous assessment also resulted from Centres awarding marks for work outside the assessment briefs published by WJEC for the year of the accreditation. Centres which this applied to should read the advice in their reports to avoid repetition of such issues in the future.

Marks cannot be awarded for work which includes extraneous evidence to the specification, (see pages 21-24); centres are advised to consider the explicit criteria in the marking grids for Research, Planning, Production and Reflective Analysis respectively, when task setting and assessing. Generous assessment may also have resulted where there was evidence of non-compliance of the specification.

Most centres adapted an appropriate best-fit approach, using the assessment criteria in the mark grid for each component which best described the evidence.

A reminder to centres that once the Band has been agreed, teachers should assess each piece of work within the Band. At this point summative comments can be written with the justification for marks awarded, and if appropriate, annotations added to the candidate's work. However, there is no requirement for teachers to annotate candidates' work. It is important that when completing the teacher forms, the summative comments refer to the assessment criteria relevant to the Band the work is judged at Centre to have achieved. Further detail exemplifying and pinpointing where the criteria has been met is also needed to indicate how and where the Centre mark has been given. This can be done on the work itself or within the teacher comments. Teacher commentary aids the moderation process.

Across the four component of Unit 3 it is useful to aid marking and moderation to apply the following assessment alongside the specific requirements for Research, Planning Production and Reflective Analysis as set out in the individual marking grids in the specification.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4308

Email: media@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [GCSE Media Studies \(wjec.co.uk\)](https://www.wjec.co.uk/gcse-media-studies)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

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Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

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