MEDIA STUDIES

> **Paper 9607/01**
> **Foundation Portfolio**

Key messages

For success in this coursework component, candidates need to complete one of the two set tasks (video or print), keep a detailed blog of the process of the project, and reflect upon their work in the creative critical reflection. Each of these elements needs to be done to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools. Expectations of evidence from each assessment objective are listed on pages 24–27 of the syllabus. Coursework coversheets need to be completed with clear comments to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective.

General comments

Some excellent work was submitted for this component, demonstrating detailed research into existing magazines and film openings, which fed into the planning and construction of candidates' own media products. There was some high level of skill shown in the use of media tools, in both the products and in the creative critical reflections. In the best work, knowledge and understanding of conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with comprehensive evidence of the process.

However, there were also a very large number of candidates who appeared not to be following the requirements of the syllabus, with incomplete or even wrong tasks being submitted, little or no evidence of research or planning and no attempt to produce a creative critical reflection. Some Centres did not include any comments explaining how the marks were awarded; Centres are reminded that this is a requirement of the syllabus.

Comments on specific tasks

Blogs

Centres should set up blog hubs which allow one-click access to the individual work of candidates. Not only does this help in the moderation process it also reduces the likelihood of errors when transcribing long URLs. Links need to be checked by Centres in advance to ensure that they are working and the finished product should be placed at the top of the blog so that it is clear to moderators which is the final version. The best work was comprehensive, with blogposts that followed the whole process of the project and showed clear evidence of research into all aspects which then influenced the finished work. Very short blogs did not evidence enough of the process to justify more than Level 2 marks on the whole. All elements of the project must be online, either on or linked to the blog. Disks, USBs and printouts should not be sent.

There is an expectation that there will be a significant number of blogposts from each individual to document the process. The most effective blogs were those which used a linear format to order blogposts from most recent to earliest, with the earliest post last, and the most recent post at the top. They included a range of materials posted over the duration of the project, illustrating the production process from research and initial ideas to final production and critical reflection.

Creative critical reflections

Candidates who fully addressed the four questions using varied digital formats performed best in this area. There are a number of social tools which enabled really interesting and reflective work, appropriate to the task. There were some excellent voiceover videos with extracts from the finished product and from the process and some really imaginative approaches to which adequate time had been allocated. Weaker work tended to be text-heavy and just used PowerPoint or Prezi, often in very abrupt slides with little illustration. Such work could only meet the criteria for minimal marks.

Products

Magazines

The syllabus requires candidates to produce the front cover, contents page and a double page spread of a new magazine, including a minimum of four images and made up of entirely original material. On the whole, candidates fulfilled the brief, with understanding of features of design, layout, font choice and size in evidence, as well as lots of well-shot photographs. Some candidates would have benefited from more support in building their skills with the software- a DTP package such as InDesign is really needed for this task- and particularly with their understanding of conventions. Opportunities for interim feedback need to be built in to the task so that candidates can benefit from the critical eye of peers and teachers, particularly in relation to how far they have carried through their research into their own products.

Many candidates did seem to need further support in making appropriate images for their magazines. Too many relied upon 'snapshots' taken with their mobile phones. There also needs to be a wider range of appropriate images with many candidates simply presenting the minimum number of images required rather than considering what their magazine actually needed.

Film Openings

This task involves the production of the first two minutes of an imaginary feature film, including the titles, adhering to commercial cinema conventions. This worked best when candidates had researched film openings relevant to their own genre choice and had developed a systematic understanding of the institutional conventions of opening titles. Candidates need to consider carefully what purpose an opening must serve in establishing enigma for the rest of the film to solve. In some cases, candidates produced film openings which were effectively entire short films, or trailers which gave away too much of the story. A key feature of the task is how far the finished text is 'readable' as a film opening. Again, expectations for work in Level 4 and 5 is that a high level of skill with techniques will be in evidence, including camerawork, sound, use of mise-en-scène and editing. Interim deadlines can assist candidates with feedback on the effectiveness of their work.

Candidates need to have access to appropriate equipment to complete the task. In some cases, films were shot poorly on mobile phones, often in portrait mode and with minimal editing. At this level, a more sophisticated approach to the task is expected.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/02
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

For this examination, candidates need to analyse the extract from an American TV drama, identifying how it constructs meaning through camerawork, editing, mise-en-scène and sound. Candidates need to be able to adapt their learning about the media in order to answer one of two optional questions, which in this session were about marketing and ownership. For the textual analysis question, an understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to be able to attempt the question. To allow candidates to respond to Section B, candidates must handle a range of examples from a variety of media texts with confidence.

General comments

There was a good spread of marks across both sections of the paper, with many candidates showing evidence of thorough preparation, writing at length and supporting points with appropriate examples. However, some candidates appeared to be unprepared, especially for **Questions 2** and **3**, lacking adequate examples to support their points and properly answer the question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Stronger responses considered the clip in its entirety and links were formed between different sections of the extract. Weakest candidates listed elements without considering the effect these had on meaning of the extract. Candidates on the whole demonstrated good use of terminology. Camera terms were the most popular, with a range of shot types discussed. Editing was analysed less securely, with a large proportion of responses failing to move beyond a few basic terms and to appropriately link the use of editing to how meaning was created. Many candidates misused the term 'jump cut'; there were no jump cuts in this sequence. Sound terms again were limited, with many responses failing to move beyond diegetic and non-diegetic. There were some interesting observations on the use of lighting to creating mood and atmosphere, and identification of the connotations of costume and how these linked to meaning was also frequently apparent.

A number of scripts were limited in their analysis as candidates focused on one type of representation, and sometimes not the most obvious one to discuss. A broader approach to meaning would facilitate higher marks on the whole. This was particularly evident in responses where candidates focused on representation of gender. In those instances they often neglected aspects that were more readily apparent, and would strain themselves to explain their point using a marginal character that appears briefly on screen, building a case which was hard to justify from the evidence. Indeed, it was surprising how many candidates misinterpreted the various characters – a considerable number of responses referred to the main character's opponent in the debate as a news anchor.

Section B

Question 2

The majority of responses tackled the media area of film. Digital distribution was the most popular question choice with a large number of candidates focusing on video on demand and streaming services. Good

responses looked at the advantages and disadvantages of this but a lot of candidates failed to expand and merely listed the different providers. Many responses were solely focused on marketing which was hard to credit, given the wording of the question. A lack of media examples characterised a lot of the responses which resulted in missed opportunities to demonstrate factual knowledge.

The media area of print lent itself particularly well to this question, with a number of candidates demonstrating understanding of the shift to digital distribution and the implications on the industry. In addition there were a number of music responses that were successful in articulating the current shifts in the industry. Reference to Taylor Swift and Beyonce's refusal to engage in music streaming sites was popular. Likewise, there were a number of references to specific artists exclusively using streaming sites to release material. These examples allowed candidates to demonstrate understanding of current institution practices.

The effect on consumption was usually described as an increase/decrease rather than addressing possible new practices of consumption.

Question 3

Of the two questions this was answered less successfully, with candidates failing to capitalise on the change of production technologies within the relevant industries. In some cases, candidates confused the two questions in their response and failing to adequately answer the question, often referring to distribution technology rather than production. Some candidates used examples which were well out of date, notably a number of responses on contemporary production which were entirely focused on the production of *Titanic* (1997), made before they were born.

On both questions, there was a lack of evidence of case study being undertaken: answers were often general 'thoughts' about the question area. Where case studies had been taught, they were often desperately attempting to fit it to the question. Finally, responses were often scattered with appropriate terminology but with little evidence of the understanding of these terms.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/03
Advanced Portfolio

Key messages

For success in this coursework paper, candidates need to complete one of the four optional tasks, keep a detailed blog of the process of the project, and reflect upon their work in the creative critical reflection. Each of these elements needs to be done to a high standard, demonstrating knowledge and understanding, research and planning, and appropriate skilled use of media tools. Expectations of evidence from each assessment objective are listed on pages 27–30 of the syllabus. Coursework coversheets need to be completed with clear comments for each candidate to show how marks have been arrived at for each assessment objective.

General comments

Some excellent work was submitted for this component, demonstrating detailed research into existing products, which fed into the planning and construction of candidates' own media products. There was some high level of skill shown in the use of media tools, in both the products and in the creative critical reflections. In the best work, knowledge and understanding of conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with comprehensive evidence of the process. In some cases, candidates did not complete all three elements of the set brief; it is important that both major and minor tasks are completed.

Comments on specific tasks

Blogs

Centres should set up blog hubs which allow one-click access to the individual work of candidates. Not only does this help in the moderation process it also reduces the likelihood of errors when transcribing long URLs. Links need to be checked by Centres in advance to ensure that they are working and the finished product should be placed at the top of the blog so that it is clear which is the final version. The best work was comprehensive, with blogposts which followed the whole process of the project and showed clear evidence of research into all aspects which then influenced the finished work. Very short blogs did not evidence enough of the process to justify more than Level 2 marks on the whole. All elements of the project must be online, either on or linked to the blog. Disks, USBs and printouts should not be sent.

There is an expectation that there will be a significant number of blogposts from each individual to document the process. The most effective blogs were those which used a linear format to order blogposts from most recent to earliest, with the earliest post last, and the most recent post at the top. They included a range of materials posted over the duration of the project, illustrating the process of production from research and initial ideas to final production and critical reflection.

Creative critical reflections

Candidates who fully addressed the four questions using varied digital formats performed best in this area. There are a number of social tools which enabled really interesting and reflective work, appropriate to the task. There were some excellent voiceover videos with extracts from the finished product and from the process and some really imaginative approaches to which adequate time had been allocated. Weaker work tended to be text-heavy and just used PowerPoint or Prezi, often in very abrupt slides with little illustration. Such work could only meet the criteria for minimal marks.

Set Briefs

Music Promotion Package

This was often done very well. Candidates who demonstrated an understanding of the codes and conventions of music videos through detailed research into relevant examples were able to translate this into their own work. The best music videos showed good pace and the ability to lip-sync and edit to the rhythm. Digipacks were generally formatted appropriately, with the best being evidently the result of development over a period of time, rather than an afterthought. Websites for artists often used templates such as Wix to good effect.

Film Promotion Package

The best examples of work here featured pacey trailers which showed a clear grasp of the conventions of the form. Posters and a website which captured the sense of branding were most effective. This task requires candidates to develop a real sense of what the whole film would be like in a simulation of the film industry's marketing practice, so needs to be based upon quite a lot of research into existing examples. The best work showed this and also showed strong skills with photography, editing and image manipulation programs.

Documentary Package

There were a few examples submitted for this option, the best of which showed a strong engagement with the subject matter coupled with excellent research into the form and the demonstration of strong skills in the making of the texts. Once again, minor tasks were best when they had been done in parallel with the major task.

Short Film Package

This was almost as popular a task as the music promotion package. At their best, some of the short films came close to professional standard, with excellent use of actors, locations and narrative. Weaker examples tended to lack structure and showed limited skills with camera and editing. The postcard task needed to draw upon research into similar examples; websites at their best were done well with a clear sense of audience.

MEDIA STUDIES

Key messages

This component requires reflection on the coursework undertaken and the skills developed, analysis of one piece of coursework using a theoretical framework, and an extended response on one contemporary media theme.

General comments

There was a good spread of marks across the entry for this. Some candidates successfully applied a high standard of analytical skills and were able to write at great length in a limited time. Conversely, there were a number of candidates who did not appear to have been prepared for the topics, with limited material to cite as examples. Some candidates referred to 'theorists' who were actually former Media Studies students that had posted their notes on particular theories on blogs. Centres should structure learning about media theory carefully to ensure candidates do not rely on internet searches.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a)   Most candidates were able to identify some features of their research and planning, and were able to discuss its impact upon their work. The best responses contained lots of detail and related it closely to the question set, ranging across their projects and reflecting upon how these skills developed across the course and helped their final work.

(b)   Where candidates had been taught the concept of narrative, and had some relevant theory to use, this question was well answered. Where they had not addressed the concept or prepared for the exam, they quickly ran out of material. Strong responses made detailed reference to their own production and applied theory effectively. Weak responses tended to refer to irrelevant theory or showed little understanding of what is meant by narrative.

Section B

For all topics, it is important to note that candidates will need case study material in order to support their argument. In many cases, this was lacking, with vague assertions often coupled with inaccurate theory and very limited examples. It is expected that theorists will be accurately named and that the ideas ascribed to them will indeed be theirs. Such theory then needs testing out on examples of media texts.

Questions 2 and 3: Regulation

Most examples came from the UK. Film and the press featured strongly, with some responses also looking at the Internet and videogames. In some cases, candidates appeared to have written a response without having studied the topic and these were very weak and opinionated. In the stronger answers, examples were used effectively.

Questions 4 and 5: Global media

There were a lot of answers on this topic this year and those who were able to refer to detailed case studies were able to answer well. However, most responses treated the topic on a very superficial level offering no

examples in any depth or detail as if the answer to the questions were self-evident simply by citing 'the Internet'.

Questions 6 and 7: Media and collective identity

There were a range of collective identities used as examples in responding to these questions. Where the examples were substantive, candidates were able to respond well. It would be nice to see more local case studies used as most tended to be UK based.

Questions 8 and 9: Media in the online age

This was a popular topic with some strong responses making reference to contemporary theory. There were also many weak 'common sense' responses, which were often quite short and appeared not to be the result of any sustained teaching or learning. In order to do well on this topic, candidates need to have a framework for understanding the online age, which includes reference to theory and detailed case studies. There were too many responses which simply outlined basic information about the web which was not the result of any systematic study, but simply from 'being alive' in 2016.

Questions 10 and 11: Post-modern media

This topic resulted in some very strong responses with a range of good examples used to explain postmodernism and some intelligent reference to theory.