

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/01
Foundation Portfolio

Key messages

For success in this coursework paper, 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 number of candidates who submitted little evidence of research or planning and very weak final productions which demonstrated a little understanding of codes and conventions. There was also a significant number of Centres which submitted work without any justification for the marks they had awarded. Moderators rely on Centres to explain how they have allocated marks, in order to decide whether or not they can support the Centre's marking.

Comments on specific tasks

Blogs

Centres must set up blog hubs which allow one click access to the individual work of candidates. Typing in long URLs runs the risk of errors. 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 and labelled as such, 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 of the production, which then feed into the finished work. Very short blogs did not provide enough evidence enough of the process to justify more than Level 2 marks on the whole. Centres are once again reminded that **all** elements of the project must be online, either on or linked to the blog. Disks, USBs and printouts should not be sent, and will be disregarded by Moderators.

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, organising the blog so that the earliest post is last and the most recent post is first. It is also vital that blogs 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 creative 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.

Overall, the best magazine work drew upon real media practice from the research, showed how such conventions fed into the production through the planning and resulted in outcomes where this was clearly evident. This then enabled in-depth understanding to be further demonstrated in the creative critical reflections.

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 or 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- camerawork, sound, use of mise-en-scene and editing- and again that interim deadlines can assist candidates with feedback on the effectiveness of their work.

Overall, the best film openings drew upon real media practice as discovered through thorough research. Better candidates showed how such conventions fed into the production through the planning phase, and this was clearly evidenced in the high standard of film opening produced. Finally, this understanding was reinforced through the creative critical reflection, showing clear appreciation for the impact of form, genre and narrative as well as the technical processes, and how candidates had combined this knowledge and understanding in order to create meaning.

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 must set up blog hubs which allow one click access to the individual work of candidates. Typing in long URLs runs the risk of errors. 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 and labelled as such, 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 of the production, which then feed into the finished work. Very short blogs did not provide enough evidence enough of the process to justify more than Level 2 marks on the whole. Centres are once again reminded that **all** elements of the project must be online, either on or linked to the blog. Disks, USBs and printouts should not be sent, and will be disregarded by Moderators.

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, organising the blog so that the earliest post is last and the most recent post is first. It is also vital that blogs 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 creative 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.

In the productions themselves, across all four options, outcomes were most effective where candidates had learned from their research into existing media texts and used this in their planning and construction.

Set Briefs

Music Promotion Package

This was often done very well. Candidates who demonstrated an understanding of the codes and conventions of music video 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 lipsynch 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 pacy 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

The best examples submitted for this option 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

Paper 9607/21
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

In Section A candidates analyse an extract from an American TV drama, and consider how it constructs meaning through camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to be able to attempt the question, which this session was based on an extract from Fargo.

In Section B they need to be able to adapt their learning about the media industry they have studied to one of two optional questions, which in this session were about synergy/cross media and targeting media at local/national audiences. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

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. There were, however, many responses which lacked detailed contemporary examples to illustrate points, which was frustrating, as often the candidates understood concepts and produced sound arguments.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

It was pleasing to see evidence of some effective teaching of all of the technical skills with the majority of candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately and with ease. However, some candidates just identified elements and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer; this then did not give them the opportunity to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently they were unable to achieve higher marks.

At the higher end of the range there were some excellent responses which clearly highlighted candidates' understanding of the ways in which meaning is constructed through the use of different technical areas. There were some very sophisticated, analytical responses which highlighted an understanding of how meaning and representation is created.

Common problems in responses were reliance upon description, rather than analysis; candidates missing the tone of the sequence (the comedy) and inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' when they meant 'cut'). Some candidates tried to apply theory in their responses (e.g. Propp's analysis) which was not really necessary or relevant. In some cases, there was an attempt to analyse the sequence solely in terms of gender representation. Whilst this can be useful and relevant, it tended to limit the scope of responses.

Of the four technical areas, editing and sound were handled least well and these should be areas for attention in the teaching.

Section B

Question 2 – Cross media convergence and synergy

The question was accessible to all candidates and elicited a wide range of responses; most case studies tended to focus on the film and music industry with many of these resulting in accomplished responses. However, many candidates just took the whole phrase *cross media convergence and synergy* and answered the question in relation to both without always distinguishing the separate role each of these components has to media areas. Disney/Pixar/Marvel were the often used as examples. Generalised responses which clearly showed understanding of key concepts but lacked specific evidence from case studies were often in evidence. In some cases examples were well out of date, and centres are reminded that contemporary examples are likely to indicate a wider engagement with the subject .

Question 3 – How do media institutions target national and local audiences in media area you have studied?

Responses tended to be less successful, with many candidates ignoring the key words 'national' and 'local' and instead focussing on targeting generally. Local targeting was an issue for many candidates who just subsumed the phrase within national targeting. Some of the best responses were on print (Hearst, Cosmopolitan, National Geographic, New York Times) which talked about how the magazine had specifically adapted to include/target different audiences notably through online versions. Better responses developed the ways in which magazines had used convergence and synergy to increase their brand and target audience, including a wide range of examples of local and national targeting. The weakest responses produced a potted history and did not always place emphasis on contemporary examples.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/22
Key Media Concepts

Key messages

In Section A candidates analyse an extract from an American TV drama, and consider how it constructs meaning through camerawork, editing, mise-en-scene and sound. An understanding of technical codes in moving image media is essential for candidates to be able to attempt the question, which this session was based on an extract from 24.

In Section B they need to be able to adapt their learning about the media industry they have studied to one of two optional questions, which in this session were about ownership and funding and audience use of technology. Candidates should support their responses using examples taken from the contemporary media landscape.

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. There were, however, many responses which lacked detailed contemporary examples to illustrate points, which was frustrating, as often the candidates understood concepts and produced sound arguments.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

It was pleasing to see evidence of some effective teaching of all of the technical skills with the majority of candidates able to identify a wide range of elements accurately and with ease. However, some candidates just identified elements and did not develop their answers much further when it came to exploring what the impact of these technical elements would have upon the viewer; this then did not give them the opportunity to explore meaning and representation, and subsequently they were unable to achieve higher marks.

At the higher end of the range there were some excellent responses which clearly highlighted candidates' understanding of the ways in which meaning is constructed through the use of different technical areas. There were some very sophisticated, analytical responses which highlighted an outstanding understanding of how meaning and representation is created.

Common problems in responses were reliance upon description, rather than analysis; candidates missing the tone of the sequence (the comedy) and inaccurate use of terminology (for example using the term 'jump cut' when they meant 'cut'). Some candidates tried to apply theory in their responses (e.g. Propp's analysis) which was not really necessary or relevant. In some cases, there was an attempt to analyse the sequence solely in terms of gender representation. Whilst this can be useful and relevant, it tended to limit the scope of responses.

Of the four technical areas, editing and sound were handled least well and these should be areas for attention in the teaching.

Section B

Question 2 – How important are media ownership and funding in understanding contemporary media practice?

This was generally well answered: when candidates had researched the case study thoroughly the response was often strong. A number of candidates produced generic responses which highlighted understanding on a general level of the key concepts, but these were not always then substantiated in detail. The best responses had a developed knowledge and understanding of the specific institutions and were able to reel out contemporary information about their chosen institutions in a convincing and well-argued manner. There were some good comparisons between the oligopolies and the independent labels which highlighted how marketing strategies have to change dependent upon the ownership and funding, and the aims of the institution itself.

Most case studies were adequate for the question, though there were some questionable interpretations of 'contemporary' in places, notably with examples from the last century, such as *The Blair Witch Project* and *Titanic*. Centres should encourage candidates to seek out more recent, and perhaps more relevant, examples, as a means of engaging with the subject and the case study.

Question 3 – How far have audiences adapted to the changes in media technologies in recent years?

Generally, this question was well answered, although some candidates struggled with the basic skills of essay writing, such as focusing on the key aspects of the questions. Many candidates included a range of excellent facts, but focused on the institution rather than audiences. Also the 'How far' element of the question was often overlooked. There were a number of excellent arguments about the impact of online media. Technological advances within the film industry and the impact on audiences was explored, and there were some excellent responses about the advancements of technology, the use of CGI and special effects, and how this has shown a significant increase in audience viewing figures. Some candidates made some very effective discussions about increased profits for institutions, concluding that this ironically resulted in a marketplace with limited choice for consumers, with particular franchises dominating the market and little room for innovation in terms of variety and niche audiences.

Again some case studies were well out of date and centres are reminded of the need to study the contemporary media landscape.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/41
Critical Perspectives

Key Messages

This paper 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

The ability range of the relatively small number of entries for this paper was broad. At the top end, there was evidence of high level analytical skill and the ability to write at great length within a limited time. At the bottom end, there were a number of candidates who did not appear to have been prepared for the topics, with limited material to cite as examples.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1(a)

Most candidates were able to discuss their use of digital technology in their coursework and to discuss its impact. 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. Better candidates showed an excellent understanding of how they created meaning in light of their development of digital technology skills.

Question 1(b)

Where candidates knew what is meant by media language and applied it rigorously to an example of their work, with reference to media theory, they did well. Unfortunately there were many candidates who had no idea what media language meant, which is surprising given its status as one of the four key concepts of the subject; such candidates struggled to produce a relevant response.

Section B

For all topics, it is important to note that candidates will need case study material in order to support their argument. The best responses synthesised theory, texts and arguments, and ranged across at least two media forms in some depth. They supported their answer with detailed examples which were relevant to the set question, with a clear, coherent and developed argument exploring the issues of the question.

Media in the online age and Global media were the most popular topics, followed by Post-modern media, Media and collective identity and Media regulation.

Questions 2 and 3: Regulation

Question 2 asked 'How far can media regulation be effective?' This question was the more popular of the two, with some good responses comparing tangible forms of regulation, such as the BBFC, with the difficulty of regulation across borders with the internet. Videogames and the press also featured strongly and in the stronger responses, examples were mobilised effectively. **Question 3** asked 'To what extent do issues of media regulation reflect wider issues in society?' and might have appeared on first impression to be a more challenging question, which perhaps explains the fact that fewer candidates attempted to make a response to this question. Those who did attempt it often took on their local context quite effectively, especially some

Centres from Pakistan, with others making good use of case studies such as China, North Korea, Iran and policy regarding regulation of the internet.

Questions 4 and 5: Global media

Question 4 contained a quotation: “Media are increasingly global in terms of distribution,” asking candidates to consider how far they agreed. Those making use of detailed case studies were able to answer well, but less successful responses tended to rely on making generalized comments. The alternative, **Question 5**, was the more popular of the two, and asked ‘To what extent have global media affected national cultures’. The best responses made very good use of the local context and drew upon a range of examples to good effect.

Questions 6 and 7: Media and collective identity

Question 6 again focused on a quotation “Contemporary media always end up stereotyping particular groups of people,” asking candidates how far they agreed, whereas **Question 7** focused on a comparison between contemporary representation of specific social groups to that of previous time periods. The two questions were equally popular. In both cases, there were a range of collective identities used as examples, from very broad categories, such as women or ‘old people’, to very specific representations, such as Russians or people with disabilities. When the examples analysed were substantive, candidates were able to respond well. However, in a number of cases, responses turned into an invective about inequality, rather than analysing media texts and looking at nuances of the argument. There were some effective references to theory in response to this topic.

Questions 8 and 9: Media in the online age

Question 8 asked ‘To what extent have online media revolutionised distribution’. The best responses had clear examples from case studies and made use of a range of ideas from writers on the subject. Weaker answers tended to rehearse everyday knowledge about the online age which would be known without having studied the topic. **Question 9** asked candidates to evaluate the claim that online media have a democratising effect. This was seen by candidates as a more challenging question, with fewer responses, but those that approached it with relevant material from their studies did well. The very best answers really engaged with the idea that the relationship between online media and democracy is a complex one.

Questions 10 and 11: Post-modern media

Question 10 used a quotation: “There is no single definition of post-modernism,” to engage candidates with competing definitions of the term. Here there were a lot of rehearsals of different theoretical positions, with the best responses supported by detailed use of examples from a range of media texts. **Question 11** was less popular and it asked candidates to consider the arguments for and against understanding some forms of media as post-modern. This topic resulted in some very strong responses with a range of good examples across a variety of media forms used to explain post-modernism and some intelligent reference to theory.

MEDIA STUDIES

Paper 9607/42
Critical Perspectives

Key Messages

This paper 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.

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Where candidates knew what is meant by media language and applied it rigorously to an example of their work, with reference to media theory, they did well. Unfortunately there were many candidates who had no idea what media language meant, which is surprising given its status as one of the four key concepts of the subject; such candidates struggled to produce a relevant response.

Section B

For all topics, it is important to note that candidates will need case study material in order to support their argument. The best responses synthesised theory, texts and arguments, and ranged across at least two media forms in some depth. They supported their answer with detailed examples which were relevant to the set question, with a clear, coherent and developed argument exploring the issues of the question.

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