
AS

MEDIA STUDIES

7571/C Creating a media product
Report on the Examination

7571
June 2018

Version: 1.0

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General

This was the first time this AS non-exam assessment (NEA) component has been completed and it has been a pleasure to moderate as students worked on the new style briefs.

The students had three briefs to choose from. The majority of students completed brief 3, the magazine production. Brief 1, the music video, was the second most popular brief, with brief 2, the radio drama, only being completed by a very small proportion of the students who entered this year.

Administration

There were no major administrative issues encountered during moderation. Schools and colleges are reminded that work should be marked and the marks uploaded to the e-sub system by May 15th. The system will indicate which folders then need sending to the moderator. Work should be sent within five working days. Many schools/colleges sent work well before the deadline.

Each folder should include a signed Candidate Record Form (CRF). Please ensure that the form is fully completed, including providing information on any found images/footage included within the production work and details of any unassisted participants and their roles in the production of the final product. Some CRFs only offered the most basic of information. The more information that teachers can offer to contextualise the work, the easier it is for moderators to understand the reasoning behind the marks awarded.

Centres are required to complete one Centre Declaration Sheet (CDS) for each cohort (one from each school/college if submitting as part of a consortium).

It is important that the statement of intent shows evidence of marking with notes and annotation, even when summative comments are provided in other formats. It is most helpful when comments about the work not only reference the mark scheme but also indicate how or where the student has evidenced the knowledge or skill that is being rewarded. Schools and colleges are free to submit their own documentation for recording marks and/or making notes but this must be in addition to the completed CRF and CDS.

Each student's submission should consist of:

- a signed CRF with teacher notes and comments (continued on separate sheets if required)
- the statement of intent (with evidence of marking)
- the production (presented as per the [Notes and guidance: Component 2 – Submitting NEA evidence](#) document).

No further documentation or evidence is required.

There were occasional issues when trying to access students' work. Sometimes data files were corrupt or could not be opened. Schools/colleges are reminded to keep copies of any digital files sent as part of the sample as moderators may occasionally need to ask for duplicates to be sent. Some students were on study leave when work was requested and teachers then struggled to contact students, delaying the process and creating significant extra work for themselves.

Marking criteria

All schools and colleges must use the marking criteria in the specification (pages 17-22) to assess students' work. It is appreciated that in the first year of any specification, this can be a difficult task. Exemplar marked work was made available on e-AQA and teacher standardising material is also available online. These pieces of work are marked and have accompanying commentaries to explain the application of the mark scheme. The statement of intent is marked separately and can be awarded a maximum of 10 marks. Production tasks across all platforms are marked in the same way using the marking criteria, which is divided into three sections; media language, representation, and audience and industry, giving a total of 50 further marks.

Media language (15 marks)

This section of the marking criteria looks to reward students for their ability to use media language choices to create meaning for the audience in a way that is appropriate to the target audience and the brief's requirements. Students can be rewarded for their ability to use media language to create both denotations and connotations, and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in the way media language is used to construct meaning. This can include the use and/or subversion of genre codes and the construction of narrative.

Representation (15 marks)

Students should be considering the named target audience provided in the brief and create representations that are appropriate and appealing for that audience. Representations could be of people or groups as well as activities, ideas and issues depending on the brief chosen. Students can be rewarded for combining media language choices to create meaning as well as the use and/or subversion of stereotypes and the way they are used in service of the overall aims of the production.

Audience and industry (20 marks)

This area of the marking criteria seeks to reward the students' use of media language to create a coherent production that will appeal to the target audience. Part of this will be in the way students are able to present their work in a way that enables the audience to engage and understand the messages being constructed. Students should show knowledge and understanding of the form and ensure that their use (or subversion of) codes and conventions consider both the industrial context of the production and the need to communicate effectively to the audience.

The statement of intent (10 marks)

The statement of intent seeks to reward students' knowledge of the theoretical framework in the context of responding to the brief and planning for production work. This is only a very short piece of written work (400 words). Students should outline some of their plans for production in a way that demonstrates their engagement with ideas coming from the brief, whether this is, for example, demonstrating an understanding of how to appeal to a niche audience or meet some of the industrial demands of the brief. Students whose work was awarded in the higher levels gave detailed explanations for their decisions and were specific in their identification of the media language choices they would make to achieve their stated aims. Those students whose statements of intent were awarded marks in the lower levels of the marking criteria often described their ideas rather than explaining their reasoning, or made statements of what they wanted to achieve but did not offer any detail as to how they would do this. With such a small word count, students should be

encouraged to offer fewer points/ideas but be prepared to offer specific examples. Strong statements of intent were sharply focused on using the theoretical framework to discuss production plans.

The specification states that statements of intent should be written and submitted before the completion of the production work but the tenses used in some submissions indicated that the written work was completed after the productions. This means that the work is less likely to be awarded marks in the higher levels of the marking criteria as the students are not being asked to evaluate production work. Some schools and colleges provided a written framework for students, which often limited the scope of the statement of intent.

The briefs

Brief 1: Moving image production – Music video

It was good to see a range of different approaches to creating a music video that aims to communicate a social issue. Topics were wide-ranging and included cyber-bullying, body image issues, ideas about health (anti-smoking, anti-drugs and anti-drinking messages were common) and the environment. Some students produced material that met both of the aims specified in the brief, which were to communicate a social issue and to promote the song and artist. Higher level work often intercut between the performance of the song and a narrative related to the message. Some work was quite literal whilst other students opted to use metaphors and symbolic representations of the message. Both approaches were valid and could be rewarded. Visual storytelling through the considered use of media language was often used very effectively by students and they were awarded marks in the upper levels of the marking criteria. Similarly, these students often constructed images that showed a clear intention to create visual/aesthetic appeal and helped sustain audience interest by using a variety of camera shots and editing decisions that were purposefully chosen. Some students lost focus on the idea of this production being a music video. Less successful work focused solely on the issue and created what was in effect a short narrative with music. The brief did ask the students to include the artist in some way and also to keep in mind a music video's function as a marketing tool. Narratives focused only on the issue did not tend to communicate ideas about the artist's brand image or the musical genre.

Brief 2: Audio production – Radio drama

This was by far the least popular production task and very few were seen at moderation. Most of the students who worked in this area presented work that showed evidence of careful scripting and sound design. They provided interesting narratives that followed the conventions of using sound and voices to communicate meaning.

Brief 3: Print production – Magazine

As with moving image productions, students offered a range of approaches to the print production task. They produced magazines on many topics identified as being targeted towards a niche audience. Moderators saw magazines covering a range of sporting topics (football and weight training were popular choices) as well as more domestic topics, such as cookery, knitting, crafting and DIY. Travel was also a popular topic, as was music, film, architecture and interior design. With briefs such as this, it is hoped that students will find topics that interest them and it was clear that some magazines were 'passion projects' and it was really pleasing to see the students' engagement and enthusiasm transfer through into their work.

Stronger students showed both good levels of understanding and application of their own ideas in their approaches to illustrating their productions. It is important that students create their own original images for print production and, in doing so, consider how their images (in combination with other design elements) create meaning. Marks were limited where students used images as simple, literal representations of objects. Work that was awarded marks in the higher levels of the marking criteria used images to create connotative meaning and construct narratives. Some food magazines showed the food being discussed in the articles but a simple picture of a cup-cake or the very popular overnight oats gave little scope for higher marks. Images that were contextualised in some way where an idea about the food was created, rather than just a simple denotation about the food created, could be rewarded with higher marks for both media language and the construction of representation.

Weaker students tended not to show a confident knowledge of the codes and conventions of the media products they were presenting. Front pages tended to be better than feature articles at this level with some tables of content showing a clear understanding of the function of the form, which is the need to summarise the magazine's content and make it attractive and accessible for the target audience, both in terms of locating the information in the magazine as well as a visual representation of the magazine's contents. Some weaker students presented confused tables of content, which did not help the reader identify or find the content within the magazine, whilst stronger students considered readability and legibility, and attempted to 'tempt' the reader into the magazine with appealing or intriguing images and descriptions. Whilst front pages were more successful overall, not all students considered how the use of A4 impacted on the proportions of the page. Stronger students adapted the size and position of the cover lines, the size of the title and the dominant image, etc, to create a balanced and well-proportioned front page. Some students presented their magazines on pages that were similar to the non-A4 size used by many magazines. These were often more successful in terms of proportion, readability and effectiveness. The most successful double page spreads were the ones where students demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the way layout and design is used to appeal and communicate ideas to the audience. Stronger double page spreads were ones where students showed knowledge and understanding of the way columns, headings, subheadings, pull quotes and other page design features are crucial in the clear and effective communication of messages to audiences. These submissions indicated that existing magazines had been analysed and the knowledge of conventions was applied to the production work.

In some submissions, students had made extensive use of non-original, found images and it should be noted that this is something to be avoided. The minimum number of original images required is identified within each brief and page 16 of the specification says 'students should not use any non-original material in their media products'. Similarly, repeating the same or very similar images across pages limits the student's ability to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how to make media language choices and create representations in different ways.

Submission of work

When submitting print work, it should be printed out for marking and moderation. Please do not send work in plastic wallets. Any audio/video work should be submitted as a data file on a pen-drive. It is important to ensure that pen-drives/data files are clearly labelled so that individual students' work can be easily found by the moderator. Schools/colleges can send one pen-drive per student or the full cohorts' submission on a single pen-drive. Work should not be submitted on CDs/DVDs.

Going forward

AQA will no longer be accepting the submission of students' work 'live' online. This applies to video and audio work, as well as e-media.

Students can construct e-media productions using standalone software or using online website building tools. When using the latter, students should be encouraged to avoid just populating pre-made templates as they should be making decisions about the media language choices of the page design as well as the content.

There are several options for submitting e-media work.

Where work is created online students can:

- i. Screen grab each page of their production and present it as print outs, such as a PowerPoint or a PDF. Students can annotate or create brief notes to explain details about the production that may not be fully clear in a printout. Any audio, video or other multi-media content should be sent as a data file alongside the printouts. Schools and colleges are free to use any method they wish to present offline work. However, they should be mindful about their moderator's ability to access submissions and so work must be presented in universally accessible formats.
- ii. Alternatively, students can create a video file presenting e-media work as a recorded 'walk through'. If students wish to demonstrate their use of moving image and/or sound embedded in the website, this method allows them to do this and also has the benefit of allowing the students' work to be seen in the way that was intended. Students do not need to create any descriptions or any other additional information as a voice-over. The videos can then be submitted as a data file on a pen-drive.

Where work is created offline the final production should be saved to a pen-drive in a format that will allow the work to be accessed via a browser. It's a good idea to check finalised e-media work through different browsers in case the students' work appears differently in Chrome or Safari for example.

Further support

The following support is available:

- briefs change for each academic year and are published on e-AQA
- each school/college has an NEA advisor available to them to offer guidance and the Curriculum Team at AQA can put you in touch with them (mediastudies@aqa.org.uk)
- [teacher standardisation materials](#) are available online
- a range of sample NEA briefs and annotated work are available on e-AQA
- the AS specification
- a range of teaching resources are available on the [AQA website](#).

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.