



GCE

Media Studies

Advanced Subsidiary Level **H009**

OCR Report to Centres June 2018

About this Examiner Report to Centres

This report on the 2018 Summer assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful
- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection
- points of advice for future examinations

It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

The report also includes links and brief information on:

- A reminder of our **post-results services** including **reviews of results**
- Link to **grade boundaries**
- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme

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H009/01 Media Today

1. General Comments:

The H009 question paper enabled all candidates to engage with the questions set. Candidates appeared to enjoy the paper and centres on the whole prepared their candidates well.

The performance of the candidates for component H009 Media Today was good and responses very positive. The question paper enabled candidates to provide a variety of responses to the Assessment Objectives AO1 and AO2 of the component. Where candidates managed their time according to all six questions, and wrote focused and relevant detailed responses they achieved well. On the whole, candidates attempted to address the questions set and highest level responses did so with responses demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the contexts of media, institutional process and their influence on media products across all six questions. These candidates were able to make judgement and reach conclusions on media texts, and their contexts, and where appropriate make connection to academic ideas. Lesser achieving candidates could offer adequate analysis of media products, description of the text with partial relation to their contexts and occasionally with the use of 'general' academic theory.

Centres should ensure that plenty of timed practice is given to candidates and an understanding of the weightings of marks given to each question and how long they should be spending on these established. The OCR guidance on the marks and weighting for this paper can be referenced on slide four of the annotated specimen assessment materials presentation:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce/as-a-level-gce-media-studies-h009-h409-from-2017/assessment/#as-level>.

Frequently candidates omitted a question or needed improvement in the time management of the paper, and in some cases this led to a minimum number of marks being credited. In terms of the strategies used to answer the question paper most candidates opted to complete questions in chronological order. However, some more able candidates responded to the unseen sources first and then the Long Form Television Drama question, which appeared to be an excellent approach. There was evidence that the most detailed and comprehensive responses addressed Question 4/5 or 6 first, and Questions 1/2/3 later on, enabling better management of time. Few candidates sought to answer Question 1 in a bullet point format, a strategy which would help candidates in the future, and in addressing a short five mark question. There were no rubric issues with the paper.

2. Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

On the whole this question was successfully answered. Most candidates were credited for identifying economic contexts around budget and production costs; and how, Disney as a conglomerate media company has the ability to vertically and horizontally integrate business interests. It was possible on most responses to get full marks with two fully developed points that linked to factually accurate information, for example, Disney has annual revenue of over US\$55 Billion with assets of nearly US\$100 Billion. Candidates could also reference the

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economic context of film production, and explain how economic factors, including different types of ownership, influence funding models for film production. The best responses clearly identified the budget and investment in CGI and new 3D cameras, but also showed an awareness of budgeting for actors and linking to the synergy of working with other production companies, including Jon Favreau, Jim Henson and MPC.

Lesser achieving responses were simply too descriptive of the *Jungle Book* (2016) and talked about audiences wanting to see the film and therefore buying tickets. Candidates' responses which focused on marketing and synergy did not address the question set on economic contexts. The least successful responses included answers that only discussed marketing and would use what seemed to be general knowledge "the more money you have the better the film" rather than specific evidence from their case study.

Question 2

The key to answering Question 2 was for candidates to identify that the question asked them to identify issues of representation and evaluate how Michael Jackson's music video *Billie Jean* challenged these. The best performing candidates' responses identified the key moments from the music video using media language to demonstrate how stereotypical representations of ethnicity were challenged. These met the top-level mark criteria descriptor: comprehensive, detailed and accurate application of knowledge and understanding of media representations to analyse stereotyping and images of ethnicity in the *Billie Jean* music video. These responses were able to analyse the way individuals and social groups are represented in the *Billie Jean* music video through processes of selection and mediation, and discussed how these used and challenged racial stereotypes in the 1980s.

The lesser achieving candidates' responses made sweeping generalisations, such as: Michael Jackson dyed his skin white because he didn't like being black, or came up with some misreading of the text, for example Jackson breaks into the woman's bed to sleep with her, conforming to stereotypes that black men were seen as deviant.

The range of responses varied in quality, but most candidates identified the issues (social and cultural contexts) at the time, and engaged with the issue of race inequality. For some this meant their essays developed into a contextual essay rather than directly referencing parts from the music video to support their points, for example, lots of discussion exploring why the video was a landmark in MTV history was evident - which in many cases left little room to make reference to the video itself. Overall, more reference to the set text using a wider array of media language to focus on the construction (and subversion) of stereotypes was needed to access higher levels.

Question 3

Responses were expected to use the example of the unseen **Source A** to discuss how social, cultural and political events are represented on the front cover of *The Big Issue* magazine. The majority of responses focused on the political representations of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin at the expense of social and cultural contexts, for example, some responses acknowledged that bird watching and Tom Daley represented other issues in society and might be there for entertainment. The most able candidates not only highlighted these latter contexts, but also tapped into an understanding that *The Big Issue* was an alternative magazine

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publication catering for a niche audience. The highest level responses discussed the cultural issues of America being a global power and the use of the eagle as symbolic, also the social issues relating to fake news and global warming affecting society (and readers) in general.

In the teaching of magazine front covers centres need to develop candidates' understanding of how magazine covers use key conventions and recognisable design elements. One way in which this can be achieved is to use terminology specific to the media form. This will enable candidates to describe the features of magazines, for example, splash, headlines, footers, pugs, puffs, slogans, etc. This would have enhanced many of the responses and enabled candidates to reflect on how magazines reflect a range of representational issues in one cover in relation to the Assessment Objective AO1, and the representation of a magazine's ideology in response to social, cultural and political contexts.

At the lower end many candidates fell back on taught case study information which was of limited relevance, for example, whole responses discussing the ethos and business model of The Big Issue with zero/minimal discussion of cover design. These responses met the marking criteria Level 1, showing minimal application of knowledge and understanding of how magazine front cover design represents social, cultural and political contexts.

Question 4

There was a wide range and varying degree of responses from candidates and the most popular choice of Long Form Television Drama studied was Stranger Things, the least was Mr Robot.

When candidates offered comprehensive, detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of the media theoretical framework in relation to the Long Form Television Drama (AO1) studied they were able to make judgements and reach conclusions (AO2) in relation to the question set and gained the highest level of marks. In these cases the use of subject specific terminology was relevant and accurate. However, the quality varied for Q4 across the paper mainly because candidates varied in their ability to write an essay (this is the longest extended response question). Some candidates did not reach conclusions to their arguments or refer back to the question set. All candidates were able to identify a specific TV show/episode and most were able to engage with the question in relation to their show and also discuss codes/conventions of Long Form Television Drama.

An area for development for future sessions is to prepare candidates to address the focus of this extended question. For example, star appeal was very successfully discussed in responses to Stranger Things - Winona Ryder might have been variously discussed as a star of the 70's/80's/90's as was the reference to Kevin Spacey in House of Cards. However a number of candidates could not name the stars of their TV Shows and struggled to contextualise their stardom or reflect meaningfully on what their appeal might be. Responses to Mr Robot could not seem to decide if Rami Malek was a star, and similarly Homeland responses struggled to meaningfully explore Claire Danes as a casting choice. Despite this candidates were able to point to both the sense of nostalgia she might bring to the show and also the intrigue given that she is more famous as a film star/playing against type/has been out of the limelight for a while.

The use of media theory in the highest marked responses tended to be secure and relevant in meeting the theoretical understating of media frameworks (AO2); or was absent entirely. Lesser achieving candidates made reference to lots of narrative theory, but tended to be very

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descriptive with very little reference to the question, for example, describing which character fits each of Propp's character archetypes. While theory was used or applied (directly or indirectly) by most candidates, this was limited to narrative theory rather than that of representation or audience theory. While there was no set way to address the question, many candidates jumped to conclusions or made assumptions about each text which highlighted gaps in their knowledge. Likewise many responses did not address the full range of contextual understanding needed to reach the top mark level for AO1.

In response to *Stranger Things*, candidates largely focused their responses on how genre hybridity and intertextuality was a key feature of the success of show. The most able candidates also picked up on American popular culture and the streaming services of Netflix in producing high quality content that can be streamed or binge watched. These responses used a variety of examples to explore narrative and genre as being main selling points. For future sessions, an area for development is to consider how the history of Long Form Television Drama and conventions can be linked to key issues such as stardom as in this examination series many candidates implied that no famous people were in the show. The question focus was often overlooked in favour of recounting everything they knew about the series which affected AO2 marks, and resulted in an approach by candidates which was a 'write all I know about the episode' approach.

Homeland was also a popular choice of text and good responses were seen in particular making connections between the US Government and ideological positions. The best responses focused in on the economic success of the show and their producers/budget to deliver an exciting LFTV, also commenting on the subversion of stereotypes and linked to American culture (fears and anxieties). The least successful responses gave no examples from the show to expand on their ideas about narrative and cliff-hangers/enigma codes being used, and again issues regarding assumptions that *Homeland* doesn't feature big actors and names meant that candidates did not fully address the question set.

The candidates' responses to *House of Cards* focused on the fact that Kevin Spacey makes the show successful because of breaking the fourth wall, they also gave mention to the directorial influence of Fincher on the episode which gave it a stylistic edge over other political thrillers. The least successful candidates referenced a few key scenes from the show with no context or reference to the question. Centres should ensure candidates engage clearly with the text with plenty of reference to textual examples in their learning. There were some good and more than adequate references to current issues regarding Kevin Spacey.

While a limited number of scripts addressed *Mr Robot*, the range of content produced by candidates was encouraging. There was clear engagement by candidates with regards to the characterisation of Elliot and issues relating to hacking/social anxieties. These candidates also demonstrated good awareness of the ethnic makeup of the cast and diversity being a positive convention, and explained that in some ways making the whole show unconventional in its success. Encouragingly, with *Mr Robot* candidates engaged with theory regarding identity, audience readings and representation rather than solely focusing on multi-strand narrative.

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Question 5

This was an unseen source of the front page of The Telegraph and a Daily Mail Facebook page. The candidates were required to address how the different media addressed the same news story about the BBC and equal pay, and were asked to analyse the ways in which media language has been used in the two sources to convey values, attitudes and beliefs about the world. When candidates used media language to understand how the extracts communicated meaning and supported this with examples from the extracts then they achieved well, and especially if they identified the Telegraph extract as a broadsheet front page and the Daily Mail, (a tabloid newspaper) social media Facebook page and illustrated how the different modes of address to traditional and online audiences are mediated. Candidates who did try to analyse the sources tended to be successful when discussing the use of images and the hyperbolic language/use of an open question in the Daily Mail source and they were often able to comment on the more sober, information heavy presentation of The Telegraph. The most able candidates used three or four key comparisons between the texts and commanded media language (for example, in reference to headlines, sub headlines, images and the mode of address in the different media) effectively to support their arguments and refer to relevant contexts and academic ideas and arguments in their analysis.

However, top-level candidate responses need to be developed in relation to the application of media theory. There was the impression in the marking of this question of a clear lack of theory for Q5 which prohibited many detailed responses from reaching a top-level because they did not apply or discuss relevant ideas regarding representation, audience readings or any other relevant industry theory. Some fleeting and relevant references were made to Curran and Seaton Gauntlett/Hall and Barthes, but very few responses developed the theory in a meaningful way. There were an alarming number of candidates identifying The Daily Mail as a left wing publication. This error seemed to underline a lack of knowledge/context about the way print news is selected/constructed. Lesser achieving candidate made sweeping assumptions that, being a tabloid, The Daily Mail supported Labour and was aimed at working class readers, rather than looking at the content thoughtfully and addressing the question about how media language is used to present ideas and beliefs. Responses that made simple references between the differences or leaned heavily towards either source rather than equally weighting the address of each source were unlikely to achieve a top-level mark.

Question 6

The vast majority of the candidates understood the question and were able to discuss the role of the internet and digital technology with some confidence. Question 6 was successfully answered by most candidates, with many engaging comfortably with the statement about The Daily Mirror evolving to survive the changing landscape of print media. The most able responses clearly focused on the question and made arguments about the transformation of The Daily Mirror, for example, explaining how online formats mirror the same content as its print editions as both a reflection of technologically driven social change and its economic context that the newspaper had to ensure it can offer a diverse range of traditional and online media to reach its audience. At times successful candidates also demonstrated some excellent argument on economic contexts regarding generating income from synergy and click-bait formula- designed to make audiences want to click on a hyperlink. Most candidates recognised that The Daily Mirror

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has made a successful transition to online formats to reach address and tailor content to its audience.

However, like with Q5, there was a lack of theory which prohibited many candidates from reaching the highest marks. A frequent misconception in some candidates' answers was reference and discussion of The Daily Mail rather than specifically talking about The Mirror. The lower ability candidates' responses tended to play it safe with content moving to online, apps and smartphones for younger audiences, and were deterministic in conclusion that The Daily Mirror will become solely an online newspaper and replace traditional print media.

A satisfying set of responses from candidates which were at times excellent and detailed, articulate and sophisticated. The question paper offered a plethora of opportunities for candidates to engage with the unseen texts and the questions on News and Long Form Television Drama. Centres do need to ensure that the candidates are well prepared to manage the paper and the weightings of response that the questions demand. It would be good to see candidates engage and connect with academic ideas on the AS course and apply these in relation to media contexts and arguments, for further information on how to connect media theory with different media areas of the course, do visit <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/421658-academic-ideas-and-arguments-factsheet.pdf>

H009/02/03 Creating Media

1. General Comments:

On the whole centres engaged creatively with this component and candidates produced some effective products, demonstrating research into existing advertisements, their carriers, their audiences, and their messages. Many candidates demonstrated skill in the use of appropriate media tools and centres are encouraged to continue to create opportunities for candidates to learn and practice effective use of these tools. In the best work, knowledge and understanding of codes and conventions of all aspects of the media products was coupled with appropriate representations and intertextuality. However, there was much work which did not follow the requirements of the brief, with inappropriate products and little or no evidence of research and planning. Statement of Intents were often illuminating and demonstrated the candidate's understanding of how to produce an effective media product. Less effective Statement of Intents were purely descriptive and did not translate into effective media products. While research and planning materials are not assessed it is a requirement that they be submitted for moderation; this allows both the teacher and moderator to authenticate the candidate's work. Where research and planning materials were not submitted it was often clear from the candidates' products that little had actually taken place. While candidates were not marked down for non-submission of research and planning many effectively self-penalised through products that did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding. Much work was presented for moderation as hard copy, and/or on DVD, as outlined in the specification for the 03 option. Many centres opting for the 02 option also sent physical materials despite opting for the OCR Repository upload route. Some centres have continued to use the online blog format established during the legacy specification. This is seen by moderators as good practice. The use of a blog enables both teachers and moderators to see the development of the candidate's work and makes it easier to justify and agree marks. In accordance with recent data protection laws it is permissible to lock online materials as long as a master password is sent to the moderator. Teacher commentary on the candidates' cover sheets tended to be personalised but did not always reflect the marking criteria or use the language of the brief. It is important that these comments are as clear as possible and refer to the candidate's work in relation to the appropriate mark descriptors.

2. Comments on Individual Elements:

Statement of Intent

These varied in quality. The most effective outlined specific intentions and how these would be achieved using appropriate media language. The least effective were simply a description of the product. Candidates who demonstrated a clear understanding of the requirement of the brief outlining codes and conventions, representations, appeal to appropriate audience[s], and intertextuality often produced excellent or good products.

Research and Planning

Research and planning was generally not of the standard expected at this level and this was often reflected in the final products. The most effective presentations of research and planning were online blogs showing a clear sense of process. Many centres submitted a few printed

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pages describing either the planning completed or the final production process. Most centres should consider doing more research and planning to inform better end products. Research, in particular, is vital in informing a candidate's knowledge and understanding of what they are producing. Centres should encourage research into target audience and social groups, placement, regulatory context, intertextuality, and codes and conventions as relevant to the brief.

Briefs

Print

This was the most popular brief of this session with candidates producing some creative magazine advertising employing appropriate content for purpose and audience. The candidates working at the higher levels produced, and evidenced, a range of well-made original images created specifically for the task in hand. Some centres had provided good opportunities for candidates to learn and practice photography skills, employing careful consideration of composition, mise-en-scene and lighting. They also encouraged candidates to practice using appropriate photo editing and desk-top publishing software. Work at the lower levels tended not to pay a great deal of attention to typography and graphic design. Many candidates had clearly not constructed appropriate images preferring to rely upon found imagery for backgrounds. Centres are reminded that the specification clearly states that "Any material submitted by the candidate as part of their NEA production must have been produced by the candidate themselves. Learners who do not use original materials in their production will be limited within the mark scheme". Photography, layout, and post-production skills should be practised, perhaps through the use of preliminary production exercises. While most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the brief many did not fully consider all of the required elements, especially the placement of the advertisements in Total Film magazine, intertextual referencing, and the use of different social groups (which could simply be male and female if justifiable). The most effective advertisements also considered branding across the four products and employed appropriate product placement.

Television

Products for this brief tended to demonstrate a good level of creativity and a stronger level of understanding of audience and context. Advertisements to be shown on E4 often centred on topics applicable to the target audience such as sport, relationships, identity. However, the application of technical skills was often problematic hindering the intended message. Mise-en-scene was often not considered with many products shot around school/college with candidates in uniform. The creation of an appropriate soundscape needs greater consideration, mixing together ambient sound, with music and voice-overs. Many products employed copyrighted music without reference to it in the research and planning. Ideally candidates should use music from non-copyrighted sources but if it is central to the meaning of the advertisement that popular music is used (as is convention) then it should be demonstrated that the candidate has an understanding of the issues of copyright and that they have made an attempt to seek permission from the copyright holder to obtain rights (this should be presented in the research and planning). Some centres had provided good opportunities for candidates to learn and practice film and editing skills with some devising creative preliminary production exercises. Others had also highlighted the importance of the choice of fonts and other graphic elements within the advertisements. The most effective advertisements also considered branding across the four products and employed appropriate product placement.

Radio

This was the least popular brief and the one that the candidates attempting it found most problematic. Many of the products had not been properly researched and the outcomes were not appropriate for context. The most effective products employed creative mixing of multi-track recordings that created a sense of excitement about the product. The least effective simply recorded voice over music employing basic recording equipment. For this brief the centre should ensure that candidates have the opportunity to fully research the medium and practice the skills required to produce professional sounding products appropriate for purpose and audience.

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