OCR
RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

GCE

Media Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 H540**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H140**

OCR Report to Centres

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OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates 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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Media Studies (H540)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Media Studies (H140)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

G321 Foundation Portfolio in Media

General Issues

Most centres sent their work on time, though as in previous series, there were some very late submissions. Centres with ten or fewer candidates are reminded that they should not wait for a sample request and should send all their work to the moderator by the deadline, which, in the summer, will be 15 May. Most centres are now putting work online, which has drastically reduced the size of packaging. Despite requests in all previous Principal reports, there are still some centres with no central blog hub, whilst not an essential requirement of the specification it is very helpful. If there isn't a central blog hub page with hyperlinks to all the candidate blogs it forces moderators to type in individual URLs manually for each candidate. Often these URLs have been handwritten and often contain errors, making the process unnecessarily lengthy as moderators then have to re-contact centres to get the correct URL.

Coursework coversheets were mostly completed in detail, but there were still some examples where teachers simply copied directly from the marking criteria in the specification without personalizing comments about how each individual candidate had met the criteria. Centres are asked to print and send hard copies of the coursework coversheets to ease the moderation process. It is best practice to use the interactive version of the coversheet (and print this) as centres can save a copy of each coversheet for their records before printing and sending, also the interactive version of the coversheet carries out all arithmetic addition, thereby avoiding any potential for clerical errors.

The centres with best practice not only set up a blog hub containing the name and candidate numbers of those in the sample, but also ensured each blog featured the completed construction (e.g. film opening or magazine pages) at the top followed by clearly signposted responses to evaluation questions. There were a number of poorly organised blogs that made it necessary to search for the final construction work and/or spend time working out which evaluation question was being addressed. Indeed, many candidates failed to label the evaluation questions so it was not always clear what they were answering.

Centres are reminded that nothing should be added to blogs after the coursework deadline date. Any such material cannot be counted for assessment. A few centres sent work in non-universal formats, such as Publisher and Photoshop. All work should be supplied in universal formats such as JPEG or PDF. Around half of the candidates entered for this series were resitting the unit. There is still a problem with resubmissions in that the majority of the candidates appear to have done little to improve their marks since the first sitting**.** If candidates make a new product, this needs to be accompanied by new research and planning evaluation evidence.

Research and Planning

The best centres encouraged an equal measure of research and planning, advising candidates to see this as an ongoing process, representing the journey of the project. In some cases, there was an imbalance, with lots of research and little planning, or vice versa. The best work is comprehensive and shows strong evidence of candidates reflecting on the process of the production in their blogs.

Hard copy research and planning tended to lack the sense of a journey - candidates tended not capture the essence of their development as successfully as those using an online platform and evidence was often the product of retrospective work rather than the actual process. There were still some cases of candidates basing their complete understanding of real media conventions on a single analysis, for example, looking solely at individual front covers/contents pages/double page spreads or one film opening. In the video brief, there was still a tendency to analyse the

name of films as opposed to the actual conventions of titles within film openings. However, there was good evidence of creative thinking and it was pleasing to see centres embracing the specification and encouraging the candidates to do the same in this area.

Construction

Print

There was some very effective branding across the three magazine components, with the best centres encouraging candidates to fully embrace the brief, which was evident as they completed additional tasks, such as adverts in the same house style as the magazine.

Overall, front covers were the strongest element of magazine work with contents pages most likely to fail to conform to forms and conventions, particularly in the use of images. The quality of double page spreads was variable; the best followed forms and conventions closely and featured striking images while the worst showed lack of awareness of the required point size for magazine copy and often failed to show understanding of basic elements such as the use of columns.

There was insufficient variety in terms of original images in many of the magazines. More variety in terms of costume and background is often required, and, for a contents page a variety of artists would be expected to feature. This led to many pages containing similar mid-shot or medium close-ups of individuals who were not styled in a way that made them readable as music artists. There were still a large number of candidates who failed to include at least four of their own images and/or included found images, which is not permitted and often still far too many apparent snapshots of friends and musicians with little consideration of purpose.

Candidates would benefit from paying more attention to details of page layout. In particular, use of space, and use of font colour. Font size, particularly in the double page spreads, was an issue in many cases. Front covers were marred in many cases by text superimposed over images. In the very rare cases when this has to be done, then choice of font colour is very important. Particularly on a front cover, image and text should be striking. Text that is obscured by the colour of an image is ineffective. Candidates need to focus carefully on register and spellings; if mistakes are noticed whilst producing their evaluations the centre should encourage them to correct them at that time.

Radio

A small number of centres submitted radio work and really seemed to embrace the specification. A clear attempt to construct a community radio station as opposed to a national radio station and clear understanding of the conventions in order to do so was in evidence. There were some good examples of appropriate stories and a clear attempt to combine relevant sounds with good mixing of different layers of sound and some good integration of internal and external sound clips. There were some issues with register and tone, but otherwise this work held up well to comparisons with professional broadcasts.

Video

There were several examples of highly proficient/excellent editing and more work is being done on creating an opening with some sense of enigma rather than trying to create a condensed narrative. There was still an over-reliance solely on actors' names and the film title itself to constitute all the titles in the film opening, showing a lack of understanding of the range of titles expected of a film opening and of their construction, appearance and timings. Candidates need to be encouraged to create their own soundscape rather than sourcing an existing well-known soundtrack or resorting to familiar sounds attached to IMovie. Some candidates who imported

non-diegetic MP3 files from Garageband into Final Cut Pro need to be careful not to compress files before sharing to ITunes; there were numerous examples of audio 'popping/ticking' sounds connected to this import error which can be easily rectified by un-ticking the box.

There were some excellent examples of film openings where candidates had clearly worked hard to establish a sense of enigma and atmosphere. However, more often, candidates did not focus well on what the narrative was. Many film openings ended abruptly; candidates had put some thought into what they wanted to show in the opening sequence but not enough into how they would close the sequence. The combination of effective use of images and sound, titles and lighting worked extremely well in some of the better work. There were many examples of highly proficient editing and excellent camerawork, the outcome of work on skills development. However, in some cases there was little sense of control of the camera, with an over-reliance on zooms and shaky material without tripods. Mise en scene was often well chosen, but weaker candidates still tended to focus on the chase in the woods.

Evaluation

At the top end, there were some really creative pieces and here candidates had generally used a different technology to answer each question, exploring a range of formats and experimenting creatively. Centres that did particularly well made sure that the evaluation was not an afterthought and that candidates spent a reasonable amount of time producing it, rather than just a couple of lessons at the end of the project. It also appeared that centres had advised candidates to use a variety of technology; often the evaluations were submitted on blogs with PowerPoint, Prezi, video, audio and embedded documents to support.

A significant amount of candidates only produced Level 2 responses: brief, undeveloped short written responses done as an add-on rather than being treated as twenty percent of the mark for this unit (and ten percent of AS as a whole)**.** The candidates who had really made an effort though, showed a thorough understanding as well as very effective use of digital technology to communicate their evaluation responses. There was a clear link between the research and planning and the evaluation. Candidates who had done little research subsequently suffered in their evaluations as they had less to reflect upon.

G322/3 Key Media Concepts

This was the first series in which non-British TV drama became available to use as an extract in the exam. The choice of extract was **ER** and the representation was **age**. Question two focused on media ownership and the impact ownership has on the range of products and services to the audience. The paper achieved differentiation across the whole range of candidates' abilities and presented candidates with sufficient opportunity to engage with the key media concepts required for this paper. However, this series also saw a number of candidates who failed to engage with the representation of age in question one, and similarly, a number of candidates who were not prepared well enough for the requirements of question two, which resulted in a significant number of responses that were brief, minimal and in some cases no responses. Entry for the exam was similar to the previous January however the majority of candidates were sitting the examination for the first time, with the number of candidates using the January series as a re-sit opportunity much lower than in previous years.

Question 1

On the whole candidates engaged with the set question on the representation of age with answers maturely and sensitively handled. Those candidates that performed to the highest level did so with detailed and sustained analysis of age and with application of a range of examples across the four technical areas. In their responses candidates would frequently refer to oppositional and negotiated readings of the text, in relation to child/adult/elderly representations. The most detailed responses considered a hierarchy of meaning in the text in analysis of the discourse between adult/child and elderly age representations. In a few cases this was quite a sophisticated analysis in which candidates commented on how the extract challenged typical expectations and presentations of children and adults. This was most pertinent in relation to the very ill child at the beginning of the sequence: for example, stronger candidates recognising that there was a role-reversal at this point, with the doctor learning from the younger patient. Indeed many candidates that picked up on the representation of the child as vulnerable also noted that the child was incredibly mature, realistic and intelligent in relation to the discourse with the adult doctor on his medical condition. Weaker performing candidates relied on simplistic binary oppositions, such as elderly patients are all senile, with all children being weak and in need of protection. Many weaker candidates chose to focus on superficial tasks such as looking at age differences, ignoring particular values or ideologies linked with age groups. Some of these candidates also focused on the discussion of gender or the medical profession rather than age.

Technical features

The analysis of camera angle, shot and movement was used by most to varying degrees. Stronger candidates often correctly identified the use of high/low angled shots, the use of steadicam and could in some instances also analyse the framing of shots as key to how meaning is constructed, particularly with the doctor/ child in the private medical room.
A common error for many candidates was to confuse the use of low and high camera angles and on a few occasions candidates referred to bird's eye and worm's eye camera shots which were not present in the extract. On the whole terminology was used correctly by candidates. Candidates' discussion of mise-en-scène included analysis of the medical environment being used as a context for the study of age. The mise-en-scène was referred to in the use of costume to demonstrate the doctor's age and experience versus the child as a patient and the use of tubes and make up to represent him as weak and fragile. The key prop of the Sudoku book and the child's technical vocabulary were well discussed to illustrate how typical representations of childhood were challenged. Candidates were also able to analyse the use of location and the characters' actions in relation to the construction of age representations in this medical drama, for example, the professional adult doctors working under stress in busy waiting rooms were often contrasted to the irresponsible actions of the older women who was simply there to

'breathe the air' and also the supposedly drunk older male. There was a lot less colour determinism used in analysis of mise-en-scène this series, whilst aspects like lighting are still under- utilised, except on occasion, for example some candidates analysed the low lighting of the room with the ill child at the start and noted the sombre atmosphere this created around his situation. Lesser performing candidates simply relied upon the dress of characters and the role they had in the extract, leading to quite simplistic analysis.

Candidates engaged with the use of editing and sound. Many candidates could mention editing and continuity, through the use of shot reverse shot or eyeline matches. The most able candidates examined editing in an analytical way. These candidates could clearly link meaning constructed in the extract and state something purposeful about the representation of age, for example they focused their attention on the use of long takes and how the camera followed key characters who dominated the frame and there were also some excellent musings on the use of cross cutting within the sequence. Most candidates could identify transitions used, though a common error was the use of the term jump cut. Lesser achieving candidates simply mentioned the word edit or commented on editing without actually using any examples of discussing how editing through shot sequencing helped create representations of age. At times there was little attempt to understand how editing created particular viewpoints from which the sequence made most sense or how it was used to privilege particular characters and age groups.

Sound proved to be the most problematic technical area for candidates, although through the evaluation of the use of dialogue, particular attention was focused on the first boy's use of language and the mature way he confronted the illness that was enveloping him. This stoic manner was compared to another young adult doctor's childish construction, which focused on his immaturity. Many candidates relied on dialogue as a valued aspect of sound and would refer to key dialogue between characters. A few candidates exemplified the use of monitor blips for the ill child or indeed the use of silence to reflect the seriousness of the child's situation, though many noted how calm the female doctor was in the ER waiting area, making reference to diegetic sounds. There was some common misunderstanding of diegetic and non-diegetic sound and that which is synchronous and asynchronous. At times it was encouraging to see that candidates examined sound and editing alongside each other and in relation to mise-en-scène. This integrated approach should be encouraged more as it often leads to more advanced responses from candidates.

Question 2

The question has been approached by candidates in a number of different ways. Some candidates chose to examine a media area with a range of examples of ownership, whilst others focused on a single institution and the range of products produced across different media. The most frequently occurring method was to compare two or three different companies, usually a mainstream and an independent media company. Where candidates were focused on the set question and were able to discuss the impact of media ownership on a range of products they found themselves able to articulate a discussion of the contemporary media in relation to ownership. Those who took this approach were able to discuss the forms of ownerships and discuss differences between mainstream, conglomerate led institutions and independent smaller scale companies. Within these responses candidates could quite rightly discuss the impact of horizontal and vertical integration and cross media ownership. As a result candidates got to grips with the range of products and services available, the importance of an institution's scale and size in relation to its marketing, distribution and its access to local and global markets, and to an extent, how the online age and changing technologies have affected opportunities in the areas outlined above. Lesser performing candidates had little to say on media ownership, many appeared under prepared and could simply describe ownership without any form of discourse on the question set, omitting the use of key evaluation skills. At the bottom end there were many brief responses to question two (or no response offered at all to the question) and at times there appeared to be a common misconception of what was meant by media ownership.

Most candidates' responses focused on film and music. The strongest responses were derived from detailed case studies of specific institutions with examples of particular texts/artists to illustrate institutional practice, particularly where the case studies offered contrast. The best responses were well focused on the question and were able to shape their case study material accordingly. Many weaker candidates simply presented pre-prepared answers which regurgitated learned material with little actual consideration of the question set - this particularly appeared to be the case where issues of piracy were discussed without any real sense of how this had an impact on the range of products offered by institutions.

Too many candidates are still offering historical accounts of their chosen industries or companies. Equally problematic are the number of candidates focusing on texts rather relationships between institutions and audiences. A significant number of centres are using examples that are no longer contemporary; This Is England (2006) was a common example.

Film

Film was the most popular media area studied and at times very successfully. Those candidates that addressed the question well would compare and contrast a major Hollywood Studio with a British film company. The most able responses were supported by examples across a range of media and these in turn were embedded in institutional practices such as synergy, convergence and cross media promotion. The most able candidates also argued that despite the power of film companies (backed by conglomerates) outweighing smaller independent and British film companies in terms of success, many opportunities have been created by the ever changing online age, for example Vertigo films and 'Monsters' or 'Streetdance 3D' and 'The Microwave' scheme encouraging films like 'Shifty' to be produced. There were also some confident discussions of three of the majors: Disney/Sony/News Corp – with 'The Hobbit' and 'The Life of Pi' and 'Skyfall' being introduced as particularly relevant and topical case studies. Candidates who studied these examples seemed to have a broad understanding of issues around audience.

Less able candidates would simply describe media ownership, sometimes incorrectly, for example using Pinewood Studios as a discussion of ownership, or offer potted histories of film companies. In some instances candidates had very little to say on media ownership, displaying a lack of preparation for the set question. There were a significant number of film titles mentioned which are deemed as non-contemporary: ('Atonement' (2007), 'Notting Hill' (1999) 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' (1994) and 'Chicken Run' (2002). When discussing examples form the online age it is a basic response to argue that a product or service is a T-shirt or piece of merchandising, candidates need to identify and explain the example; likewise a mention of a twitter account or references to Netflix or Lovefilm are basic ways to present examples. Candidates should be encouraged to provide detail in the examples they use and explain these in relation to the set question.

Music

Candidates who addressed the area of music achieved well. There was plenty of evidence of engagement with the issue of ownership, often through a major record company like Sony or Time Warner in comparison with an independent label, frequently British. Stronger candidates investigated the extent of the impact of media ownership on a range of products, often with a discussion of subsidiary labels and artists' products and services on offer. Many arguments were made about transforming online media and how better equipped the major record labels were in utilising online websites with merchandising tie-ins and other synergetic marketing. The advantages for these conglomerate backed majors were made apparent. More able candidates juxtaposed this situation with the position of independent record companies such as Domino, XL and Beggars; correctly arguing that these companies were also being transformed in the online age and having plenty of success, but limited compared to the way in which major record companies dominate the industry. Where case studies were contemporary and where centres

had explored cross media convergence, candidates were empowered to explore the diversity of products available to potential audiences.

Lesser performing candidates limited themselves to a description of the type of media ownership and artist signed to a major label and compared this to an independent company without fully exploring the issue of impact, arguing that majors simply make an impact because of the size and scale of the company, which tended to be basic in response. Those candidates that simply offered Apple as a case study in the area of music did not fully address the question set, because Apple is a distribution platform and a licensing partner of the major record companies. To argue that Apple owned the music industry as in some cases was incorrect. Other weaker responses spent too much time focussing on illegal downloading, which if going to be used as a part of the argument, needed context. It was surprising that many candidates did not fully understand the role of Spotify as a streaming service for the music industry.

Newspapers

Candidates that studied this media area often showed limited understanding of ownership, often focusing on a media mogul who dominates the industry and newspaper ownership as an oligopoly rather than exploring institutional practice and the impact this had on products and services. Candidates would often offer potted histories of newspaper ownership. There was some discussion of the cross promotion of newspapers through the use of tablet and mobile devices. There was much misunderstanding of vertical and horizontal integration as key terminology; as well as confusing case studies of newspaper ownership, (for example, that Murdoch owns 'The Independent'). On the other hand there were occasional sound responses to the Newspaper industry which compared and contrasted approaches from News International and The Guardian, with The Mail On-line used as an interesting counterpoint in the middle.

Magazines

This was also tackled by several centres with varying degrees of success. Hearst and Cosmopolitan were popular examples with some confident discussions of brand management and multi-platform development to provide audiences with a range of products. Better performing candidates would examine the magazine area with case studies between major publishers such as Bauer and IPC and offer a comparison of the range of products available, often in the form of cross promotion (at times in synergy with other services). On the whole candidates argued that because a publisher owned a group of magazines they made an impact because each title supported each other. It was argued by many that lifestyle magazines were dominated by a few major publishers and were therefore repetitive in content and in competition for audience share. Other approaches included comparing a lifestyle magazine with a publication such as Kerrang and NME. This was at times more productive because there was a greater comparison of the range of products available and cross promotion, such as music video channels and other music related products. On the rare occasion when candidates used online publications such as Monkey Magazine, there was limited argument about range of products and online services available. Again lesser performing candidates offered potted histories of publications and tried to offer reception theories as a way of addressing the question set – a misplaced approach to the question set problem this series.

Radio

A few good responses were seen on radio – though this was a less popular option. One good comparison was BBC and Absolute Radio and how ownership and investment in radio stations impacted on the range of products and services available. Some responses were limited because they only focused on the BBC as a case study with a focus on one station, therefore limiting the range of examples to be discussed. The more positive responses argued that radio is a competitive media area and relied upon cross promotion and brand identity for its success with audiences.

Video games

There were some excellent responses on the ownership of video games companies and the impact this has on the range of products available. Candidates were able to engage with the ownership of institutions such as Electronic Arts (EA) and also with the provision of online services available, for example through X Box live. Indeed many responses dealt with ownership and the practice of convergence using the 'SIMS 3' as an example. Other explored examples of ownership including Rovio and the Angry Birds franchise and Activision / Infinity War, looking at games development and the Call of Duty series of products. This allowed candidates to show they understood mainstream and alternative game production and the type and range of products available. On the whole candidates were able to successfully interpret the notion of ownership in a number of ways around licensing, institutional structure and streaming to enable them to answer the set question.

Conclusion for question two responses.

For the vast majority of candidates it was clear that there was no issue with the case study knowledge learned or the ways in which the case studies demonstrated typical or atypical of contemporary industry and audience practices. However, few candidates fully engaged with the set question and it would appear that centres need to redress the balance between the time spent on the 'content' and 'exam techniques/skills'. The former was very rarely problematic, and, where it was, appeared to be an issue for an individual candidate rather than a centre. The latter was clearly difficult for a large number of candidates who were unable to effectively utilize their case study knowledge and understanding to fashion a response that explicitly addressed the set question.

G324 Advanced Portfolio in Media

As in previous series moderators were pleased to see a significant number of truly excellent submissions, indicating very high levels of technical skill, creativity and understanding of function, form, style and audience; indeed the proportion of excellent work was notably higher than previous eries, which may be accounted for by Centres taking advice from reports, using the Media Studies Weebly site and by candidates becoming more accomplished technically.

Construction

The most popular tasks this series remained the music video (mainly with print ancillaries, although there were an increased proportion of websites this series); documentary, short film and film trailers (all mainly with print ancillaries). There were a few soap opera submissions and one centre opted for radio drama. There was a very small percentage of candidates submitting print work (newspapers and regional magazines) but the standard of this was generally not as strong as moving image work. As has been mentioned on several occasions, centres that concentrated on a limited number of briefs tended to have stronger and more informed work than centres that offered 3 or 4 different briefs.

There was some real excellence and technical flair at the top end of the moving image work but, interestingly, work from a wider range of candidates seem to have benefited from moving away from low end video cameras towards DSLRs. Several moderators noted that the use of DSLR cameras appears to have increased the quality of candidates' production work, probably because they create a stronger requirement for candidates to consider focus and/or movement, which brings a greater degree of precision; it's not so much the better definition as the better composition that is obvious. (It also accounts for this series technical and creative 'motif', which seemed to be an increased use of pulled focus!) Moving image work also made very good use of sound this series, many creating their own diegetic and non-diegetic soundtracks, doing foley work etc.

There was some very creative and accomplished work for the music promotion brief; many music videos employed a huge variety of shots, yet within an easily accessible location, including beautiful shots of instruments and bands, with well considered mise en scene, framing and lighting that was consistent with industry practice. However, at the other end there was less considered production work, where the main problems seem to be a failure to follow conventions (eg lack of pace in editing), lack of artistic decisions in shot types during narrative sequences, 'home video' excuses for poorly executed sequences etc. Often there was insufficient consideration given to the idea of building an image for an artist and using this to 'sell' the product (the artist and their music) to the audience. Most music videos combined narrative and performance, though some did consist purely of narrative and as a result had the feel of short films rather than music videos. Greater consideration of the performance aspect of videos would have strengthened productions. Using a greater variety of shot types and angles on the performance would have helped, when it comes to editing, to create a video with appropriate pace and varied content. A major concern was lip synching and instrument synching, which was not referred to on cover sheets, yet was sometimes of an inadequate standard to meet the criteria for the level 4 marks so frequently given by centres. Candidates in some centres had attempted animated graphics, stop motion, chromakey and had used filters and effects. However, these were often apparently randomly chosen and there was not the sense of a 'look' or design that would be needed to justify the marks given. Chromakey quality was variable, and in some instances meant that candidates focused on this process in particular to the detriment of the finished production; for example they utilised backgrounds that were not original footage, or the videos were inconsistent in terms of genre signifiers and style.

The best film trailers showed excellent understanding of the genre in terms of the way they entice the audience to find out more by using short shots, building the pace of the trailer and, in particular, playing about with the narrative order of events. The weakest trailers simply followed the narrative of the film and consequently gave away too much information, including the ending of the film; and as a result did not work effectively as trailers as they did not 'tease' the audience into finding out more about the film.

Several candidates made full use of the creative scope offered by the short film option, with poignant, witty, and thoughtful submissions.

There was a limited amount of successful local newspaper production; more often this brief was weaker and sometimes especially where the work was produced on Publisher, Word and Photoshop, which limited candidate outcomes. The danger of the regional magazines was seen when candidates opted for a special interest approach – then the magazines became dangerously close to the AS music magazine brief. If candidates take on the regional magazine brief teachers should guide candidates in their choice of magazine production so that it is sufficiently different from their AS music magazine.

Original images were clearly used, on the whole, in the construction of print texts. However very little evidence was provided of the pre-manipulated images. A small number of candidates, though, did use found images in their work. In all cases this was not acknowledged by centres who had allocated inappropriately high marks. Centres must ensure that where candidate fail to meet the requirements of the specification this is reflected in their comments and marks. A similar situation was seen in the use of music; for one centre the whole sample appeared to use music that was not produced by candidates and didn't appear to be from a copyright free source. As the Specification notes: 'All material for all tasks to be produced by the candidates with the exception of acknowledged non- original sound or image material used in a limited way in video/radio work. Further guidance will be available in the support materials. For music video, permission should be sought from the artist for use of the audio track' (p34).

Ancillaries were variable. The higher marked ancillary products demonstrated skill in the use of Photoshop and publishing software, and the research performed was used to inform the production of each piece. There were several centres in which the ancillary tasks appeared to have been given insufficient attention in terms of the preparation of candidates' skills, confidence with relevant software as well as research and planning. At the lower end of marks, the research seemed to be irrelevant, or ignored when it came to the production of each product (e.g. digipaks with 3 panes, film posters with poor use of font and lack of relevant conventions). Most digipaks were complete with usually 4 or 6 panels; however, given the avalanche of perfectly proportioned templates available after searching online for 'digipak template' it was perplexing to see unevenly sized panes. Furthermore the idea of the album is still not fully considered by some candidates. Font choice seemed to be a weakness this series, with many candidates seemingly taking little time to consider suitable fonts for the genre. One centre produced DVD covers instead of digipaks. The same images were sometimes duplicated across both tasks, (this was the case in some of the film magazines, which in reality rarely use images from the film or poster and usually attempt to coalesce their own house style with that of the film featured). Perhaps candidates felt that by duplicating images they were creating a brand identity, however it just made it look like they lacked images to work with. Sometimes the promo poster was just an enlarged album cover stretched into an oblong. It was felt that candidates generally needed to take more test photographs and consider framing, lighting and mise en scene so that they had better images to work with. Six pane digipaks proved difficult for lower ability candidates.

Centres are reminded that web work needs to be available online (and working) during the whole moderation period; it is not enough to be produced as a Wix for example and then submitted as non-working documents such as jpeg or pdf images. In terms of the supporting comments from centres, some teachers are not writing comments about the individual candidates' contributions

to a group production. This is particularly important where groups only submit one blog containing all the group's work.

Whilst most centres presented their work effectively for moderation using blogs accessed via blog hubs, some centres submitted everything on disc. In these cases the research, planning and evaluations tended to be on PowerPoint and were sometimes used well by candidates, however, the method still seemed a little restrictive compared to blogging for some candidates. Some centres still persisted in presenting these elements on Word documents on disc which does not really reflect the spirit of this digital specification and does not benefit the candidates.

Research and Planning

In terms of Research and Planning, there was some good work this series, with some excellent examples of detailed textual analysis research for all three texts, and audience research which informed the planning. Research into existing media texts was more comprehensive in this series than in the past. In previous series many candidates did not provide evidence of research appropriate to the ancillary productions, but in this series a higher proportion of candidates had conducted research into texts relevant to all three productions and this was clearly used to inform the construction process. However, with respect to brief one, many centres are still researching and producing CD covers (jewel case designs) rather than digipaks. This is a specific genre of text with clear codes and conventions relating to format, content and design.

Moving image planning was varied, in some cases consisting just of storyboards, in others it was extremely thorough, covering shooting schedules; location visits; risk assessments etc. Most centres attempted to use a variety of media in their research and planning blogs and evaluations. However, some centres still tended to give credit where vital elements of research or planning were missing. Some blogs at the lower end of marks had insufficient planning (with little evidence of shotlisting and storyboarding) and the research seemed to follow a standard approach regardless of the brief selected. Some centres continued to foreground the theory/ history of music videos at the expense of real media research of relevant texts and, as such, it looked like the candidates had lots of blog posts or PowerPoint slides, but such material was not always relevant to the final product. Research and planning that was only presented in an Evaluation PowerPoint limited access to level 4 marks. Whilst this does not contravene the requirements of the specification, it did limit candidates as it felt like the planning was done after the event, rather than as an ongoing process that impacted on the final productions. It is appreciated that all centres may not have access to electronic Blogs, however candidates could be encouraged to use a wider range of techniques to evidence research and planning. Best practice in the presentation of research and planning often produced practical work which reflected the extent and engagement with their research.

Centres should be sure of the provenance of their candidates' materials for assessment – candidates copying directly from web sources (or, in some cases, from blogs submitted by previous candidates from other centres) without referencing the work, putting the work in quotes or commenting on how this research had impacted on their productions could be considered as committing malpractice. Centres are advised to provide guidance for their candidates on referencing research.

Evaluations

Evaluations were generally relevant and were usually organised as discrete responses to each of the set questions. Some centres elected to submit evaluations in video format only, which was not the best way to present the information - one example was a single 20-minute long video that did not clearly answer the set questions. Some candidates submitted audio readings of the text that appeared on the same slide of a PowerPoint, which is of little use. Similarly, Prezis with text only are little more than an essay. Some evaluations appear to have been rushed at the last minute, which is a shame as this element is 20% of candidates' marks for G324; allowing more

time for the planning of content and presentation of responses would have resulted in more detail and considered work and consequently higher marks for many candidates. Many weaker evaluations became an essay with a few pictures and in some cases sound; this meant that candidates could not show 'excellent skill in the use of digital technology' or 'excellent choice in the form of presenting the evaluation', as all questions were answered in the same way. Audience feedback was lacking in much work and as a result this was a weak aspect of many evaluations. Candidates could use social media more effectively in this respect, rather than just asking a few people to fill in a questionnaire or videoing two members of their class answering questions.

However, most candidates provided more than an essay, with a range of creative means for conveying their evaluations, and there were some very pleasing examples of candidates working in a range of formats - for example one candidate provided a great answer that used stop motion and video commentaries with lots of video, audio and images to support the answer.

Assessment

In general it was found that, though many centres had marked consistently, applying the marking criteria appropriately to all five elements, a number of centres had marked the coursework too generously and should refer more closely to the assessment criteria and the media studies Weebly for exemplar material (http://ocrmediastudies.weebly.com/). There is marked work on the site to use for standardisation within a centre. The best teacher comments did refer to the criteria and apply them to the work of the candidate, thereby leading to more accurate assessment; however, some teachers seemed to list the criteria without applying them to the aspects of the work that they thought deserved the mark awarded, or what elements of weakness precluded the work from a higher mark. Occasionally comments did not match the marks that were submitted. There was often no indication that internal moderation had taken place, e.g. changed marks or initialled cover sheets.

In terms of standards the production work was the most frequent source of inaccurate assessment, being almost exclusively over-generous in terms of centre marking. Often candidates were being given high level 4 marks for work that did not have the attention to detail characteristic of 'excellence'; work that was really 'basic' was thought by the centre to be 'proficient'. The marks awarded for the music video productions in particular were often overgenerous.

Research and planning was also generously assessed, sometimes given level 4 marks while lacking detailed evidence for research of similar texts and target audience or pre-production processes (planning).

Evaluations were also over-generous at times. Centres seem to be under the impression that a Prezi with a few images and text is appropriate for excellence in communication and use of ICT, yet Prezi is open to all the same misuses as any other slideshow/presentation software. The importance of directly addressing the four set questions appears to have been recognised by most centres.

Administration

Work was generally submitted promptly by centres and with the correct paperwork. A number of centres had used the new coursework coversheets. These required centres to indicate on the front candidates who have worked together on a group production, and where this was done it made the moderation process easier. Coversheets were usually fully completed, and most teachers wrote comments which were useful to moderation. A small number of centres submitted incomplete coversheets, either lacking candidate or centre details or which contained no breakdown of marks for the five aspects of this component; this made it impossible to moderate the work and so centres must ensure all cover sheets are completed in full. Although

in the best centres cover sheets did reference the level of candidate involvement in the task, this was not the case in every centre. There was often no indication of what areas of the production the candidates had involved themselves in; to assist with moderation it may be helpful to just list these at the start of each of the tasks. It would have been really useful to know what the highest mark for the productions were as there was some uncertainty as to whether the mark was given for the candidate's involvement or the actual quality of the video.

The majority of centres had taken note of previous moderation reports and created blog hubs for the submission of candidates' work, which is excellent practice. Where individual blog addresses were written on coversheets there were some errors with incorrect blog addresses, and centres must ensure that correct addresses are written clearly in future submissions (copying the url from the live site and pasting onto the digital coversheet is good practice; handwritten addresses are not). Centres are requested to include the candidate numbers on blog hubs if possible as that aids identification.

There were also some issues with clerical errors which were dealt with speedily.

G325 Critical Perspectives in Media

General Comments

This was the final January session of G325 and the entry was dominated by single candidate entries from centres, making it more difficult to draw conclusions about the cohort in general.

Two points that can be made at the broader level:

1   It appeared that candidates had in general a greater ability to apply 'classic' theories of narrative to their own work than has been the case with some of the other media concepts from Section A.

2   A significant number of responses to Section B featured 'whole centre' shortcomings with specific regard to a lack of contemporary examples. This was the case in particular with postmodern media and the representation of youth for the collective identity topic. In both cases, significant numbers of candidates could not be rewarded in the higher mark levels for 'use of examples' when their explanation, analysis, argument and use of media terminology and theory were proficient. In the case of postmodern media, *Blade Runner* and Madonna featured heavily, whilst for the representation of youth, there were many historical accounts of teenagers and moral panics.

The following reflections on candidate responses and performance is an accumulation of reports submitted by all of the examiners. As such, it combines 'macro' level observations of general trends and patterns with 'micro' level examples of particular successes and problems.

Section A

1a   The best responses were able to focus on a combination of research into existing media, the 'nuts and bolts' of planning for media production and making use of audience feedback 'in progress'. The weaker answers tended to focus mainly on research into conventions of existing media, which is part of research and planning but is a separate topic for this paper. Again, level 4 responses were those that achieved these things and also discussed a range of productions and progress over time.

1b   As stated above, the responses were generally of a higher quality than in some previous sessions, with the theories of Barthes, Propp and Todorov and some media / form specific theories such as Goodwin (for music video) applied well to specific examples. There was some conflating of narrative and semiotics but this was acceptable where the latter was connected to the development of action or enigma or cultural codes that help to structure a text. Weaker answers either just described narrative as a production technique or accounted for the general mode of address of the text in relation to the audience and / or took a 1a approach to accounting for what "I / we" decided / did. This question requires textual analysis of one production from a more detached vantage point, using an academic concept.

Section B

Postmodern media and regulation were popular topics. For the former, important theories were generally well handled but the application to contemporary examples was variable (see comment above). For regulation, it was surprising that Leveson was often confined to a passing comment or brief reference. The Byron report and Human Centipede were frequently cited, and there were some common mistakes with the discussions of *Battleship Potemkin* and (once again) the Jamie Bulger case – see every examiner report to date. Historical case studies are

useful only for context and to weigh up the degree to which new digital media require new forms of regulation. 'Classic' case studies add little value for candidates in this examination.

There were some interesting approaches to collective identity, including the representation of immigration, linking the recent work of Gillroy to the work of the Glasgow Media Group and theories of hegemony and pluralism. This kind of work – connecting analysis of contemporary media to important debates around multi / inter-culturalism within a strong theoretical framework – is very pleasing to see.

General Advice to Centres

This advice is repeated from previous sessions.

Support candidates to prepare different approaches to 1(a) and 1(b) – process and decisions for 1(a), conceptual textual analysis from a critical distance for 1(b).

Ensure that candidates are able to make use of contemporary media examples for the majority of their answer in section B. Theory from any time is appropriate, but media examples and case studies should be **mainly from the five years preceding the examination**.

Enable candidates to engage with a range of theoretical, academic and research perspectives for whichever theme is addressed – there is an abundance of media theory applicable to ALL themes, including media in the online age and media regulation.

Develop time management skills for exam preparation, particularly for section 1.

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