GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

GCE (LEGACY)
MEDIA STUDIES
AS/Advanced

SUMMER 2018

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MEDIA STUDIES

General Certificate of Education (Legacy)

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Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

MS1: MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS AND RESPONSES

The audio-visual text for this examination was the opening sequence for Class, a BBC Three Drama spin-off from Doctor Who. Candidates found the text and accompanying question accessible; it provided rich opportunities for relevant media responses and candidates across the mark range were able to analyse the text to varying degrees. It was pleasing to see such strong reference to relevant media terminology. Candidates were well prepared for the question and, in the main; it was the strongest response on the paper.

Question 1
Candidates demonstrated confidence in discussing the codes and conventions of the opening sequence. Of particular note was their ability to analyse the technical, audio and visual codes of the extract. Narrative was dealt with less strongly with some simply explaining what happened in the extract. The strongest candidates successfully discussed the purpose and effect of camera movement, the range of shots and the use of visual codes/CGI special effects. The opening sequence provided a variety of opportunities for candidates to commence their discussion at various junctures which provided interesting reading and sophisticated analysis in some responses. The command word 'analyse' required candidates to do more than merely describe the issues and it was pleasing to note that some candidates seemed well prepared for this higher order skill. There was some excellent, detailed analysis using a wide range of media concepts and theory applied well to the opening sequence. The more sophisticated responses explored a range of ideas to give a valid and personal interpretation of the text, showing understanding of the sci-fi genre and the impact of the techniques used in the extract. Even weaker responses made some attempt to analyse, although some candidates tended to list or describe technical codes and the narrative without analysing the purpose and effect. Others recognised the subtexts but failed to then explore them in any detail.

The question provides quite specific guidance in the bullet provided, indicating that candidates need to cover all of these points and providing them with an appropriate structure for answering the question. Some candidates focused on audience and representation at the expense of the focus required. Narrative was the aspect of the question that was handled least well. Although most responses made reference to binary oppositions and/or enigma codes, some centres had several candidates who ignored this bullet point completely and many (otherwise good) candidates tended to download some theorists such as Prop and Todorova. Those candidates who had a clear focus on the bullet points produced a more structured and coherent response.

The range of points made included:

Technical and audio codes
- camera movement – audience positioning through POV shots
- range of shots – close ups of characters in varied situations, long shots of school setting, tracking shots of students running for audience involvement
- use of continuous shot as students arrive at school, involving the audience
- tracking shots of the chase at the beginning, creating tension and drama
- camera angles - high to suggest vulnerability and low to suggest dominance
- use of slow motion
- special effects and CGI in credit sequence establish the genre
- dramatic music in the pre-credit sequence to heighten tension
- heavy breathing - tension and drama
- soundtrack suggests young audience

Visual codes
- iconography related to school environment
- muted colours to suggest realism contrasting with the bright colours and lights of the 'fantasy' element in the credit sequence
- clothing and physical appearance establish characters as students
- iconography linked to science fiction genre - shadow on the floor, monster
- setting and background
- on screen graphics of boy's texts suggests he is not from that time - lack of cultural competence

Narrative
- genre conventions of science fiction combined with conventions of teen drama
- characters and their role within the narrative
- use of privileged spectator position in the pre-credit sequence
- credit sequence - intertextuality with *Doctor Who* and suggestions of time travel
- audience expectations of plot situations due to foreknowledge of *Doctor Who*
- setting - ordinary setting with extraordinary events
- use of dialogue to establish characters and possible relationships
- clues to narrative in dialogue ('students disappear') - contrasts with ordinary school dialogue around the prom
- use of enigma codes

Question 2(a)
Question 2(a) was accessible and there were many confident responses with candidates gaining full marks. As has been the case in previous years, candidates need to be aware of time-management in the exam and should not spend a disproportionate amount of time on a question only worth 4 marks. Weaker candidates did not consider two different types of audience as was required by the question or referred to two audiences with no justification for their choices.

Suggestions included:
- the BBC Three audience who enjoy the flexibility of online viewing
- a young audience - BBC Three target
- fans of *Doctor Who*
- fans of the fantasy/science fiction genre
- fans of the writer Patrick Ness - audience expectation

Question 2(b)

Question 2(b) required candidates to make a connection to the opening sequence, thereby applying their media knowledge. As has been the case in previous years, it was important that candidates focus on the 'how' element of the question rather than provide a merely descriptive answer. The choice of ways selected for 2(a) affected the response for 2(b) and there needed to be this connection in order for the marks to be awarded. Candidates considered (in relation to their choice of audience for 2(a):

- construction of narrative
- appeal of characters for target audience
- narrative suggesting that audience will find out the mystery - enigmas created
- appeal of generic codes of science fiction drama
- repertoire of elements of the science fiction genre and of *Doctor Who* specifically
- iconography related to *Doctor Who*, particularly in credit sequence and setting
- introduction of new, young actors of the audience demographic
- flexibility of viewing and eventual opportunity to binge watch

Question 2(c)

Question 2(c) required candidates to explore how the same media text appeals to different audiences. It was expected that relevant examples were used to support this evaluation. There was a range of ways in which candidates approached this question. Those who focused well on the question, exploring the meaning of 'different' audiences while substantiating their response with relevant examples were able to access all of the marks available. Weaker candidates did not consider a range of different audiences, thereby limiting their achievement. The answer required candidates to refer to their own examples but as is the case in previous years, some candidates referred only to the resources material. The candidates who did select their own examples selected appropriate examples from a range of industries which allowed them to discuss a range of relevant points.

Candidates explored:

- an awareness of 'different' which may encompass age, gender, ethnicity etc.
- the genre of the text - genre hybridity appealing to audience range
- the inclusion of a diverse range of stars/celebrities
- intertextuality appealing to audiences from different age groups
- aspects of narrative that may appeal to different audiences
- the construction of the text - appeal of different elements
- reference to theory e.g. uses and gratifications, Gauntlet's 'pick and mix'

This question proved problematic for some candidates and it was evident that many candidates were not prepared to engage in detailed textual analysis of specific texts. It is important for a coherent response that candidates select specific scenes, pages etc. and can analyse these in specific detail. Some candidates engaged in general analysis of, for example, magazine front cover/newspapers without discussing a specific edition, TV programmes with discussing specific episodes etc.

It continues to be a concern that some candidates do not display effective essay writing skills. The best responses provided an effective introduction that unpacked the question and provided some signposts to the reader as to what the main body would consider. A clear paragraph structure was expected with links made that took the reader through the essay. Stronger candidates concluded and gave evidence of an overview that supported their overall conclusion. Weaker responses lacked structure and moved from one example to the other without the development of a point of view or exploration of purpose.

Question 3
Question 3 proved to be an accessible question and was generally answered well with many candidates seeming to be prepared for a question on representation and on representations of age specifically. It was expected that candidates focused on the concept of representation and needed to refer to 2/3 examples across different forms. There was an expectation that candidates who attained the higher levels would demonstrate an understanding of the concept of representation and be able to anchor their chosen examples in terms of context and purpose. The chosen examples needed to be analysed in some detail and higher level responses needed to engage with them on a more sophisticated level that went beyond simple descriptions or assertions of positive and negative. Higher level responses needed to use examples to both challenge and reinforce the statement.

Question 3 was problematic for candidates who had not been adequately prepared in all areas of the specification. The best candidates were able to demonstrate their understanding of the focus of the question: 'Media texts construct stereotypical representations of age.' Explore this statement with reference to your own detailed examples. Stronger candidates were able to develop their answer to discuss a range of points. The best responses used a specific example such as a magazine front page and then analysed in detail how the representation of age had been constructed through, for example, the choice of the central image, the use of language and mode of address etc. Weaker candidates failed to establish the focus of the question.

The 'how stereotypes are constructed' element of the question was largely ignored by many candidates. Some candidates gave very brief responses and did not develop their examples in adequate detail. There were many cases where students were too general or descriptive when referring to texts, limiting their ability to get into higher levels. Stronger candidates focused explicitly on the construction of the stereotypes via technical codes, dress codes, mode of address, language etc. whereas weaker responses simply described the characters/central images. Some centres' candidates referred to EastEnders but did not refer to a specific episode or characters to heighten their focus. Others looked at magazines and newspapers but did not refer to a specific issue.

The length of the essay required for this question continues to prove challenging for candidates. Responses often lack structure and candidates need to be better prepared with essay writing skills. Ideally, there should be an introduction that unpacks the command and topic words then signposts how the main body will progress. The best candidates introduced the concept, demonstrated their understanding of representations of age through the analysis of specific media texts, and then summed up their points in a conclusion. As with question 2(c), essay skills were lacking in a significant number of scripts.

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MS2: MEDIA PRODUCTION PROCESSES

A significant, and surprising, number of centres entered candidates for MS2 this year. Moderators reported seeing some sophisticated work and a range of interesting Briefs had been set for candidates. Indeed, it was pleasing to see that candidates across the ability range had been set tasks that were manageable and allowed them to achieve their potential. As in previous years, Print was more popular than A/V but there was some technically and creatively excellent work across all media forms.

Pre-Production:
The most popular tasks remain storyboards and magazine pages, closely followed by scripts and CD covers.
Pre-production work should closely reflect the independent Research undertaken by candidates and, whilst this was usually the case, there remain a number of candidates for whom the tasks appear to be quite separate. As this is a key feature of the new Unit 2, centres are reminded that Research is not an end in itself but must be reflected in the Planning undertaken by candidates.

Some technical points to note:
- Storyboards should be technically accurate and candidates need to be taught the generic requirements of these – for example, shot duration, camera language, transitions and editing, audio codes. Without these key features storyboards are not technically accurate, or an effective planning tool.
- Web pages need to be more than a template with writing on it. Whilst it is not expected that websites would be fully working for this element, a clear sense of layout, design and key functions are required.
- Print pages should be an accurate expectation of the Production; elements such as logos, social media and web links and appropriate font choices should be considered.

Production:
The most popular choices were film opening sequences and trailers, and music videos. Very few candidates attempted adverts or radio programmes this year.

Some points to note:
- Candidates who are working together should have clearly defined technical roles and these should be clearly stated on the cover sheets to aid the moderation process. Assessment should take the separate roles into consideration and it is not expected that candidates working together would have identical marks.
- A lot of A/V work would benefit from fewer hand held shots.
- There is no excuse for pixelated work and assessment should be adjusted significantly if print work is stretched, pixelated or blurred.

Report:
Centres are reminded to check the requirements for the Report if they have any candidates who may be re-submitting work next year. It is essential that the work – and assessment – reflects the requirements of the Assessment Objectives and the mark scheme. AO4 links to the Research undertaken to inform the Pre-Production and AO2 links to the evaluation of the Production.

Centres are also reminded of the need to ensure candidates keep to the word limit.

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MS3: MEDIA INVESTIGATION AND PRODUCTION

In the last full year of MS3, it is pleasing to note that moderators reported a range of excellent work. The highest achieving candidates produced work of an extremely high standard across the unit's three elements. Throughout the ability range it was pleasing to see evidence of candidates engaging with the demands of MS3 with enthusiasm and producing work in a range of appropriate media forms.

There were a variety of appropriate approaches to the task setting and assessment of the three elements of the unit. The majority of centres have, over the course of the specification, developed a constructive, clearly focused approach allowing candidates, across the ability range, to utilise their skills, and address the assessment criteria in a manner designed to ensure they achieve their potential. However, it was disappointing that a significant number of centres had not addressed concerns previously raised as a result of the moderation process. This was in terms of initial task-setting as well as the application of the assessment objectives. Problems at the task setting stage will negatively impact candidates' ability to develop and demonstrate their skills, showcase their ideas and successfully meet the demands of the assessment criteria. Generous assessment of any or all elements raises issues of parity between centres and, where this was the case, necessitated an appropriate adjustment of marks to ensure uniformity across all centres.

Each of the elements requires a range of skills, including: independent secondary research; technical and creative skills and an ability to evaluate with insight.

Research Investigation

The most effective research investigations demonstrate the following features:

- Titles clearly focused on a key concept (narrative; genre or representation) which incorporates between 1 and 3 specific media texts for investigation.
- Primary research, in the form of close textual analysis, which makes use of the skills candidates have developed for MS1.
- Secondary research, clearly focused on the key concept identified in the title that makes use of academic, clearly referenced sources such as textbooks, journals, essays and academically credible websites.
- The *application* of secondary research findings to the primary research, highlighting the development of candidates' conceptual understanding.
- Clearly drawn, insightful conclusions which can be used to inform the Production element.

Commonly noted issues which limit the effectiveness of the Research Investigation and therefore create problems at the Production and Evaluation stages:

- A holistic approach with titles prescribed by the centre; where candidates have been prescribed titles they tend to have less successful outcomes.

- Titles that are: too broad; encourage an overview/history of a topic; attempt to explore a concept over more than one media platform; lack focus on a key concept.
- Titles which encourage a focus on audience/audience responses or a more sociological approach to topics, such as the representation of mental health issues.
- An over-reliance on user-generated sources that lack academic credibility, such as Wikipedia, Slide share, BlogSpot or Prezi.
- Overuse of sources that, whilst academically credible, do not have a clear conceptual or media focus, for example sociology or psychology textbooks.
- Overuse of sources such as reviews and newspaper articles.
- A lack of referencing skills which, in the worst cases, may result in issues of plagiarism.
- Description rather than analysis; for example, description of the basic visual codes or a simple narration of the plot at the expense of exploration and analysis of the technical features of the texts.
- Audience research, in the form of surveys, questionnaires and focus groups, which is unnecessary and unlikely to aid conceptual understanding.

Production

The most effective productions display the following features:
- Clearly demonstrated use of research findings and conclusions to inform the production artefact/s.
- An effective understanding of, and adherence to, the relevant codes and conventions of both the media form produced and its genre – this is usually achieved through detailed analysis and well-drawn conclusions in the investigation.
- Appropriate levels of technical competence for the marks awarded, for example, effective editing and use of original images for higher levels
- Clearly defined technical roles within group production work, such as editing or camerawork.

Common issues which limit the effectiveness of the Production:
- Limited or tenuous application of the research findings and conclusions; most often where candidates produce work in a media form or genre other than the one they investigated, have investigated audience rather than a key concept, have focused on a sociological issue or researched an individual artist or celebrity.
- Failure to adhere to codes and conventions of the media platform, including incorrect aspect ratio; usually due to the candidate not having analyzed appropriate texts or not having paid sufficient attention to technical details in completing their investigation.
- Lower levels of technical competence than the specification requires; for example, use of found images only – this can lead to issues of plagiarism.
- An insufficient amount of work, for example, less than three pages of print or significantly less than four minutes of audio-visual material
- No individually defined *technical* role within group work, for example, candidates citing pre-production/planning work, or acting/directing as their role within a group.

Evaluation

The most effective evaluations demonstrated the following features:
- A clear understanding of how research investigation findings and conclusions inform the production element.
- An effective ability to analyses technical features of the candidate's own work in relation to the research findings and conclusions.
- Exclusive focus on the relationship between the research investigation findings and conclusions and the production artefact.

Less effective evaluations were characterized by:
- Discussion of the pre-production processes such as storyboarding and scripting.
- Discussion of the production processes such as filming and editing.
- Discussion of the strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement of the production element.
- The introduction and discussion of new research / texts which did not appear in the investigation.

Assessment
There was a definite propensity towards generous assessment, sometimes significantly so.

Generous assessment of the Research Investigations frequently occurred where candidates either lacked credible, academic secondary sources or failed to incorporate and apply such sources to primary research in the form of detailed textual analysis. Candidates find it extremely challenging to achieve the levels of conceptual understanding required for this unit if they have not made use of appropriate secondary sources. A significant minority of centres tended to over-reward candidates who drew research purely from inappropriate, on-line sources such as Wikipedia, Slideshare and blogs; it should be noted that these sources are often simply mediated opinion on theorists and candidates are better advised to access the original theorists' work. Exclusive use of these user-generated, online sources does not provide the range expected for candidates to be assessed in the higher levels. Other issues with secondary research included a tendency in some centres for candidates to use sociological-focused research or research based purely on the primary texts which does not allow candidates to develop their conceptual understanding. Primary research should be in the form of textual analysis not in the form of audience research.

Where productions were over-rewarded this tended to be because they lacked the close attention to detail needed for the levels awarded. Centres would be well advised to utilise the wealth of exemplar material available through the WJEC secure website. It would be most useful to pay particular attention to the technical skill highlighted at each level; particularly the higher levels. In some instances the codes and conventions of the form produced were not apparent; possibly because of the lack of detailed analysis in the investigation. Centres should be aware that candidates who work in one media form for their Research Investigation and work in a different form for Production often create difficulties for themselves. This is most evident where audio-visual texts are the focus of the Research Investigation and the Production is print-based; especially magazine covers and double page spreads. It is, therefore, vital that candidates are fully aware of the codes and conventions of the form they produce work in; this may require additional – uncredited – research.

Candidates working in groups should be individually assessed with regards to technical competence and how far the conclusions drawn from their Research Investigation have informed the production on an individual basis. Candidates therefore must have distinctly defined and appropriate technical roles. It is important that each group member is able to highlight their individual Research Investigation findings clearly in their Production. Each candidate's contribution is based on how effectively their Research Investigation findings inform the Production, as well as their individual technical contribution: it is therefore extremely unlikely that all members of any group will be awarded the same marks.

Administration

There was clear evidence of good practice. For example: evidence of internal moderation; assessor annotation which clearly detailed the reasoning behind marks awarded; the inclusion of word counts and generally well presented folders. However, there were also some centres who failed to annotate candidates' work, or used annotations in the form of advisory comments to the candidate, making it difficult for moderators to understand how and why the assessment criteria had been applied or centres had arrived at marks awarded.

The MS3/1 form must be completed in some detail by both assessors and candidates; not all centres complied with this requirement. The form is the opportunity for centres and candidates to explain their assessment process, i.e. to explain the work presented for moderation with all relevant information regarding its completion; for example, group roles should be specified by both candidate and assessor. Footage, imagery or music sourced from existing products should be identified along with details of how this may have affected the marks awarded.

Centres which submit work late, without an agreed extension, or present candidates' work without appropriate attention to detail as outlined above, make the moderation process difficult and raise issues with regards to parity across centres which may necessitate marks being adjusted to ensure uniformity of assessment.

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MS4: MEDIA – TEXT, INDUSTRY AND AUDIENCE

General Comments

The paper was accessible to all but offered higher level learners appropriate opportunities for sophisticated, conceptual debates and explorations. There was, as always, a wide variety of responses. All industries were studied, although there was a dearth of radio responses and fewer responses on magazines and newspapers than in the past (perhaps indicating an overall decline in the popularity/relevance of these for a younger audience). Popular texts included Old Spice, Compare the Market, Stranger Things, Ed Sheeran, Lady Gaga, Doctor Who, Sherlock, Luther, Fish Tank, I, Daniel Blake, The Hunger Games, Spectre & Skyfall, Frozen, Wonder Woman, GTA and Minecraft.

Similar problems continue to occur each year. Candidates did not always choose the most appropriate question for the industry and texts that they had studied and too many candidates failed to read the question properly. Candidates gave a response for the question they had practiced – usually from previous papers – rather than the question set. For example, although there was neither an explicit representation nor an explicit regulation question, as some candidates had been prepared for these, those candidates were determined to answer them. Whilst either concept could have been legitimately addressed in several questions, downloaded responses which failed to answer the question set were self-penalising.

Some aspects of English grammar such as capitalisation, paragraphing and use of inverted commas continues to be a problem for many candidates. Whilst there is no direct penalty for this, candidates should be encouraged to write accurately in order to ensure that they are able to effectively communicate their ideas.

As in previous years, there were a number of rubric infringements. The most common were not completing all questions or not using three texts in each, but there were a few more complex rubric infringements which suggested centres had not read the specification fully such as mixing industries and repeating industries across questions.

Centres are occasionally disadvantaging their candidates by not covering an industry thoroughly (according to the Specification and Guidance for Teachers). Some candidates used only one music video as a text for the music industry, which limited their marks, as the "text" should be the artist as a whole. Some candidates referred to single adverts as a campaign, for example John Lewis, or Chanel Coco Mademoiselle rather than writing about the campaign as a whole. Similarly, the lack of examples from specific editions/episodes for TV or magazines and newspapers was disappointing. Many answers suggested good understanding but lacked the detail to take them into higher levels. Too many candidates' responses referred to only the front cover of a magazine or paper. The lack of detail did impact on candidates' overall marks.

Section A: Text

A1: "Genres develop and change over time." Discuss this statement with reference to your three main texts.

This was a very popular question. Most responses successfully explored through the use of film or TV texts. Most of the text choices remained predictable and, as usual, the choices of texts by centres either helped or hindered the learners' ability to respond appropriately.

There was an often sound application of relevant theorists such as Buckingham, Chandler and Neale with some candidates able to discuss Post-modernism (Baudrillard, Lyotard). However, it is important that students are able to appropriately apply theoretical perspectives rather than simply name-checking theorists. There was, in the main, a good understanding of Genre as a concept. Candidates had a grasp of the concept of hybridity and some of the reasons why genres develop such as the changing attitudes and nature of audiences and social/cultural changes. For example, some candidates linked changing concepts of masculinity and femininity to the way that Men's Health and Closer has evolved and the way that The Big Issue has evolved to reflect contemporary issues.

Many focused on Neale's theory of repetition and difference, but in some cases failed to engage with the 'change over time' part of the question. When the Music Industry was used, many candidates did not respond to the question but cited how artists change genres. When advertising was used, responses were often confused. The very best responses fully addressed the demands of the question, analysing the way that genres change over time in relation to industry and audience contexts.

A2: "Narratives are based on order and conflict." To what extent is this true of your three main texts?

Stronger responses explored the question and considered how the industry context might impact on the narrative, with the best responses analysing the ideology associated with order being restored – or not. There were some excellent responses that looked at linearity V non-linearity, multi-strand narratives and flexi -narratives, and how conflict operated on a variety of levels in e.g. The Imitation Game.

The majority of candidates did focus on narrative, however some tended to veer into genre or representation. Often there was a tendency to describe the plot and there was some confusion about 'order' and 'conflict'. Todorov's theory was often used as a way of exploring 'order', interpreting this to mean chronological order of events; similarly Vogler's theory of the Hero's Journey was cited by some candidates. Many candidates focused on conflict, often using Levi-Strauss' theory of binary oppositions. Some candidates focused on characters as binary opposites which was valid if this was discussed in relation to the narrative conflict, while others argued that characters had an internal conflict.

Many candidates seemed to download prepared "narrative" responses that did not really engage with order and conflict.

Section B: Industry and Audience

B1: How far do you agree that the purpose of a media text is to offer pleasure to audiences? Refer to your three main texts.

This question was attempted by many candidates and was often reasonably well done – right across the ability range. Better responses engaged with both purpose and pleasure although a significant number of candidates only considered pleasure, thus overlooking a key element of the question. Too often, responses moved into appeals and response with candidates downloading everything they knew about audience without really engaging with the concept of pleasure.

The very best candidates made sophisticated links between the purpose of texts for the industry i.e.: profit or public service remit, and the concept of pleasure.

The Uses and Gratifications model was frequently –and usually appropriately - referenced. Hall's reception theory was also used- often less relevantly- as some candidates determinedly wrote about responses and readings with little reference to the question itself.

Some candidates argued, with validity, that the purpose of a text was not to offer pleasure – for example that the purpose of a documentary was to inform or a charity campaign to raise awareness or change attitudes. Occasionally, candidates did have a sense of debate about what else texts may offer audiences, which opened up their responses – but it was surprising that candidates who had studied newspapers and advertising often struggled with this idea.

B2: Explore the effect of digital technologies on your chosen industry. Refer to your three main texts.

Candidates using games, newspapers and magazines often linked responses to industry effectively. Some strong responses explored the positive impact of technologies in the advertising or television industries. Some candidates argued that digital technologies had negatively affected, for example, the magazine or music industries, resulting in falling sales.

The clear majority were able to describe a range of digital technologies used in their texts, however the key issue with this question was the lack of engagement with industry - few candidates were able to do this more than perfunctorily, if at all. Many focused on the impact of technologies on the audience, for example increased choice, interactivity etc.

There was some misreading of the question and a lot of downloading about how texts use digital technology - for example, explosions in Skyfall, social media marketing of Jurassic World and Beyoncé using (or not) Twitter. Had these points been linked back to the question, all would be valid, but this was rarely the case. Responses therefore tended to be very descriptive, particularly when using the film and music industries.

B3: "Media texts target specific audiences". How true is this of your three main texts?

This was a very popular question and many candidates wrote knowledgably about their audiences. Most candidates were able to discuss the target audience/s for their chosen texts, although some struggled to explore the extent to which texts target 'specific' audiences. However, many candidates failed to focus fully on the concepts of targeting and instead explored the appeal of the text. Some drifted into responses so became less relevant and less focused.

Some strong responses were able to draw comparisons between their texts, for example more mainstream texts that target a mass audience and independent products that target a more specific, niche, audience. The best had detailed knowledge and understanding of demographics and psychographics. The film industry often worked well, as it allowed candidates to explore the idea of mass audiences and link the concept of a large audience to the blockbuster and the need to generate profit. Some good responses examined representations as a way of targeting audiences and The Hunger Games, Tomb Raider and Heat were used successfully in this context.

Candidates touched on the obvious (though not always very well understood) socio-economic classifications of audiences. There were some tenuous references to Young and Rubicam Four Cs classifications (which are intended to apply to advertising) with comments such as Strugglers would watch this film.

B4: How far do your three main texts reflect typical production and distribution practices within your chosen industry?

As the focus of section B is 'Industry and Audience', it was surprising (and a little disappointing) that this was the least popular question, perhaps reflecting a stronger concentration by centres on the text rather than the context.

When done well, this was done extremely well, and candidates had a secure, sometimes sophisticated, grasp of the industrial context of their texts. This worked particularly well across film, television, magazines and music. These candidates were able to discuss, for example, the differences between Hollywood and UK, national and global, independent and mainstream production and distribution. The best candidates linked this knowledge to e.g. production values, use of celebrity/star, budgets, marketing strategies etc. and were fully aware of the "typicality" of their own texts within these contexts.

However, too often, weaker candidates ignored the 'how far' and 'typical' and were very descriptive. Many candidates focused on either production or distribution, usually the latter, in some cases considering only marketing, rather than engaging with the more complex issue of production (and highlighting their relative lack of comfort with this). Some candidates discussed the text itself as "typical" rather than linking it explicitly to production or distribution practices.