

GCE

AS and A Level Specification

Media Studies

For exams from June 2015 onwards

For certification from June 2015 onwards



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1 Introduction

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1.1 Why choose AQA?

It's a fact that AQA is the UK's favourite exam board and more students receive their academic qualifications from AQA than from any other board. But why does AQA continue to be so popular?

- **Specifications**

Ours are designed to the highest standards, so teachers, students and their parents can be confident that an AQA award provides an accurate measure of a student's achievements. And the assessment structures have been designed to achieve a balance between rigour, reliability and demands on candidates.

- **Support**

AQA runs the most extensive programme of support meetings; free of charge in the first years of a new specification and at a very reasonable cost thereafter. These support meetings explain the specification and suggest practical teaching strategies and approaches that really work.

- **Service**

We are committed to providing an efficient and effective service and we are at the end of the phone when you need to speak to a person about an important issue. We will always try to resolve issues the first time you contact us but, should that not be possible, we will always come back to you (by telephone, email or letter) and keep working with you to find the solution.

- **Ethics**

AQA is a registered charity. We have no shareholders to pay. We exist solely for the good of education in the UK. Any surplus income is ploughed back into educational research and our service to you, our customers. We don't profit from education, you do.

If you are an existing customer then we thank you for your support. If you are thinking of moving to AQA then we look forward to welcoming you.

1.2 Why choose Media Studies?

- Comprehensive and integrated coverage of media theory and practice
- Focus on new technologies
- Covers audiences as both producers and consumers of media texts
- Production in both AS and A2
- Opportunities for students to investigate what interests them
- Choice of cross-media studies
- Emphasis on contemporary issues and debates
- Rolling programme of production briefs and pre-set topics
- Prepares students for progression into work or higher education in a range of media-related areas
- Opportunity for CPD on New Technologies
- Opportunity to submit coursework electronically (e-portfolios)

1.3 How do I start using this specification?

Already using the existing AQA Media Studies specification?

- Register to receive further information, such as mark schemes, past question papers, details of teacher support meetings, etc, at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/rn/askaqa.php>**. Information will be available electronically or in print, for your convenience.
- Tell us that you intend to enter candidates. Then we can make sure that you receive all the material you need for the examinations. This is particularly important where examination material is issued before the final entry deadline. You can let us know by completing the appropriate Intention to Enter and Estimated Entry forms. We will send copies to your Exams Officer and they are also available on our website **http://www.aqa.org.uk/admin/p_entries.html**

Not using the AQA specification currently?

- Almost all centres in England and Wales use AQA or have used AQA in the past and are approved AQA centres. A small minority are not. If your centre is new to AQA, please contact our centre approval team at **centreapproval@aqa.org.uk**

1.4 How can I find out more?

Ask AQA

You have 24-hour access to useful information and answers to the most commonly asked questions at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/rn/askaqa.php>**

If the answer to your question is not available, you can submit a query for our team. Our target response time is one day.

Teacher Support

Details of the full range of current Teacher Support meetings are available on our website at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/support/teachers.html>**

There is also a link to our fast and convenient online booking system for Teacher Support meetings at **<http://events.aqa.org.uk/ebooking>**

If you need to contact the Teacher Support team, you can call us on 01483 477860 or email us at **teachersupport@aqa.org.uk**

2 Specification at a Glance

AS examinations

Unit 1 – MEST1

Investigating Media

50% of AS, 25% of A Level

2 hour written examination

80 marks

Two sections: A – **four** compulsory short answer questions

B – choice of **one** from two essays

Available in June only

Unit 2 – MEST2

Creating Media

50% of AS, 25% of A Level

Practical unit, internally assessed and externally moderated

80 marks

Externally set production briefs.

Two linked production pieces taken from two of the three media platforms studied in Unit 1 plus 1500 word evaluation.

Available in June only

AS
Award
1571

A2 examinations

Unit 3 – MEST3

Media: Critical Perspectives

25% of A Level

2 hour written examination

Two sections: A – **three** compulsory questions on unseen stimulus pieces

B – **one** essay from a choice of two topics

Available in June only

Unit 4 – MEST4

Media: Research and Production

25% of A Level

Practical unit, internally assessed and externally moderated

80 marks

Two sections: Critical Investigation (48 marks)

Linked production piece (32 marks)

Available in June only

A
Level
Award
2571

$$\boxed{\text{AS}} + \boxed{\text{A2}} = \boxed{\text{A Level}}$$

3 Subject Content

AS Units

Unit 1 and Unit 2 provide an integrated and complementary introduction to the study of the media and the contemporary media landscape. The content of both units is underpinned by a set of key media concepts and media platforms eg:

Media Concepts

- Media Forms
- Media Representations
- Media Institutions
- Media Audiences

Media Platforms

- Broadcasting
- Digital/web-based media (e-media)
- Print

Unit 1 requires candidates to carry out a cross-media study for an unseen examination. The study will then also be used to inform their work on Unit 2. For Unit 2 candidates will produce two media productions in two of the three different media platforms, with an evaluation of the productions, including a consideration of the use of the third media platform. Both units require candidates to look at cross-cultural issues where appropriate.

A2 Units

At A2 candidates will build on their AS work to look more fully at the contexts of media production and consumption – *why* as well as *how* texts are created as they are. As well as building on the concepts studied at AS, candidates will look at some or all of the following debates and theories as appropriate:

Media Debates

- Representation
- Media effects
- Reality TV
- News Values
- Moral panics
- Post 9/11 and the media
- Ownership and control
- Regulation and censorship
- Media technology and the digital revolution – changing technologies in the 21st century

Media Theories

Media analysis eg:

- Semiotics
- Structuralism and post-structuralism
- Postmodernism and its critiques

Politics and the Media eg:

- Gender and Ethnicity
- Marxism and Hegemony
- Liberal Pluralism
- Colonialism and Post-colonialism

Consumption and Production eg:

- Audience theories
- Genre theories

For Unit 3 candidates will be required to study two pre-set media topics on at least one of the three media studies platforms. For Unit 4 candidates will produce a media product linked to their research for an individual critical investigation. In both A2 units candidates should look at cross-cultural factors and the effects of globalisation on the media where appropriate.

3.1 Unit 1 MEST1 Investigating Media

Introduction

The aim of this unit is to enable candidates to investigate the media by applying media concepts to a range of media products in order to reach an understanding of how meanings and responses are created. Candidates should be encouraged to investigate the contemporary media landscape and the changing contexts within which media texts are produced and consumed.

Candidates will investigate the processes of meaning-making in media production and reception:

- at the micro level within individual products (also termed **texts**)
- and at a macro level in terms of technologies (also termed **platforms**).

In this specification the media platforms are referred to as broadcasting, e-media and print, to include linear broadcasting (audio-visual) and cinema, print media, digital/web-based and emerging media.

Candidates will firstly investigate a wide range of media texts to familiarise themselves with media language and media codes and conventions and then embark upon a cross-media study.

The investigations into media concepts, processes and products will link with and inform the research into Unit 2: Creating Media, where candidates are required to produce media artefacts taken from two of the three media platforms.

Assessment Objectives

- AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts (and critical debates)
- AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes (and evaluating their own practical work) to show how meanings and responses are created

Content

Texts, concepts and contexts

Candidates should start this unit by investigating a wide range of media texts taken from the three media platforms to enable them to understand the media languages and the codes and conventions of moving image and print texts applicable to broadcasting (audio-visual) and cinema, digital/web-based media (e-media) and newspapers and magazines.

Centres should choose media texts that enable candidates to identify and evaluate the ways in which the media languages are used (media forms) and which also allow investigation and exploration of the additional concepts of:

- media representations
- media institutions
- media audiences.

The study of media forms gives candidates an understanding of media language, including narrative and genre. Appreciating how media representations are constructed provides insight into the values and ideologies underpinning the media. This is also apparent in the study of media institutions and media audiences. Study of these areas also provides candidates with an understanding of the profound changes taking place in the production and reception of the media, and some of the implications of these changes.

Candidates will also gain a basic understanding of the role of marketing and the advertising industry in financing and promoting media through the investigation of a range of advertising texts and strategies present within and across the media platforms.

Semiotics, narrative structures, reception theories and ideas and information relevant to the study of media texts and media platforms should be taught insofar as they serve to help candidates understand how meanings and responses are created in media products. However the understanding and application of media concepts is more important than the reproduction of theories or information.

Texts should be chosen to allow candidates access to cross-cultural factors where appropriate. Candidates are expected to use appropriate media terminology in their responses to the examination questions and this should be taught from the start of the course.

The media platforms

Candidates will undertake a study of **one or more** of the cross-media topic areas (see below) across **at least three** different media taken from the following media platforms:

Broadcasting – suggested texts: television and radio programmes both factual and fictional; films; advertisements; trailers and other audio/visual promotional material. It is advised that at least one from each type of text should be studied.

E-media – suggested texts: websites; blogs/wikis; podcasts; advertising and promotional materials; radio; television; music or film downloads; games and emerging forms. It is advised that at least one from each type of text should be studied.

Print – suggested texts: newspapers; magazines; advertising and marketing texts including promotional materials. It is advised that at least one from each type of text should be studied.

The cross-media study

The knowledge and understanding of media concepts and contexts gained through the investigation and comparison of individual media texts will then be developed by making a detailed case study chosen from a range of topics.

Centres should choose a topic area that communicates with audiences across the media platforms; a topic which includes media products that can be classified, perhaps loosely, as a genre. By making a detailed investigation of the texts themselves, their similarities and differences and the processes and technologies used to create them within different media, candidates will gain a deeper and broader understanding of the contexts of their production and reception.

They will develop their understanding of how meanings and responses are created and received and how these meanings and responses can vary or stay the same across different media platforms. This approach ensures that the fluidity, flexibility and changing nature of media production and reception is investigated and prepares candidates for the other units in the course.

Centres may wish to teach two cross-media topic areas but there is no obligation to do so.

Suggested cross-media topic areas include:

Broadcast or film fiction: candidates should investigate how (audio-visual) broadcast or film fiction is presented across the media, primarily in broadcasting and cinema platforms, but also in newspapers and magazines, the internet and portable electronic devices. They should study the production and reception of broadcast or film fiction products including the ways in which audiences may select, consume and respond to broadcast or film fiction and its coverage.

Documentary and hybrid forms: candidates should investigate how documentaries are presented across the media, primarily in (audio-visual) broadcasting and cinema platforms, but also the treatment of these in newspapers and magazines, the internet and portable electronic devices. They should study the production and reception of documentary products including the ways in which audiences may consume, participate and respond to documentaries and their coverage.

Lifestyle: candidates should investigate how lifestyle, ie: make-over, information and advice products (such as buying and decorating property, cooking, slimming, bringing up children, improving a relationship, fashion tips etc), are presented across the media, for example in (audio-visual) broadcasting, the internet, newspapers and magazines. They should study the production and reception of such texts including the ways in which audiences may participate and respond to lifestyle products.

Music: candidates should investigate how music is presented across the media, for example, in (audio-visual) broadcasting, internet and portable electronic devices, newspapers and specialist magazines. They should study the production and reception of this coverage including the ways in which audiences may select, consume and respond to music products.

News: candidates should investigate how news is presented across the media, for example in (audio-visual) broadcasting, newspapers including on line newspapers, the internet and portable electronic devices. They should study the production and reception of news, including the ways in which audiences may select, produce, respond to and contribute to news.

Sport: candidates should investigate how sport is presented across the media, for example in (audio-visual) broadcasting, the internet and portable electronic devices, newspapers and magazines. They should study the production and reception of sport including the ways in which audiences may select, consume and respond to the coverage of sport (and sports products).

This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive and centres may wish to select other topics. Advice on the suitability of a topic can be obtained from AQA.

The media texts in some topics may be predominantly moving-image, audio, print or digital/web based and may appear largely on one of the three media platforms. Nevertheless, candidates are required to examine the presence, production and reception of texts within their chosen topic area across the three media platforms.

For example, a broadcast fiction product such as a new drama series for TV or radio might be received on a linear broadcast platform with extracts available on the internet, perhaps, before the actual broadcast date; the website might give extra information and possibly opportunities for interaction and downloads; newspapers and magazines might promote and comment on the product, actors, writers etc, while others involved might appear on other media platforms.

The texts within the cross-media topic should be examined by applying the knowledge and understanding gained through the study of the media concepts introduced during the investigation of media platforms. These include:

- audiences and how they receive and respond to (and create) texts
- institutional contexts including the relationship with the advertising industry, the level of independence/corporateness and how these contexts may influence the production and content of texts

- representations available within the texts and how these are constructed and construed
- semiotic, narrative and generic codes and conventions within the individual texts and across the topic, accounting for similarities and differences in codes and conventions across the media
- features and issues such as synergy, intertextuality, cross-media promotion, public service remit and other obligations, censorship and control, news and entertainment values, the technologies used in the production and reception process – as relevant to the topic chosen.

Candidates will be expected to use appropriate media terminology in their responses to the examination questions and this should be taught from the start of the course.

The Examination for Unit 1: Investigating Media

The examination for Unit 1 will take the form of a **two hour** two-part examination paper. It will be marked out of 80. Section A tests AO1 and Section B tests AO2. Quality of Written Communication will be assessed in Section B.

Section A (1 hour 15 minutes including 15 minutes reading/viewing time) will consist of four short answer questions, all compulsory, relating to a piece of unseen stimulus material. The unseen material will take the form of one of the following: moving image, audio, e-media or print. Questions will require candidates to focus on: media forms, codes and conventions; media representations; media institutions, media audiences and values and ideologies, and candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of these media concepts and the contexts in which they appear. **48 marks**

Section B (45 minutes) will require a sustained response to **one** of a choice of two questions which will give the candidates the opportunity to write about their cross-media study. Questions will not be topic-specific but designed to allow candidates to show what they know and understand about media products and processes by applying their knowledge and understanding of media concepts and contexts. **32 marks**

Further guidance on Unit 1 can be found in the Teacher Resource Bank.

3.2 Unit 2 MEST2 Creating Media

Introduction

In this unit candidates will produce **two** linked media artefacts taken from two of the three media platforms studied in Unit 1: Investigating Media, with a single, accompanying evaluation and pre-production materials for both pieces.

The pre-production materials, the production work and the evaluation should explicitly and implicitly demonstrate understanding of media concepts. It is expected that candidates will be actively engaging with the media concepts throughout the unit but, perhaps, particularly during the pre-production and evaluation phase of the unit. Therefore, an element of prior research into the production area will be considered necessary and will be evidenced in the pre-production materials.

Assessment Objectives

- AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes and evaluating their own practical work, to show how meanings and responses are created
- AO3 Demonstrate the ability to plan and construct media products using appropriate technical and creative skills

- AO4 Demonstrate the ability to undertake, apply and present appropriate research

Content

This unit should develop out of Unit 1: Investigating Media, and enables candidates to pursue their own media interests within a framework of media concepts, contexts and issues. The productions undertaken in Unit 2: Creating Media should be linked to the learning undertaken in Unit 1. Practical work in Unit 2 should link to the study of media platforms in Unit 1 with students demonstrating an understanding of media concepts and the functions and codes of broadcasting, e-media and print. This will be evidenced in students' research, production and in the evaluation. The topic areas will be determined by the published production briefs and so may differ from the topics selected for teaching in Unit 1. Even if they work in a group, candidates must undertake individual research, pre-production work and assessment of the success of the production, which will be made clear in the evaluation. Candidates should show awareness of cross-cultural factors, where appropriate.

What candidates need to do

Candidates need to complete a portfolio based on **one** of the set briefs for that examination series.

They will offer for assessment **two** productions chosen from **two of the three** media platforms in their chosen brief, plus an evaluation of both production pieces with reference to the third media platform.

The pre-production materials will demonstrate that candidates have researched appropriate media areas and extant texts as well as considering how to target specific audiences. Appropriate planning and trial work will also be included. This will evidence the first three stages of the production guide below.

The productions will demonstrate that candidates have planning, technical and creative skills as well as knowledge of relevant codes and conventions within their chosen platforms.

The evaluation will be partly a consideration of the candidate's intentions for the productions, but it will be largely an analysis of the success of the productions in the light of their chosen platforms, target audiences and relevant media concepts.

1 Pre-production work

Candidates will be expected to research the appropriate media areas relevant to the two production tasks undertaken. Research will include the investigation of existing products (texts) as well as audience research. Candidates will also be required to show evidence of appropriate planning and the targeting of the potential audience as outlined in the Production Guide below.

2 Production work

Candidates will undertake **two** linked production tasks from **two** different platform areas, based on one of three Production Briefs supplied by AQA. They will be able to choose from three options for each media platform studied in Unit 1:

- Broadcasting
- Digital/Web-based media (e-media)
- Print.

The quality of the productions should reflect the substantial weighting given to this component and candidates will need to submit **two** fully realised products consisting substantially of their own words and images.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the use of non-original material is widespread in the media, it is considered valuable experience for candidates to engage in a full production process.

The use of found images, copy or audio will only be acceptable where it would be impractical for the candidate to produce them for themselves and such use must be carefully acknowledged. No more than 20% of each production can consist of found material.

The length of the productions will be relatively short, as required by the Production Brief.

There may be some repetition of images and text between the production pieces where appropriate but it is expected that candidates will substantially rework the original material in relation to the new platform and/or audience.

Given these constraints, candidates will need to plan productions that are as tightly constructed as possible if they are to fully demonstrate their knowledge of relevant codes and conventions.

The use of templated web designs such as those found on *Youtube*, *Bebo* and some blog sites is not permitted as they would not allow candidates to engage fully with the design process; however, the use of programmes such as *Dreamweaver*, *Frontpage* etc, is acceptable.

Candidates may work in small groups (no more than four) where necessary but each candidate's contribution should be monitored and marked accordingly with supporting comments from the teacher. It is unlikely that group work would be necessary outside of time-based media and where a centre wishes to consider it – eg where several candidates' work is linked through the design of a single website – advice should be sought from AQA.

Where group work is undertaken, the evaluation and the majority of the pre-production materials should be original to each candidate. Thus, each candidate should produce individual storyboards pertaining to the production idea before the group decide on a final production.

After **two** years a new production brief will replace **one** brief each year for the duration of the specification.

3 Evaluation

A combined evaluation will be submitted for both the production pieces and it will be original to each candidate, with a word limit of 1500 words. Each piece should be word-processed and word counted.

The evaluation should engage with the intentions for the pieces in terms of the candidate's research, but the body of the text should consist of an analysis of how the productions themselves work in the light of their specific target audiences, research, media concepts and contexts.

Production Tasks

Candidates will choose **two** linked tasks from **two** separate media platforms. Each production task can be seen as technologically equivalent (see table below for examples).

Broadcasting	Print	E-media
2-minute film trailer	2 magazine/newspaper features/ reviews	3 web pages
2 television or radio advertisements	3 magazine advertisements	viral marketing tool
opening sequence for a TV programme	2 newspaper front pages	3 web pages

The briefs for the current academic year can be found on the Media Studies subject pages of the AQA website. Hard copies will be sent to centres on receipt of their estimated entries.

Specimen Briefs and Tasks

Brief One: Film Promotion

Broadcasting

Create a 2-minute cinema trailer for a new '15'-rated hybrid genre film and with a budget of roughly £30 million partly supplied by lottery funding.

Print

Write two features/reviews on the release of a new hybrid genre film, rated '15' and with a budget of roughly £30 million partly supplied by lottery funding. You should aim to produce an A4 page for each piece including images and text. The pieces should be specific to a named publication such as a newspaper, lifestyle magazine or specialist film magazine.

E-media

Create three web pages for the official site for a new hybrid genre film, rated '15' and with a budget of roughly £30 million partly supplied by lottery funding.

Brief Two: Public Service Advertising

Broadcasting

Create two television or radio advertisements as part of a campaign designed to promote sensible drinking aimed at young women (18-25 years of age).

Print

Create three magazine advertisements for three different magazines for a pre-Christmas campaign discouraging young women from drink-driving.

E-media

Create a viral, moving image marketing tool to promote sensible drinking. The piece is intended to be disseminated via mobile phone attachments.

Brief Three: Current Affairs

Broadcasting

Create the opening sequence for a new current affairs programme to be screened on Channel 4 at 6.30 pm aimed at the 16-21 age demographic.

Print

Create the front pages for two new middle-market blacktop newspapers, each with a different gender bias.

E-media

Create three web pages of an internet site dealing with current affairs aimed at women under the age of 30.

These tasks will change on a two-year rolling programme. The briefs for each year will be published on the AQA website.

Work can be submitted in a range of contemporary formats, which could include;

- DVD
- Video
- Print
- Website (submitted on CD-ROM)
- MP3/Podcast
- CD-ROM

If centres are unsure whether their proposed media format will be suitable for submission they are advised to contact AQA early, to ensure compatibility. Centres wishing to enter candidates' coursework electronically (e-portfolio) must contact AQA. DVD material must be suitable for playback on a domestic DVD player.

Production Guide

The process of completing this unit can basically be split into five stages:

Research: this should include primary texts related to the Production Briefs chosen by the candidate, as well as exploration of more theoretical issues encountered in Unit 1. Candidates might, for instance, look at the openings to three or four current affairs programmes and a similar number of news-orientated websites investigating the image and production values that they embody, as well as more conventional AS academic resources. This research will then inform their intentions, planning and pre-production process.

Intentions: candidates should identify how they intend their particular productions to work; they should consider their specific audiences and how they are going to target them, both in terms of the content of the production pieces themselves and the relevant platforms, eg life-styling, discourse, placement, promotion, distribution etc.

Pre-production: candidates should create mock-ups, storyboards or shooting scripts and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of them and amend as necessary. Evidence of research, intentions and pre-production materials should be submitted with the productions as well as being discussed in the evaluation and apparent in the productions.

Production: the productions should be as fully realised as possible and represent a substantial amount of work. They account for 40% of the total AS assessment and this should be reflected in the finish of the pieces rather than the length. Original images should be used where possible; for instance, it is preferable for candidates to construct images of imaginary stars or politicians rather than using images of real stars, politicians etc.

Where considerable manipulation of found images has been undertaken to the extent that candidates can claim it for their own, then the original images should be supplied to the moderator.

Evaluation: the evaluation should explore the success of the productions in terms of the candidate's intentions, the target audiences, fitness for purpose in the relevant platform and the media concepts. Candidates should also consider how the ideas might be applied to the third media platform.

Further guidance on Unit 2 can be found in the Teacher Resource Bank.

Assessment

This unit is internally assessed and externally moderated. For moderation procedures please see Section 7 in this specification document. Incomplete submissions should be marked pro-rata.

Mark Scheme for Unit 2: Creating Media 80 marks in total

Teachers should employ a 'best fit' approach when using the mark scheme after, first, deciding which mark band level best describes the candidate's work. As indicated within each level, Quality of Written Communication should be taken into account when awarding marks in the Evaluation (A02).

MEST2 Mark Scheme

Productions (AO3 48 marks and AO4 12 marks)

60 marks

Level 5 (49-60 marks)

The candidate demonstrates creativity and clear technical proficiency in the use of the chosen technologies (AO3).

The candidate also demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the necessities and details of the production process (AO3).

Codes and conventions have been used appropriately and with some flair throughout (AO3).

The productions are clearly fit for purpose in the light of the candidate's research (AO4).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate considerable attention to detail and a genuine sense of engagement with both the chosen media and the subject matter.

Level 4 (37-48 marks)

The candidate demonstrates some creativity and technical proficiency in the use of the chosen technologies (AO3).

The candidate also demonstrates good understanding of the necessities and details of the production process (AO3).

Codes and conventions have been used appropriately throughout (AO3).

The productions are fit for purpose in the light of the candidate's research (AO4).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections of flair and/or sophistication in work that is otherwise good.

Level 3 (25-36 marks)

The candidate demonstrates technical competence in the use of the chosen technologies (AO3).

The candidate also demonstrates satisfactory understanding of the necessities and details of the production process (AO3).

Codes and conventions have been used appropriately through most of the work (AO3).

The productions are largely fit for purpose in the light of the candidate's research (AO4).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections of creativity and/or proficiency in work that is otherwise satisfactory.

Level 2 (13-24 marks)

The candidate demonstrates some technical competence in the use of the chosen technologies (AO3).

The candidate also demonstrates basic understanding of the necessities of the production process (AO3).

Codes and conventions are used inconsistently (AO3).

Some of the production work is fit for purpose in the light of the candidate's research (AO4).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections that are competent and/or satisfactory in work that is otherwise basic.

Level 1 (1-12 marks)

The candidate demonstrates minimal technical competence in the use of the chosen technologies (AO3).

The candidate also demonstrates rudimentary understanding of the necessities of the production process (AO3).

Codes and conventions are used inconsistently and in a limited fashion (AO3).

Little of the production work is fit for purpose in the light of the candidate's research (AO4).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections which demonstrate some competence or basic understanding in work that is otherwise rudimentary.

At the bottom of this level work will tend to be incomplete or with very limited engagement with the demands of the unit.

Level 0 (0 marks)

No relevant/appropriate/suitable response.

Evaluation (AO2 16 marks and AO4 4 marks)

20 marks

Level 4 (16-20 marks)

The evaluation and pre-production materials contain extended evidence and application of research and give a clear description of the target audience(s) and how the candidate intended to target them (AO4).

There is effective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the productions which demonstrates sound understanding of the media concepts and contexts relevant to the work undertaken with clear reference to the third media platform (AO2).

The candidate uses the language of Media Studies with confidence. The work demonstrates a high level of accuracy in spelling and syntax and is expressed in a fluent and cogent manner (AO2).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate confident understanding of the Key Concepts through an engaged analysis of the signification process.

Level 3 (11-15 marks)

The evaluation and pre-production materials contain substantial proof, and competent application, of research and offer evidence of the target audience(s) and how the candidate intended to target them (AO4).

There is competent analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the productions which demonstrates satisfactory understanding of the media concepts and contexts relevant to the work undertaken with some discussion of the third media platform (AO2).

The candidate makes appropriate use of the language of Media Studies. The work may demonstrate some errors in spelling and syntax but will communicate meaning accurately (AO2).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections that are confident, extended and/or effective in work that is otherwise satisfactory.

Level 2 (6-10 marks)

The evaluation and pre-production materials contain some proof, and application, of research and offer some evidence of the target audience(s) and how the candidate intended to target them (AO4).

There is some analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the productions which demonstrates basic understanding of the media concepts and contexts relevant to the work undertaken with some mention of the third media platform (AO2).

The candidate makes some use of the language of Media Studies. There are likely to be some errors in spelling and syntax and meaning may be confused at times (AO2).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections that are competent and/or satisfactory in work that is otherwise basic and/or inconsistent.

Level 1 (1-5 marks)

The evaluation and pre-production materials contain little proof or application of research and offer some limited evidence of the target audience(s) and, possibly, how the candidate intended to target them (AO4).

The candidate tends to describe the productions and/or processes rather than analyse the strengths and weaknesses, demonstrating rudimentary understanding of the media concepts and contexts relevant to the work undertaken (AO2).

The candidate makes minimal use of the language of Media Studies. There are likely to be extensive errors in spelling and syntax and the candidate may struggle to communicate effectively (AO2).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections which demonstrate basic understanding in work that is otherwise limited and rudimentary.

Level 0 (0 marks)

No relevant/appropriate/suitable response.

3.3 Unit 3 MEST3 Critical Perspectives

Introduction

The aim of this synoptic unit is to allow candidates to demonstrate their holistic understanding of the Media Studies Specification. It is assumed that during the course of their study they will have covered media concepts in some detail but, generally speaking, individually. At this level they are encouraged to examine the media in a less formulaic way. Unit 3 will encourage candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts, and also to develop and formulate their approach to the media and the role of the media in today's society by referring in detail to the wider contexts (social, political, historical, economic, as appropriate) which affect media production, distribution and exhibition, by tackling media theory and by taking part in a discussion of the major contemporary media issues and debates. Candidates are expected to look at cross-cultural factors and the effects of globalisation on the media where appropriate.

Assessment Objectives

- AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates
- AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes (and evaluating own practical work) to show how meanings and responses are created

Content

Candidates will be given **two** pre-set topic areas for study during the year, which they will explore across one or more of the **three** media platforms.

Each of the topic areas will allow candidates to examine media issues and debates, theory and wider contexts, while also consolidating their understanding and use of the media concepts and other aspects of the specification covered at AS level. Each candidate should produce an individual case study of their own choice for each pre-set topic selected. It is not advisable for a whole group of candidates to be given the same title for an area of research. Candidates will be expected to examine media texts in detail in terms of their meanings and their functions.

Pre-set topic areas from June 2015 onwards:

- identities and the media
- the impact of new/digital media.

Identities and the Media

Candidates might study:

- The mainstream media's role and influence in the construction of identities
- Audiences and identities, including audience uses and responses, self-representation, role playing, collective identities
- The impact of social media on identity and the role of the individual as producer
- Power and resistance, debates about the power of the media and audiences, including the media's influence, varieties of audience uses and responses, campaigning
- Debates about dominant and marginalised identities
- Identity politics, including diverse, fluid and multiple identities, changing identities, alternative and queer identities
- Ideology, the ideas and values communicated by identities.

Case studies might include the construction of female teen identities (considering gender, age, class, ethnicity etc.) in relation to celebrity culture and its links to ideological positioning. Thus candidates might study the way different aspects of the identity of a celebrity are produced and reinforced by mainstream media, fans own constructions in response to celebrity, and the positioning of the audience through their associations with popular culture in a range of media products. The manufacturing of role models and their use by institutions and audiences would be a relevant approach to this area.

Studies undertaken for this topic would also involve the evaluation of wider debates such as the blurring of borders between public and private space, the ideological function of identity and the limits of self-representation. A study of identities and the media would also lend itself to the examination of a variety of media theories to:

- consider how identity is constructed across media forms and types of producers
- consider the role of technology in forming identity; technological determinism or social transformation
- consider the view of technology as threat in the construction of identities (particularly for younger age groups)
- consider the effect of identity politics on the media; how do marginalised groups claim identities and how are they received by dominant groups?

- consider the limitations of defining individuals and groups by identity characteristics
- consider the use of representation as a process in defining identity.

Candidates should analyse the way that issues of identity in transformation have become increasingly important in the content and themes of media production, across a wide range of media output. This study might take the form of an exploration of how one or more of a range of identities, for example post-feminist, queer, class, post national – are represented as part of a cultural process of identity construction.

The Impact of New/Digital media

Candidates might study:

- The interactive consumer
- Social networking
- The internet and the world wide web
- Blogs
- Podcasts
- The changing contemporary media landscape
- The role of media institutions
- The media and democracy
- The changing role of the distributor and exhibitor
- New technologies and the audience
- The effect of globalisation on the use of new/digital media
- Cross-cultural factors in the use and effects of new/digital media
- Values and ideology in the impact of new technology.

Candidates might carry out a case study of a chosen new media area eg *Youtube* or *Wikipedia*. Thus, they might study a variety of new/digital technologies over the period of a term such as the impact of mobile phones and the changing modes of consumption of media products that are a consequence of such developing technology, or the impact of social networking sites on the internet such as *MySpace*.

Areas such as these would allow candidates to investigate a variety of media issues and debates such as globalisation, ownership and control and the digital revolution and its consequent effect on production and exhibition. Candidates might consider how new technologies affect the way we consume (and produce) media products and therefore affect the ways that media products are produced, distributed and exhibited. They could widen this approach to study the impact of new media across different media platforms.

Candidates will also consider the changing role of audiences and the decline of the mass audience in the new interactive age, and how this mainly affects media institutions now and in the future.

A study of the impact of new/digital media would also lend itself to the examination of a variety of media theories to:

- consider how new/digital media affects the construction of media products (media analysis)
- consider the political and social implications of the new technologies and the methods of their consumption (media theories)
- consider the effects so far, and possible effects in the future, on media institutions (media production)
- consider the role of the interactive audience (media audiences)
- consider cross-cultural factors in, and the effects of globalisation on, the impact of new technology as appropriate.

A case study of *Youtube* might look at a variety of issues all linked with the list above but would also examine the nature of the site, its content, the implications of a medium where we are all producers of media texts, the debate over whether a site such as *Youtube* is part of a democratisation of the media or whether media institutions have forestalled the power of the audience by purchasing such sites. There are also considerable implications for all media producers (and audiences) in the sense that now, it can be argued, creators of media products can control the distribution and exhibition of their own products.

Candidates will be expected to investigate the topics listed above by studying a range of media texts that encompass the three media platforms that remain central to the specification:

- Broadcasting
- Print
- Digital/web-based media (e-media)

Possible topics in later years include:

- Genre: audiences and producers
- Audience participation in the construction of media texts
- Media and democracy.

Other topics will be added during the life cycle of the specification. Centres will be advised by AQA in advance whenever such a change takes place.

The following two areas represent the relevant components of the specification that candidates might study during their Media Studies course. The lists are not exclusive and may/should/could change in line with the pre-set topics. None of the items listed below exist in isolation and a holistic approach is advised to the study of all aspects of the media. Candidates will also need to look at the relevant social, political, historical and economic wider contexts where appropriate.

Media Issues and Debates (cross-media)

The following represents an indication of the possible issues and debates currently prevalent in the study of the media. They may be added to or subtracted from, depending on their relevance.

- Representation and stereotyping
- Media effects
- Reality TV
- News Values
- Moral Panics
- Post 9/11 and the media
- Ownership and control
- Regulation and censorship
- Media technology and the digital revolution – changing technologies in the 21st century
- The effect of globalisation on the media

Media Theories (cross-media)

Media theories studied during the course might include:

Media analysis eg:

- Semiotics
- Structuralism and post-structuralism
- Postmodernism and its critiques

Politics and the Media eg:

- Gender and ethnicity
- Marxism and hegemony
- Liberal Pluralism
- Colonialism and Post-colonialism

Consumption and Production eg:

- Audience theories
- Genre theories

It is not expected that candidates will learn all these media theories, but that they will be able to use elements of relevant media theories when analysing media texts.

The Examination for Unit 3: Media: Critical Perspectives

The examination for Unit 3 will take the form of a two hour examination paper. It will be marked out of 80. Section A tests AO1 and section B tests AO2.

Quality of Written Communication will be assessed in Section B.

Section A (40%) 1 hour including 15 minutes reading/viewing time 32 marks

The first section will be based around unseen stimulus materials which may be print, e-media, audio or moving image based. The stimulus materials will be designed to be easily assimilated by candidates in the space of 15 minutes and there will be time for note-taking and essay planning. The materials will be chosen to raise issues about:

- media concepts (form, representation, institutions, audience, values and ideology)
- wider contexts
- media issues and debates.

There will be **three** compulsory questions based around the stimulus materials. The questions will demand short answers to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the media.

Section B (60%) 1 hour 48 marks

Candidates will have been given two pre-set topic areas for study during the year. They will be expected to answer one question from a choice of questions linked to the pre-set topics. Questions will be open-ended so that candidates can respond to the question utilising the media texts that they have studied throughout this course through the application of their synoptic knowledge and understanding of the media.

Further guidance on Unit 3 can be found in the Teacher Resource Bank.

3.4 Unit 4 MEST4 Media: Research and Production

Introduction

In this synoptic unit candidates will build on their skills from AS study to investigate a media theme/text in more depth and realise a production piece reflecting this research. The unit has two sections:

1. Critical Investigation (48 marks)
2. Linked production piece (32 marks)

Candidates will research and produce one critical investigation and one linked production.

The unit is holistic so the link between the two elements must be evident and appropriate. At AS level candidates undertake production work and apply media concepts and debates to a range of media texts. At A2 it is expected that they will be able to synthesise theory and production and consider relevant cross-cultural factors and the effects of globalisation on the media as appropriate.

Assessment Objectives

- AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates
- AO3 Demonstrate the ability to plan and construct media products using appropriate technical and creative skills
- AO4 Demonstrate the ability to undertake, apply and present appropriate research

Content

This unit is designed to allow candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the link between media research and practical production work so there must be clear and evident links between the two elements for assessment. The unit is intended to enable candidates to explore a text, theme, issue or debate relevant to the contemporary media landscape in depth and use this exploration to inform their production piece. Cross-cultural factors and the effects of globalisation on the media should be considered where appropriate.

Where candidates are working in a group on a production piece they may choose to produce similar research studies or they may wish to focus on different texts, themes, issues or debates relevant to their chosen production piece.

For the purposes of this unit, 'contemporary' is loosely defined as *within the five years preceding*

the commencement of the study of the A2 units.

Should candidates particularly wish to focus on significantly older texts and/or themes for some reason they should be aware that this may make it difficult to contextualise their own production piece in relation to the contemporary media landscape as required in the mark scheme. However there may be times when this is valid. If centres are unsure whether a chosen theme or text(s) is appropriate, they are advised to contact AQA.

Critical Investigation

Candidates will be required to produce an *individual* investigation which may be presented as a written report of approximately 2000 words or equivalent material presented in some other format. This total will not include any supportive material the candidate considers relevant, or image captions, footnotes, references or quotations. As the critical investigation is intended to provide an in-depth background for the practical production, it should be an investigation or piece of research based upon a clearly focused title and should be textually focused, regardless of how it is to be presented. Candidates will need to collect and evaluate appropriate evidence, and to reach coherent conclusions based on that evidence.

The critical investigation should be word processed (if written) and a detailed bibliography/source list provided citing both the primary texts (ie the texts studied) and secondary sources (eg textbooks and journals). Candidates should be aware that extensive use of film review websites, for example, is not encouraged as they rarely consider the text critically or in depth.

Investigations presented in non-written format should be equivalent to 2000 words of academic writing. For example:

- a DVD commentary approximately 10 minutes long – including interview, commentary on key sequences and analysis of existing material
- a wiki-based investigation of at least four pages with links, analysis, comparison and visual materials.

Centres will have access to a Coursework Adviser who they can contact with any queries relating to this unit. For details of your Coursework Adviser please contact the subject team at mediastudies@aqg.org.uk.

The intention is to allow a wide variety of forms for the presentation of the critical investigation to broaden opportunities for candidates. *The focus of the investigation should be on content, not format, and marks should be awarded for content, not presentation.* If centres are unsure about whether a format is suitable or require further guidance on how to approach this process they are advised to contact AQA.

Guidance on the linked production

The linked production must show development from AS productions and must be a fully realised media artefact. The artefact should demonstrate autonomous, secure and confident use of the chosen technology, significant engagement with institutional and genre codes and conventions and aesthetic credibility, as befits A2 standard productions. It should follow directly from the research study undertaken.

Suitable areas of investigation and linked products might include:

Critical Investigation area

Gender representations in soap operas

Linked Production

The opening sequence for an episode of a new soap opera

Critical Investigation area

Viral marketing techniques

Linked Production

A viral advertisement suitable for distribution by mobile phone

Critical Investigation area

Japanese anime

Linked Production

Trailer for a new anime film

Critical Investigation area

Contemporary men's lifestyle magazines

Linked Production

Mock-up of the first edition of a new men's lifestyle magazine

Critical Investigation area

Machinima and commercial game trailers

Linked Production

Machinima film for a new first-person shooter computer game

Critical Investigation area

Shock jocks and local commercial radio stations

Linked Production

Opening section of a new late night 'discussion' programme for a local radio station

Since this is A2, and candidates will have already completed a production piece at AS level, there is an expectation that they will make more use of media technology and produce a production piece to a higher standard than that expected at AS level. The production should demonstrate greater autonomy and understanding of the institutional and genre codes and conventions appropriate for their chosen production area than at AS level. The production should be technically, aesthetically and institutionally appropriate within the contemporary media landscape.

There are no restrictions on the medium candidates may choose to use (so they may, for example, produce moving image work even if they produced moving image work at AS level). However it is not permitted to submit a production piece which would fit any of the production tasks set at AS level from the current or two previous examination series.

All production work must be fully realised with appropriate use of media technology. Submissions such as storyboards will not be permitted.

Work can be submitted in a range of contemporary formats, which could include:

- DVD (domestic player format)
- Video
- Print
- Website (submitted on CD-ROM)
- MP3/Podcast
- CD-ROM

If centres are unsure whether their proposed media format will be suitable for submission they are advised to contact AQA early, to ensure compatibility. Centres wishing to enter candidates' coursework electronically (e-portfolio) must contact AQA. DVD material must be suitable for playback on a domestic DVD player. It is understood that candidates will not necessarily have access to industry standard equipment, as at AS level. Centres are advised to include a covering letter with work sent for moderation detailing the technical facilities available to candidates during the production process.

Moving image and audio work is not expected to be longer than 5 minutes and many products will be shorter than this: animated products or television or radio advertisements may only be 30 seconds long. Candidates should remember that overlong work is often self-penalising since quantity can detract from quality.

Print or e-media products should be at least three pages for an individual candidate, and obviously more for a group production, and must use a substantial proportion of original images. Found images are not appropriate at A2 level except as additional material. Candidates choosing to work with machinima, for example, should be aware that simply choosing to re-edit existing high production value commercial material cannot be as highly credited as work constructed from original material and will generally not be approved. Because the media, and production processes in particular, continue to evolve this can be a difficult distinction to make and centres should consult AQA before commencement of the production piece if they have any queries.

Where candidates have worked in a group on the production it is very helpful for moderation if each candidate provides details of their individual roles and responsibilities. Centres should also provide details of the technical facilities available to candidates in each group during the production process.

Groups may not consist of more than four candidates, to allow each group member sufficient opportunity to contribute. Print production work or digital/web-based work may well be more suited to individual candidates or paired production work. Candidates choosing to undertake moving image work alone should be aware of the significant demands of work in this medium.

Further guidance on Unit 4 can be found in the Teacher Resource Banks.

Assessment

This unit is internally assessed and externally moderated. For moderation procedures please see Section 7 in this specification document.

Centres should assess each of the elements for this unit in accordance with the given mark scheme for that element and record their marks for each element in the appropriate places on the Candidate Record Form (CRF), having ensured that appropriate internal moderation process has taken place.

All written work should be annotated by a teacher with a summative comment at the end of the work with a mark. This mark and a shortened version of the summative comment will then be transferred to the CRF for each candidate. Critical investigations submitted in other formats should be accompanied by a marking sheet indicating how the work was assessed and the mark awarded.

Centres will also need to provide a short marking commentary for the practical element of this unit and again a shortened version of this will be transferred to the CRF. It may be appropriate to provide a marking summary for the practical element which is largely generic for group members, and also to supply a breakdown of the individual work undertaken and the individual roles within the group, which will help show how marks have been awarded by the centre for each candidate.

Mark Scheme for Unit 4: Media: Research and Production 80 marks in total

Teachers should employ a 'best fit' approach when using the mark scheme after, first, deciding which mark band level best describes the candidate's work.

Critical Investigation (AO1 16 marks and AO4 32 marks)

48 marks

	Level Descriptor
Level 4 (37-48 marks)	<p>A fluent and analytical investigation which explores the chosen topic from a clear, autonomous and critical perspective, making use of extensive and wide-ranging research which has clearly been employed in the investigation and detailed in the bibliography, making use of a wide range of academic, media and contextual sources. The investigation demonstrates sophisticated research and engagement with the primary text(s) and a range of secondary texts. It is well presented with a very detailed bibliography/source list (AO4).</p> <p>The investigation demonstrates sophisticated knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates relevant to the chosen area of investigation. The work contextualises the study and the linked production piece effectively within the contemporary media landscape (AO1).</p> <p><i>At the top of this level</i> candidates demonstrate very good understanding of the chosen area of investigation, very good, independent research skills and very good application of media concepts, contexts and critical debates. The link between the investigation and the production is cogent, clear and evident.</p>
Level 3 25-36 marks	<p>A proficient investigation, exploring the chosen topic and demonstrating autonomous research and exploration. The work is appropriately presented with a functional bibliography/source list.</p> <p>Significant research has clearly been undertaken, employed in the investigation and detailed in the bibliography, making use of a range of academic, media and contextual sources. The investigation demonstrates significant research and engagement with the primary text(s) and a range of secondary texts (AO4).</p> <p>The investigation demonstrates knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates relevant to the chosen area of investigation. The work contextualises the study and the linked production piece within the contemporary media landscape (AO1).</p> <p><i>At the top of this level</i> candidates demonstrate good synoptic understanding of the chosen area of investigation and good research skills, as well as appropriate application of media concepts, contexts and critical debates. The link between the investigation and the production is evident.</p>
Level 2 (13-24 marks)	<p>A satisfactory investigation, exploring the chosen topic and demonstrating some evidence of autonomous research and exploration. The research has been used to an extent in the investigation and recorded in the bibliography, making use of some academic, media and contextual sources. The investigation demonstrates research and engagement with the primary text(s) and secondary texts. The work is reasonably well presented with a basic bibliography/source list (AO4).</p> <p>The investigation demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates relevant to the chosen area of investigation. The work contextualises the study and the linked production piece within the contemporary media landscape to some extent (AO1).</p> <p><i>At the top of this level</i> candidates demonstrate secure synoptic understanding of the chosen area of investigation and sound research skills, as well as some application of media concepts, contexts and critical debates. The link between the investigation and the production is appropriate.</p>
Level 1 (1-12 marks)	<p>A partially successful investigation with limited evidence of autonomous research and exploration. A bibliography/source list is present in some form, although possibly not complete. Some research has been undertaken and used in the investigation to some degree. The investigation demonstrates limited engagement with the primary text(s) and, at the top of this level, some engagement with secondary text(s) (AO4).</p> <p>The investigation demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts or critical debates relevant to the chosen area of investigation. The work attempts to contextualise the study and the linked production piece within the contemporary media landscape to a limited extent (AO1).</p> <p><i>At the top of this level</i> candidates demonstrate some synoptic understanding of the chosen area of investigation, some evidence of research skills and some limited application of media concepts, contexts or critical debates, with some reference to secondary text(s). The link between the investigation and the production is reasonably clear.</p>
Level 0 (0 marks)	No relevant/appropriate/suitable response.

Linked Production – 32 marks (AO3)

	Level Descriptor
Level 4 (25-32 marks)	<p>A creative and aesthetically successful product which achieves high production values and demonstrates highly competent use of technology.</p> <p>The production demonstrates significant understanding of relevant institutional and genre codes and conventions. The production is highly appropriate technically, aesthetically and institutionally within the contemporary media landscape.</p> <p><i>At the top of this level</i> candidates demonstrate very high production values and integrity, possibly approaching professional standards.</p>
Level 3 (17-24 marks)	<p>A fully realised product which achieves appropriate production standards and demonstrates competent use of technology.</p> <p>The production demonstrates understanding of relevant institutional and genre codes and conventions. The production is appropriate technically, aesthetically and institutionally within the contemporary media landscape.</p> <p><i>At the top of this level</i> candidates demonstrate some of the features of the level above with high attention to detail and competent realisation although lacking the flair which would put it into the higher level.</p>
Level 2 (9-16 marks)	<p>A realised product which mostly achieves appropriate production standards and mostly demonstrates sound use of technology.</p> <p>The production is appropriate technically, aesthetically and institutionally within the contemporary media landscape, although the institutional and genre codes and conventions used may not be entirely successful.</p> <p><i>At the top of this level</i> candidates produce work that is solid, secure and successfully realised although there may be some flaws and/or some of the product may not be fully realised.</p>
Level 1 (1-8 marks)	<p>A product which makes some use of appropriate production standards and demonstrates some use of technology.</p> <p>The production demonstrates limited understanding and employment of relevant institutional and genre codes and conventions.</p> <p><i>At the top of this level</i> candidates demonstrate some degree of success in using technology to produce a product to realisation.</p>
Level 0 (0 marks)	No relevant/appropriate/suitable response.

4 Scheme of Assessment

4.1 Aims

AS and A Level courses based on this specification should encourage candidates to:

- enhance their enjoyment and appreciation of the media and its role in their daily lives
- develop critical understanding of the media through engagement with media products and concepts and through the creative application of practical skills
- explore production processes, technologies and other relevant contexts
- become independent in research skills and their application in their practical work and in developing their own views and interpretations.

4.2 Assessment Objectives (AOs)

The Assessment Objectives are common to AS and A Level. The assessment units will assess the following Assessment Objectives in the context of the content and skills set out in Section 3 (Subject Content).

- AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates.
- AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes and evaluating their own practical work, to show how meanings and responses are created.
- AO3 Demonstrate the ability to plan and construct media products using appropriate technical and creative skills.
- AO4 Demonstrate the ability to undertake, apply and present appropriate research.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

In GCE specifications which require candidates to produce written material in English, candidates must:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear
- select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and to complex subject matter
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

In this specification QWC will be assessed in Units 1, 2 and 3 by means of AO2.

Weighting of Assessment Objectives for AS

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the AS units.

Assessment Objectives	Unit Weightings (%)		Overall weighting of AOs (%)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	
AO1	30	0	30
AO2	20	10	30
AO3	0	30	30
AO4	0	10	10
Overall weighting of units (%)	50	50	100

Weighting of Assessment Objectives for A Level

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the AS and A2 units.

Assessment Objectives	Unit Weightings (%)				Overall weighting of AOs (%)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	
AO1	15	0	10	5	30
AO2	10	5	15	0	30
AO3	0	15	0	10	25
AO4	0	5	0	10	15
Overall weighting of units (%)	25	25	25	25	100

4.3 National Criteria

This specification complies with the following:

- The Subject Criteria for Media Studies
- The Code of Practice for GCE
- The GCE AS and A Level Qualification Criteria
- The Arrangements for the Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Common Criteria.

4.4 Prior Learning

There are no prior learning requirements. We recommend that candidates should have acquired the skills and knowledge associated with a GCSE

Level 2 Media course or equivalent. However, any requirements set for entry to a course following this specification are at the discretion of centres.

4.5 Synoptic Assessment and Stretch and Challenge

Synoptic assessment in Media Studies must take account of the requirement that A Level qualifications should enable candidates to develop an understanding of the links between the elements of knowledge and understanding set out in the specification as a whole.

Synoptic assessment in Media Studies is assessed in the A2 units through the requirement for candidates to draw together insights gained from their study of a range of media texts and experiences of practical production. Candidates will be expected to show the ability to make connections between media concepts, products and contexts and the critical debates that inform the study of them.

The modes of assessment at A2 require candidates to respond to a variety of question styles and also encourage extended writing both in the examination and coursework to ensure both synopticity for all A2 candidates and stretch and challenge for the most able. The use of case studies and stimulus material will assist synoptic assessment as it requires candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of the subject when answering questions, rather than simply demonstrating the range of content covered.

The requirement that stretch and challenge is included at A2 is met by the instructions for extended writing in Unit 3 and for extensive research in Unit 4. The requirements for reaching the top of the highest level mark band are clearly signalled in these units.

4.6 Access to Assessment for Disabled Students

AS/A Levels often require assessment of a broader range of competences. This is because they are general qualifications and, as such, prepare candidates for a wide range of occupations and higher level courses.

The revised AS/A Level qualification and subject criteria were reviewed to identify whether any of the competences required by the subject presented a potential barrier to any disabled candidates. If this were the case, the situation was reviewed again to ensure that such competences were included only where essential to the subject. The findings of this process were discussed with disability groups and with disabled people.

Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates in order to enable them to access the assessments. For this reason, very few candidates will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment.

Candidates who are still unable to access a significant part of the assessment, even after exploring all possibilities through reasonable adjustments, may still be able to receive an award. They would be given a grade on the parts of the assessment they have taken and there would be an indication on their certificate that not all the competences have been addressed. This will be kept under review and may be amended in the future.

Candidates with visual and/or hearing impairments may be restricted when required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of video media and practical skills.

Certain impairments may restrict candidates as to which media they may select for their practical units.

Practical assistants may be used to hold or carry equipment.

5 Administration

5.1 Availability of Assessment Units and Certification

After June 2013, examinations and certification for this specification are available in June only.

5.2 Entries

Please refer to the current version of Entry Procedures and Codes for up-to-date entry procedures. You should use the following entry codes for the units and for certification.

Unit 1 – MEST1

Unit 2 – MEST2

Unit 3 – MEST3

Unit 4 – MEST4

AS certification – 1571

A Level certification – 2571

5.3 Private Candidates

This specification is available to private candidates under certain conditions. Because of the nature of the coursework, candidates must be attending an AQA centre which will supervise and assess the coursework. As we are no longer providing supplementary guidance in hard copy, see our

website for guidance and information on taking exams and assessments as a private candidate:

www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/entries/private-candidates

5.4 Access Arrangements and Special Consideration

We have taken note of equality and discrimination legislation and the interests of minority groups in developing and administering this specification.

We follow the guidelines in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) document: *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: General and Vocational Qualifications*. This is published on the JCQ website (<http://www.jcq.org.uk>) or you can follow the link from our website (<http://www.aqa.org.uk>).

Access Arrangements

We can make arrangements so that candidates with disabilities can access the assessment. These arrangements must be made **before** the examination. For example, we can produce a Braille paper for a candidate with a visual impairment.

Special Consideration

We can give special consideration to candidates who have had a temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of the examination. Where we do this, it is given **after** the examination.

Applications for access arrangements and special consideration should be submitted to AQA by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

5.5 Language of Examinations

We will provide units for this specification in English only.

5.6 Qualification Titles

Qualifications based on this specification are:

- AQA Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Media Studies, and
- AQA Advanced Level GCE in Media Studies.

5.7 Awarding Grades and Reporting Results

The AS qualification will be graded on a five-point scale: A, B, C, D and E. The full A Level qualification will be graded on a six-point scale: A*, A, B, C, D and E. To be awarded an A*, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A Level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of the A2 units. For

both qualifications candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade E will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate. Individual assessment unit results will be certificated.

5.8 Re-sits and Shelf-life of Unit Results

Unit results remain available to count towards certification, whether or not they have already been used, as long as the specification is still valid.

Each unit is available in June only. Candidates may re-sit a unit any number of times within the shelf-life of the specification. The best result for each unit will count towards the final qualification. Candidates

who wish to repeat a qualification may do so by re-taking one or more units. The appropriate subject award entry, as well as the unit entry/entries, must be submitted in order to be awarded a new subject grade.

Candidates will be graded on the basis of the work submitted for assessment.

6 Coursework Administration

The Head of Centre is responsible to AQA for ensuring that coursework/portfolio work is conducted in accordance with AQA's instructions and JCQ instructions.

6.1 Supervision and Authentication of Coursework

The Code of Practice for GCE requires:

- **candidates** to sign the Candidate Record Form (CRF) to confirm that the work submitted is their own, and
- **teachers/assessors** to confirm on the CRF that the work assessed is solely that of the candidate concerned and was conducted under the conditions laid down by the specification.

The completed CRF for each candidate must be attached to his/her work. All teachers who have assessed the work of any candidate entered for each component must sign the declaration of authentication. Failure to sign the authentication statement may delay the processing of the candidates' results.

The teacher should be sufficiently aware of the candidate's standard and level of work to appreciate if the coursework submitted is beyond the talents of the candidate.

In most centres teachers are familiar with candidates' work through class and homework assignments. Where this is not the case, teachers should make sure that coursework is completed under direct supervision.

In all cases, some direct supervision is necessary to ensure that the coursework submitted can be confidently authenticated as the candidate's own.

If teachers/assessors have reservations about signing the authentication statements, the following points of guidance should be followed.

- If it is believed that a candidate has received additional assistance and this is acceptable within the guidelines for the relevant specification, the teacher/assessor should award a mark which represents the candidate's unaided achievement. The authentication statement should be signed and information given on the relevant form.
- If the teacher/assessor is unable to sign the authentication statement for a particular candidate, then the candidate's work cannot be accepted for assessment.
- If malpractice is suspected, the Examinations Officer should be consulted about the procedure to be followed.

6.2 Malpractice

Teachers should inform candidates of the AQA Regulations concerning malpractice.

Candidates must **not**:

- submit work which is not their own;
- lend work to other candidates;
- allow other candidates access to, or the use of, their own independently-sourced source material; (this does not mean that candidates may not lend their books to another candidate, but candidates should be prevented from plagiarising other candidates' research);
- include work copied directly from books, the internet or other sources without acknowledgement or attribution;
- submit work typed or word-processed by a third person without acknowledgement.

These actions constitute malpractice, for which a penalty (eg disqualification from the examination) will be applied.

If malpractice is suspected, the Examinations Officer should be consulted about the procedure to be followed.

Where suspected malpractice in coursework/portfolios is identified by a centre after the candidate has signed the declaration of authentication, the Head of Centre must submit full details of the case to AQA at the earliest opportunity. The form JCQ/M1 should be used. Copies of the form can be found on the JCQ website (<http://www.jcq.org.uk/>)

Malpractice in coursework/portfolios discovered prior to the candidate signing the declaration of authentication need not be reported to AQA, but should be dealt with in accordance with the centre's internal procedures. AQA would expect centres to treat such cases very seriously. Details of any work which is not the candidate's own must be recorded on the coursework/portfolio cover sheet or other appropriate place.

6.3 Teacher Standardisation

We will hold annual standardising meetings for teachers, usually in the autumn term, for the coursework units. At these meetings we will provide support in developing appropriate coursework tasks and using the marking criteria.

If your centre is new to this specification, you must send a representative to one of the meetings. If you have told us you are a new centre, either by submitting an estimate of entry or by contacting the subject team, we will contact you to invite you to a meeting.

We will also contact centres to invite them to send a representative if:

- the moderation of coursework from the previous year has identified a serious misinterpretation of the coursework requirements,
- inappropriate tasks have been set, or
- a significant adjustment has been made to a centre's marks.

For all other centres, attendance is optional. If you are unable to attend and would like a copy of the materials used at the meeting, please contact the subject team at **mediastudies@aqa.org.uk**

6.4 Internal Standardisation of Marking

Centres must standardise marking within the centre to make sure that all candidates at the centre have been marked to the same standard. One person must be responsible for internal standardisation. This person should sign the Centre Declaration Sheet to confirm that internal standardisation has taken place.

Internal standardisation involves:

- all teachers marking some trial pieces of work and identifying differences in marking standards;

- discussing any differences in marking at a training meeting for all teachers involved in the assessment;
- referring to reference and archive material such as previous work or examples from AQA's teacher standardising meetings.

6.5 Annotation of Coursework

The Code of Practice for GCE states that the awarding body must require internal assessors to show clearly how the marks have been awarded in relation to the marking criteria defined in the specification and that the awarding body must provide guidance on how this is to be done.

The annotation will help the moderator to see as precisely as possible where the teacher considers that the candidates have met the criteria in the specification.

Work could be annotated by either of the following methods:

- key pieces of evidence flagged throughout the work by annotation either in the margin or in the text;
- summative comments on the work, referencing precise sections in the work.

6.6 Submitting Marks and Sample Work for Moderation

The total mark for each candidate must be submitted to AQA and the moderator on the mark forms provided or by Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) by

the specified date. Centres will be informed which candidates' work is required in the samples to be submitted to the moderator.

6.7 Factors Affecting Individual Candidates

Teachers should be able to accommodate the occasional absence of candidates by ensuring that the opportunity is given for them to make up missed assessments.

If work is lost, AQA should be notified immediately of the date of the loss, how it occurred, and who was responsible for the loss. Centres should use the JCQ form JCQ/LCW to inform AQA Candidate Services of the circumstances.

Where special help which goes beyond normal learning support is given, AQA must be informed through comments on the CRF so that such help can be taken into account when moderation takes place.

Candidates who move from one centre to another during the course sometimes present a problem for a scheme of internal assessment. Possible courses of action depend on the stage at which the move takes place. If the move occurs early in the course the new centre should take responsibility for assessment.

If it occurs late in the course it may be possible to arrange for the moderator to assess the work through the 'Educated Elsewhere' procedure. Centres should contact AQA at the earliest possible stage for advice about appropriate arrangements in individual cases.

6.8 Retaining Evidence and Re-using Marks

The centre must retain the work of all candidates, with CRFs attached, under secure conditions, from the time it is assessed, to allow for the possibility of an enquiry about results. The work may be returned

to candidates after the deadline for enquiries about results. If an enquiry about a result has been made, the work must remain under secure conditions in case it is required by AQA.

7 Moderation

7.1 Moderation Procedures

Moderation of the coursework is by inspection of a sample of candidates' work, sent by post or electronically from the centre to a moderator appointed by AQA. The centre marks must be submitted to AQA and to the moderator by the specified deadline. We will let centres know which candidates' work will be required in the sample to be submitted for moderation.

Following the re-marking of the sample work, the moderator's marks are compared with the centre marks to determine whether any adjustment is

needed in order to bring the centre's assessments into line with standards generally. In some cases it may be necessary for the moderator to call for the work of other candidates in the centre. In order to meet this possible request, centres must retain under secure conditions and have available the coursework and the CRF of every candidate entered for the examination and be prepared to submit it on demand. Mark adjustments will normally preserve the centre's order of merit but, where major discrepancies are found, we reserve the right to alter the order of merit.

7.2 Post-moderation Procedures

On publication of the AS/A level results, we will provide centres with details of the final marks for the coursework unit.

The candidates' work will be returned to the centre after the examination. The centre will receive a report

giving feedback on the appropriateness of the tasks set, the accuracy of the assessments made, and the reasons for any adjustments to the marks.

We may retain some candidates' work for archive or standardising purposes.

Appendices

A Performance Descriptions

These performance descriptions show the level of attainment characteristic of the grade boundaries at A Level. They give a general indication of the required learning outcomes at the A/B and E/U boundaries at AS and A2. The descriptions should be interpreted in relation to the content outlined in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.

The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the Assessment Objectives (see Section 4) overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of the examination may be balanced by better performances in others.

Performance Descriptions for AS Media Studies

	Assessment Objective 1	Assessment Objective 2	Assessment Objective 3	Assessment Objective 4
Assessment Objectives	AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates	AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes and evaluating their own practical work, to show how meanings and responses are created	AO3: Demonstrate the ability to plan and construct media products using appropriate technical and creative skills.	AO4: Demonstrate the ability to undertake, apply and present appropriate research.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate relevant knowledge and understanding of media concepts b. sustain relevant arguments linked to media contexts and critical debates c. structure and organise their writing d. communicate content and meaning through expressive and accurate writing.	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate a understanding of media forms, codes and conventions b. explore through analysis of media products and processes how these aspects create meaning c. evaluate their own work with reference to these aspects and the shaping of audience response.	Candidates characteristically: a. construct a media product using appropriate technical and creative skills b. demonstrate controlled use of the selected technology.	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate an understanding of research skills and appropriate methods b. present relevant research findings or conclusions c. produce a reflective evaluation of the process and its outcomes.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate some knowledge and understanding of media concepts b. make reference to media contexts and critical debates c. communicate meaning using straightforward language.	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate understanding of media forms, codes or conventions b. link media products and processes to the creation of meaning c. evaluate their own work with reference to these aspects or the shaping of audience response.	Candidates characteristically: a. construct a media product using technical and creative skills b. demonstrate the use of the selected technology.	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate an understanding of research skills and methods b. present research findings or conclusions c. comment on the research process or its outcomes.

Performance Descriptions for A2 Media Studies

	Assessment Objective 1	Assessment Objective 2	Assessment Objective 3	Assessment Objective 4
Assessment Objectives	AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates	AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes and evaluating their own practical work, to show how meanings and responses are created	AO3: Demonstrate the ability to plan and construct media products using appropriate technical and creative skills	AO4: Demonstrate the ability to undertake, apply and present appropriate research
A/B performance descriptions	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate detailed knowledge and understanding of media concepts b. create and sustain well organised and coherent arguments linked to media contexts and critical debates c. structure and organise their writing using an appropriate register d. communicate content and meaning through expressive and accurate writing.	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate an informed understanding of media forms, codes and conventions b. explore through detailed analysis of media products and processes how these aspects create meaning c. evaluate their own work with close reference to these aspects and the shaping of audience or user response.	Candidates characteristically: a. research, plan and construct a media product selecting appropriate technical and creative skills b. demonstrate controlled and creative use of the selected technology.	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate an informed understanding of research skills selecting appropriate methods b. present relevant and detailed research findings and conclusions c. produce a critical and reflective evaluation of the process and its outcomes.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate knowledge and understanding of media concepts b. develop arguments linked to media contexts or critical debates c. structure and organise their writing d. communicate content and meaning using straightforward language accurately.	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate an informed understanding of media forms, codes and conventions b. explore through detailed analysis of media products and processes how these aspects create meaning c. evaluate their own work with close reference to these aspects and the shaping of audience or user response.	Candidates characteristically: a. research, plan and construct a media product using technical and creative skills b. demonstrate the creative use of the selected technology.	Candidates characteristically: a. communicate understanding of research skills and methods b. present relevant research findings and conclusions c. produce a reflective evaluation of the process.

B Spiritual, Moral, Ethical, Social and other Issues

European Dimension

AQA has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community in preparing this specification and associated specimen units.

Avoidance of Bias

AQA has taken great care in the preparation of this specification and specimen units to avoid bias of any kind.

Environmental Education

AQA has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community and the Report "Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education" 1993 in preparing this specification and associated specimen units.

C Overlaps with other Qualifications

There are no overlaps with other qualifications.

D Key Skills

Key Skills qualifications have been phased out and replaced by Functional Skills qualifications in English, Mathematics and ICT from September 2010.



GCE Media Studies (2570) For exams from June 2015 onwards

Qualification Accreditation Number: AS 500/2246/5 - A Level 500/2245/3

For updates and further information on any of our specifications, to find answers or to ask a question: register with ASK AQA at:

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<http://www.aqa.org.uk/professional-development>

Every specification is assigned a discounting code indicating the subject area to which it belongs for performance measure purposes.

The discount codes for this specification are:

AS KA2

A Level 5350

The definitive version of our specification will always be the one on our website, this may differ from printed versions.

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