GCSE

Media Studies

Teaching guide: NEA production

e-Media, video, print and audio production

Updated April 2019

Contents

e-Media production

Types of e-media productions

NEA briefs could ask students to create any type of e-media production. NEA tasks will usually be related in some way to the media forms studied for the two exams and so websites, YouTube videos, podcasts, social media feeds and elements of video gaming are possible within NEA briefs. Within this, NEA briefs could ask students to create websites and other e-media products for different purposes, which could include advertising and marketing.

e-Media briefs will specify the target audience that should be considered when creating the product and it is possible that a specific industrial context is offered which should influence the approach taken by the student.

Hardware and equipment

e-Media work will obviously need be created on a computer or an internet-enabled device (see below for information on software and apps). Most of the apps that centres choose to use are internet-based, so a constant internet connection may be required. Students will need to create their own images, audio and/or video footage if relevant to the brief, and so will need access to a camera or digital recorder to take photographs for the production. Whilst using more professional digital cameras and recorders may be the ideal, cameras and audio recorders on smart phones are usually fine. Many phones/cameras come with a range of different features that allow students to create effects on the device itself, and this can help the students create the images, footage and sounds that they want.

Depending on the types of images or footage the student wants to create they may wish to use a tripod to steady the camera and may want to create lighting effects. Students will need to source models for their visual work and for any spoken elements. The sound of the actual voice is important in conveying meaning. They may want to use make-up, costumes and props in the creation of their images or footage. Although it is not strictly 'equipment', students should also carefully consider the location(s) for their shoots as the mise-en-scene should carry a great deal of the meaning in any visuals.

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4 of 28

Note: the items below are suggestions, not recommendations.

Website design software

Website productions can be created using industry-standard packages such as Adobe Dreamweaver; however, web-based apps are also acceptable, such as Wix, Squarespace, Weebly, GoDaddy, Mobirise and WordPress. Mobirise can be downloaded and used offline while the others require an internet connection. The web-based apps can be accessed on both computers and mobile devices, and students can work on the same saved website across a variety of devices. Any software that allows the student to create page designs, link those pages, and arrange images, text, audio and video files within the webpage would be fine. Although most online apps offer pre-designed templates, if these are used, students should use these as outlines only, and repopulate them completely with the elements (images, text etc) of their own choice and design, leaving no evidence of the original template. This is because students can only be assessed on the choices they have made, not choices made by the app. Microsoft Word and PowerPoint tend not to offer the same level of control as website-specific packages and apps.

Students will often find it easier to type their copy in Microsoft Word or a similar program first, before copying and pasting it into their website pages. This will allow them to use the spell and grammar check tools, check the word count, and print off a copy for proof-reading, all before uploading.

Game design software

As with website design, the ability to code is not required. Again, online software is available, such as the game engines provided by GameMaker, Atmosphere, GamesFactory, GameSalad and Unity. MIT's Scratch is a simple-to-use program that many students are already familiar with from IT lessons. There are free-to-use versions of many of the paid-for programs. For example, while RPG Maker VX Ace has to be paid for, RPG Maker VX Ace Lite is free and offers enough usability for an NEA task.

Image, video and sound editing software

Website design and social media feeds

Students will need access to software to edit the files they are going to embed in their websites.

Video game design

Students will need to use software to create their own avatars, assets and backgrounds, as well as their own sounds if the NEA brief asks for gameplay. If it asks for cut scenes or intro movies, they will need to create their own moving image sequences. Some video game engines don't allow the import of user-created graphics, but do offer a wide range of in-app graphics for makers to choose from. While the import of their own graphics is preferred, it is acceptable for students to use video game engines where this is not possible, as long as they are able to make real choices about media language and media representations, for example by combining different graphic elements to create an avatar. If only complete assets are available (e.g. a library of complete characters) this will not allow students to make sufficient choices, and alternative software should be found. Where in-app graphics have to be used, students must make reference to this in their Candidate Record Form and their Statement of Intent.

Podcasts and YouTube videos

See page 11 for further information about Audio and Video production.

Print, video and audio production

See pages 12 and 22 in this document for more specific information about any of these aspects. Free software and apps are available for all of these editing tasks; students may find that phone/tablet apps have lots of features that allow them to manipulate sound, video and images in a number of ways.

Note: there are many online communities, tutorials and YouTube videos that offer guidance on using website and game development software.

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6 of 28

Research

Whatever type of e-media production the students are making, they should research the codes and conventions of the form/genre they are working in. Students should investigate the use of media language in terms of each of the below.

Conventions of the form

Many apps or programs will give students outline templates to use for e-media products. Students should ensure they know what the common conventions are for the specific purpose of the product they are making, so that they can make an appropriate choice – a vlogger's personal website will look quite different to a shopping site or a social media site. NB As stated above, these templates, if used at all, should only be used to provide an overall layout, and all design elements within the layout should be substituted with the students' own.

Conventions of the genre

Exploring existing media products will help students work within the chosen (or given) genre. They do not have to slavishly copy the media language choices of any specific e-media product but they should attempt to make sure that the work they produce is recognisable as belonging to the genre they have chosen. A website or YouTube video for a rock band will make very different media language choices to a website or YouTube video for the latest *X Factor* boy band.

Attempts to address and appeal to the audience

The use of language, images and design will be influenced by knowledge about the target audience. Audiences will have expectations about the form and genre that need to be addressed in the productions but students should also make creative choices that relate specifically to the target audience identified in the brief.

The NEA products must address the audience appropriately and create audience appeal. Students should look at a range of products targeting similar audiences (not just the form/genre being produced) as this will show differing approaches to attracting the same audience group(s).

For many e-media products, one of the aims of the producers is to attract the audience to revisit the product – coming back more than once. Students should therefore consider what pleasures the professional examples offer for repeated engagement with the product. For social media feeds, students should look at the range of content – both the information given and the types of files used.

Use of representations/creating meaning

Students should be encouraged to look at the way representations are constructed in real media products similar to the one being created. These representations are often built on stereotypes as

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7 of 28

e-media products tend to be used only briefly by consumers, so students should analyse what the underlying stereotypes might be, and why they have been used.

Students may decide to subvert stereotypes in their production work and should be encouraged to consider how to use representations to create the meanings they want to communicate. The representations should take account of the target audience and enable the media product to fulfil its function.

Planning

Design

When planning a production an understanding of the codes and conventions of the form and genre will lead planning decisions as will knowledge of how audience appeal will be created. Students need to plan how their overall message will be created and how the representations will be constructed within this.

For websites, design documents should outline what content will be on each page, what the headings should say, what the images and other embedded files should contain, and how the pages link together. A brief sketch of the layout of the page will ensure everything has been included. The different pages should be visually similar using a house style, so students should carefully plan their use of colour, fonts, layout style and other design elements, using similar ideas on each page.

Game designers create a game design document. This could have a brief synopsis and a flow diagram of the game play, plus sketches of the main assets and background. If students search 'game design document' they can find a list of questions to be answered in their planning before they start to create the game.

Photography, filming, animation and sound recording

Students need to plan their embedded content for websites, the files to be posted on social media feeds, or the assets and cut scenes for video games. The creation of this material may well involve other people as models, cast or crew, as well as the organisation of locations, props, costumes, lighting and so on. The student making the decisions for their NEA therefore needs to be well organised to make the most of other people's time. In particular they need to ensure they are meeting the parameters of their chosen brief, in terms of content, range and meeting the needs of the target audience. Organising everyone and everything, to be in the right place, at the right time, takes forward thinking. Sourcing materials and equipment beforehand saves time during production and allows for a 'plan B' should some items/people not be available.

Students should plan their material in as much detail as possible before they start their filming or recording, but if they know they have completed all of their planned material, they can also respond to their surroundings and events on the day to capture even better ideas.

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8 of 28

The specification is clear that students should not use found material in their work, except for music. This means they may need to think creatively as to how to create the images, footage and sounds they need. There is no problem arranging to use friends, teachers or relatives who would be presented as named public figures. These people should act, appear or sound like the 'right' sort of person, so appropriate costume, body language, accent, pace of speech and so on are all important.

How should the work be presented for marking and moderation?

e-Media work should be presented for moderation in a form as close as possible to how the real product would be used.

Websites and social media feeds

Websites and social media feeds can be submitted in one of three ways:

1. USB containing a full working version of the website offline. The site can then be viewed directly from the USB stick using a standard web browser such as Firefox, Outlook Explorer, Safari or Google Chrome. Some apps simply allow you to click on a button or tab that says 'Export site' and save the whole site to a chosen location. However, some apps will not allow you to directly export the whole site, as much of the code remains online. If this is the case, you may still be able to use a website copying app, such as HTTracks, Getleft, SiteSucker or PageNest. If submitting an offline site, please ensure you check that the website functions properly by viewing it from the USB stick on a completely different computer from the one used to create it, without connecting to the internet. This will show whether any of the embedded files have not been included.

2. a video walkthrough of the site, which must not include audio commentary or any additional notes. This walkthrough should either be filmed using a camera or phone in a static position (ie from a tripod) covering the whole website screen, or created using screen recording software such as QuickTime on a Mac or Screen Capturer (free to download) on a PC. Newer versions of PowerPoint also allow you to record your screen – go to Insert → Screen Recording, select the area of the screen to be recorded and click the record button. The resulting video can be saved as a separate file. The walkthrough should demonstrate all working hyperlinks to internal and external pages and present any embedded video, audio, animation, etc in full. To ensure the moderator can see all of the work at the best quality, separate files for any embedded audio/video work should also be included on the USB. For the same reason, walkthroughs must be supported with accompanying print outs to show the detail of the work and to ensure that all written copy can be read by the moderator.

3. Live URL: Websites and social media feeds that are submitted via URL must be submitted in such a way that students cannot change their production after it has been submitted. To ensure this the following two steps must be followed:

- Websites and social media feeds submitted via url must be password protected by the centre in such a way that students cannot access them after their final submission to, and marking by, the teacher. This could mean, when students have created the work, on final submission the student logs into their website builder app/software in front of the teacher who then changes that password to one that the student does not know.
- Printed screen-grabs of the website at the point of submission must be included as well as the URL, to ensure that the work has not been changed since submission.

The URL links to such websites should then be pasted into a Word document next to each candidate's number. The Word document should be submitted to the moderator as a digital file, encrypted according to AQA guidelines.

N.B. Please be aware of GDPR and safeguarding issues for work on live URLs that are accessible by the public. Ensure your students do not use real names and contact details on these sites.

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10 of 28

Video games

Video games should be submitted in one of the three ways outlined above: either playable offline using a standard browser, as a video walkthrough,or via url submission. As moderators may be using Macs, .exe files are not necessarily compatible with their systems. Many game engines don't allow offline playing of video games, so either the video walkthrough option or url submission above are likely to be the best options. For video walkthroughs, if there are choices of narrative or action within the game, then more than one run-through may be useful to show some of the possibilities – not all of the possibilities need to be presented in the video. As above, embedded video files for cut scenes or intro movies, and print outs of screen shots to show assets and backgrounds, plus any text in detail, will also be required.

Videos and podcasts

Please follow the instructions for submitting video or audio work in the other sections of this guidance.

Do make sure that the submission is labelled with the student's name and their candidate number. The memory stick and/or the folder containing the digital files should be labelled with the student's details.

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11 of 28

Video production

Types of video productions

NEA tasks could ask students to create a wide variety of video productions. Some briefs may ask for a production that relates to television programming or advertising, whilst others may ask for a video production that is intended for online distribution within a website or as a video for YouTube or other social media. In either of the distribution methods there are many forms and genres of video production that could be requested. For example: news feature, TV drama, advertising, music video, vlog, documentary etc.

Video briefs will specify the target audience that should be considered when creating the product and it is possible that a specific industrial context is offered which should influence the approach taken by the student.

Hardware and equipment

Students will need access to some basic video recording equipment. Whilst digital video cameras such as DSLRs are ideal, the video-recording function on smart phones and tablets can be used to capture footage. Tripods will almost certainly be required to ensure the footage is well-controlled; smartphone mounts can be added to tripods. A tilt and swivel head on the tripod will allow for camera movements such as pan and tilt. Tracking in and out can be achieved using something that is wheeled – a dolly mount for the tripod, or something more readily at hand.

Thought should also be given to the microphone that will be used to capture the sound. Built-in microphones in the camera or the phone being used are not necessarily the best for the job, partly because the sound may best be recorded from a different position to the video. For example, when recording a dialogue scene, it may be best to record all of the sound from one position fairly close to the actors, although the video footage may be recorded from several different camera positions. Portable audio recorders often have a good quality built-in microphone. A tablet/smart phone's microphone will sometimes be sufficient although sound quality is likely to be better if a standalone microphone is used. If the product requires more than one voice being recorded at the same time (eg in a conversation), then more than one microphone could be used to capture each individual voice.

Students will also need to consider how best to record ambient sound and foley sounds (diegetic sounds such as walking and using specific props) to add to the footage later.

In addition, students will need to be able to make choices about lighting. You may be able to access photographic lights, theatre lights or video lights. If not, many smartphones have good lighting capabilities, but torches and angle poise lamps can also be used. Students should consider bouncing lights off walls to make them softer, and using white paper or card as a reflector to fill in harsh shadows.

Software

You may be able to access video editing software such as Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere Pro, or Avid's Media Composer. Free or cheap software includes Media Composer | First, Windows MovieMaker and iMovie. There are also free or cheap apps available for each mobile device.

The software needs to enable students to place their clips into a timeline, crop them to the right length, and add different edit styles or transitions, such as cuts, dissolves and fades. The ability to add text, mix sounds and add layers of footage would also be useful. Most software or apps also allow for basic effects such as altering the colour-grading or contrast of the footage.

As with audio production, there are many places online where copyright free music can be sourced (eg Free Music Archive, Bensound, Purple Planet music) and if sound effects are required that cannot be created for the production, sites such as Freesound or the BBC Sound Effects Archive can be very useful.

Research

Any successful video production begins with an understanding of the codes and conventions of the form being created. Research should be focused on existing video products that are similar to the one being constructed either in form, genre, target audience and/or function. Students should look at how actions, sounds, shots and edits are used to create specific meanings within different genres and forms.

It is always worth watching and analysing products that aim to appeal to the target audience identified in the task to evaluate the techniques used by professional producers to attract and address the group. Students may find that style of presentation, tone and pace are quite specifically related to the target audience.

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13 of 28

Planning

Although none of the planning will be assessed, a good quality production that uses media language and media representations to convey meaning will need to be well-planned. Video production is primarily visual and works over time, so a storyboard is the most comprehensive form of planning. It should include reference to both visuals and sounds, and should clearly indicate camera movements and intended edits. This storyboard would be best accompanied by a script, which doesn't only include spoken words, but also actions. A silent movie still has a script. Further planning, to ensure efficient use of people and time, should include a shooting schedule, to show what will be filmed where and when. Costume and props plans are also important - anyone appearing in the video should be given information about how to dress for the shoot, so that their complete appearance has been decided by the student being assessed, not by chance decisions made by the actors.

Video production usually involves other people as cast or crew, as well as the organisation of locations, props, costumes, lighting and so on. Students should select and visit their locations before the shoot itself, so that they are familiar with the environment and know that they can achieve what they want in that location. The student making the decisions for their NEA therefore needs to be well organised to make the most of other people's time. In particular they need to ensure they are meeting the parameters of their chosen brief, in terms of content, range and meeting the needs of the target audience. Organising everyone and everything, to be in the right place, at the right time, takes forward thinking. Sourcing materials and equipment beforehand saves time during production and allows for a 'plan B' should some items/people not be available.

Students should plan their video shoot in as much detail as possible, but if they know they have completed all of their planned material, they can also respond to their surroundings and events on the day to capture even better ideas.

Planning should allow the student to consider how to use (or subvert) the codes and conventions of the form and how to achieve the aims of their production. Students should be encouraged to consider how they will create interest using a variety of shots and camera movements.

How should the work be presented for marking and moderation?

Video production work can be submitted on USB or online via url

USB submissions

Standalone video work should be presented as a universally accessible video file. .mp4 is the best option. The video will need to be exported to this format from the software's generic format. Videos in the software's generic format often cannot be viewed on any other computer, as they are editing files not movie files, and do not include the video clips themselves within their data. Many apps and programs allow for different export options of varying quality. Export to a high quality so that the moderator can see all the detail included by the student. If the quality is described using words as in iMovie, something like 'Theatre' will be the best quality. If numbers are used, then 1080p and 30 frames per second will give you good quality. Exporting to the h.264 codec, where available, gives good quality with a lower file size and therefore less lagging of the video.

Do make sure that each submission is labelled with the student's name and their candidate number. You can submit more than one candidate's work on one USB memory stick, but must indicate this clearly on the candidate record forms. The memory stick and/or each digital file should be labelled with the student's details.

Where video work is part of an e-media production, the video can be embedded into the e-media production. The submission of this work should follow the submission guidelines for e-media work but it is good practice to send a standalone digital file to the moderator too.

Submission of video production work online

It is permissible for centres to submit video productions that have been uploaded to video and/or audio sharing sites. However, centres must be sure that students do not have access to the files once the work has been submitted for marking. In addition, centres should ensure that the students' work is not in the public domain.

For example, centres wishing to submit videos via YouTube must set up a **dedicated YouTube channel** for their centre for the submission of coursework. Videos can then be submitted via the **centre**'s YouTube channel using an 'unlisted link' for each video so that only those with the link can see the videos. Students must not have access to this channel's password.

The 'unlisted links' for each video should then be pasted into a Word document next to each candidate's number. The Word document should be submitted to the moderator as a digital file, encrypted according to AQA guidelines.

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15 of 28

Print production

Types of print productions

NEA briefs could ask students to create any type of print production. NEA tasks will usually be related in some way to the print media forms and so newspapers, magazines and advertising and marketing are likely to be part of NEA briefs. Within this, NEA briefs could ask students to create different forms of advertising or different genres of newspapers.

Hardware and equipment

Print work should be created on a computer (see below for information on software). Students will also need to create their own images and so will need access to a still camera to take photographs for the production. Whilst using more professional digital cameras may be the ideal, cameras on smart phones are usually fine for creating images for print production work. Many phones/cameras come with a range of different features that allow students to create in-camera effects and this can help the students create the images that they want.

Depending on the types of images the student wants to create they may wish to use a tripod to steady the camera and may want to create lighting effects. Students will need to source models for their photography and may want to use make-up, costumes and props in the creation of their images. Although it is not strictly 'equipment', students should also carefully consider the location(s) for their photo shoots as mise-en-scene can make a massive difference to the impact and meaning created by the images.

Software

Note: these are suggestions and not recommendations.

Desk top publishing (DTP) software

Print productions should be created using some form of desk top publishing software. Standalone software for productions such as Xara, MS Publisher, Adobe InDesign or PrintMaster are fine. There are also online DTP packages such as LucidPress, Canva or Joomag.

Apps for tablets are also available – for example, Publisher and InDesign for Android; Pages, Swift and iStudio for iOS. Any software that allows the student to create page designs and arrange images and text in preparation for printing would be fine. It is always best to avoid any pre-designed templates that may be offered by a software package as students should be making their own creative choices. If the software will not work without the use of templates for layout options, then all design elements within the template (e.g. fonts, colours, images) should be substituted with the students' own design elements, leaving no evidence of the choices made in the original template. Only the students' choices can be assessed, not those made by the software.

Microsoft Word and PowerPoint tend not to offer the same control as DTP packages for the user when designing pages.

Image Editing Software

Students should have access to image editing software. Again, students may find that phone/tablet apps have lots of features that allow them to manipulate images in a number of ways, from cropping, to colour and exposure alternation, air-brushing and visual effects. Some image manipulation software often comes with phones – other apps can be used such as Fotor, Pixelmator, Fotogenic, Aviary or Cupslice.

Students could use standalone image manipulation software whether this is software such as Photoshop, Pixelamator, GIMP, Photo Pos Pro or PhotoScape.

Note: There are many online tutorials and YouTube videos that offer guidance on using DTP and image editing software. Also please note that these are suggestions and not recommendations.

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17 of 28

Research

Students should always research the codes and conventions of the form/genre they are working in. Students should investigate the use of media language in terms of the below.

Conventions of the form

Students should engage with an analysis of the way shared characteristics define the form. They should become familiar with the design conventions so that they are able to successfully create the products in a way that shows a knowledge and understanding of the way magazines (for example) use columns to arrange text, how headlines pull quotes, how images and boxes are usually arranged on the page. Newspaper and magazine front pages are both print productions but the design conventions are different for both. Students should analyse existing products to work out what media language choices they will make in their own productions.

When making advertising and marketing productions, students should investigate the different media language choices that are made in different types of advertising. The layout and design of images and texts in an advertorial, in a magazine advert or in a billboard poster will be distinct and students should try to use media language appropriately in their own work.

Conventions of the genre

All magazines share general approaches to layout and design but different magazine genres have their own codes and conventions. Music magazines look distinctly different to gossip magazines but all gossip magazines look similar to one another.

The genre of print production will also influence the size of paper the work needs to be printed on as well as the type/style of photographs that need to be taken for the production. Knowledge of the genre codes will also influence the choice of language (vocabulary and syntax) in the articles/copy the students write for the publication they are creating.

Exploring existing media products will help students work within the chosen (or given) genre. Students should not feel they have to slavishly copy the media language choices of any specific print product but they should attempt to make sure that the genre they are working in is recognisable.

Attempts to address and appeal to the audience

The use of language, images and design will be influenced by knowledge about the target audience. Target audiences may have expectations about the form and genre that need to be addressed in the productions but students may want to make creative choices that relate more specifically to the demographic/psychometric group identified in the brief.

Again, being familiar with existing media products that target the audience in question can inform students' approaches. As students plan their work, they should make sure that their production choices engage with the idea of addressing the audience appropriately and creating audience appeal. It is always worth looking at a range of products targeting similar audiences (not just the form/genre being produced) as this will show differing approaches to attracting the same audience group(s).

It is worth considering the function of the print production in order to select appropriate ways to communicate to the audience. A magazine or newspaper article may aim to entertain and/or inform whilst an advert or marketing product will be focusing on persuading the audience to act. The techniques used by existing media products can provide inspiration for the students in terms of the way they try to ensure that their product achieves its main aims.

Use of representations/creating meaning

Students should be encouraged to look at the way representations are constructed in real media products similar to the one being created. The representations that the student uses may be linked to the conventions of the form and genre and/or the expectations and needs of the target audience.

Student research could include identifying the common stereotypes used in similar media products and engaging with how the ideas are communicated in the construction of images and the use of text. The types of representations could vary within a genre depending on the target audience and so students should be able to demonstrate their understanding of the way representations can be used in the context of the brief they are responding to.

Students may decide to subvert stereotypes in their production work, and if so, should indicate this clearly in their Statement of Intent. They should be encouraged to consider how to use representations to create the meanings they want to communicate. The representations should take account of the target audience and enable the media product to fulfil its function.

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19 of 28

Planning

Design

It is good practice to create flat plans of print work before production begins. A well-planned production tends to come together more quickly when working in the DTP. Students should use the results of their research to plan their work to include the general layout and design of the page including the placement of main features such as the primary and secondary images, headlines, the use of columns, font choices and design elements that create a 'house-style' for the publication. Students can select a colour palette and a general design aesthetic for the work during the planning stage as this will help them ensure that the visuals they create work within the overall style of their page(s).

When planning a production an understanding of the codes and conventions of the form and genre will lead planning decisions as will knowledge of how audience appeal will be created. A billboard poster may require a more simple overall design than a feature article, but ensuring that the message is communicated efficiently and effectively needs to be thought through and planned for during the early stages of production.

Photography

Planning photoshoots will enable the students to ensure that the images they create work within the parameters set by the task and the student's understanding of the form being created. When working with models, props, lighting, costumes and make-up, organising everyone and everything, to be in the right place, at the right time, takes forward thinking. Sourcing materials and equipment beforehand saves time during production and allows for a 'plan B' should some items/people not be available. Similarly, it is worth encouraging students to take some time to scout locations to ensure that the mise-en-scene in images works with the overall look they are going for. When planning the advert/page it's a good idea for the student to be quite specific about what type of images they need to illustrate their work so they can use the time on their photo-shoot to capture the required images as precisely as possible. They should be able to plan to ensure they capture images using the in-camera effects they feel they need. They may also plan for specific images in light of ideas they have about the post-production effects they want to create.

Whilst planning helps to use time effectively and ensure that the images needed for a production are created, students could also experiment with angles, distances and effects whilst taking their photographs. It is always possible that the 'perfect' shot could be a product of experimentation.

The specification is clear that students should not use found images in their work. This means they may need to think creatively as to how to create the images they need. There is no problem arranging to use friends, teachers or relatives who would be presented as named public figures; creating geographical markers to convey the idea of a place; or toys/models being used where it is impractical to photograph the real thing.

How should the work be presented for marking and moderation?

Print work should be printed out for moderation. Work will look different on screen and so part of the process of creating print work is the ability to construct artefacts that work on paper and then present it effectively.

At the start of production, care should be taken that page sizes are set correctly and then the layout and design reflects the proportions of the media form being created. For example, a billboard poster is (often) 3-4 times wider than it is tall. This shape influences the way images and text are used both in terms of positioning and size/proportion. The student should ensure that production work is created using the correct page proportions. This means that even when printed on smaller sheets of paper, the product will reflect the conventions of the form. Similarly, it may be difficult to print a newspaper page on the correct size of paper so submitting a reduced (but proportionally correct) page or multiple pages taped together is fine. Some advertising products lend themselves to being presented 'in situ' – as a part-page magazine or newspaper advert, photo-shopped onto an image of a bus (for example), or photographed on the wall of the student canteen. It would be good practice, therefore, to include a full-page print-out of each page of the print product, plus a printed photo of the product as if in situ, where this is appropriate.

Students may need to do a number of test prints during production. It is recommended that at least one is in colour so students can check that colour choices that look appropriate on screen are replicated in the way the student wants when printed. The final printed submissions must be in colour, or it will be assumed that black and white is a deliberate choice to convey meaning.

Print work can be presented on single sheets of paper, as folded booklets, back to back magazine/newspaper pages etc. as is practical and appropriate for the task being completed. Care should be taken to protect printouts when sent through the post for moderation. Larger pieces could be rolled and sent in tubes whilst A4/A3 sheets could be presented in folders or wallets.

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21 of 28

Audio Production

Types of audio productions

NEA tasks could ask students to create a wide variety of audio productions. Some briefs may ask for a production that relates to a traditional radio form of programming whilst others may ask for an audio production that is intended for online distribution within a website or as a podcast. In either of the distribution methods, there are many forms and genres of audio production that could be requested. For example: news bulletins, drama, commentary, discussion programme, magazine show, documentary etc. It is possible that students could be asked to create audio advertising and marketing products.

Audio briefs will specify the target audience that should be considered when creating the product and it is possible that a specific industrial context is offered which should influence the approach taken by the student.

Hardware and equipment

Students will need access to some basic audio recording equipment. Whilst specialised recording equipment is ideal, the recording function on smart phones and tablets can also be used to capture sound. However, thought should be given to the microphone that will be used to relay sound to the device. The type of microphone required will depend to some extent on the form/genre being created and for some types of production. Portable audio recorders often have a good quality built-in microphone. A tablet/smart phone's microphone will sometimes be sufficient although sound quality is likely to be better if a standalone microphone is used. If the product requires multiple voices being recorded at the same time (eg a roundtable discussion), then a number of microphones will be needed to capture each individual voice. Where recording will take place outside, a hand-held microphone with an outdoor wind muff or wind shield may be useful. If the audio production is attempting to replicate a studio based format or record foley sound, then having a quiet location to record is crucial. Students may consider trying to dampen the sound in an indoor recording location. Using cushions and blankets can help reduce echo and make the sound feel 'softer'. Finally, if the student has access to a sound mixer they will be able to control sound levels, edit sounds from different sources and create sound layers – although this can also be achieved using software.

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22 of 28

Software

Recording software is included with smart phones and tablets and free apps are available for Android and Apple operating systems. Apps like Voice Recorder, Easy Audio Recorder, Sound Studio and Vector all offer basic recording functions – although it should be noted that free apps are often limited in scope. Audio editing programmes such as Audacity or GarageBand are relatively easy to use and offer a range of features.

Although this is not strictly software, there are many places online where copyright free music can be sourced (eg Free Music Archive, Bensound, Purple Planet music) and if sound effects are required that cannot be created for the production, sites such as Freesound or the BBC Sound Effects Archive can be very useful.

Research

A successful audio production begins with an understanding of the codes and conventions of the form being created. Research should be focused on existing audio products that are similar to the one being constructed either in form, genre, target audience and/or function. Breaking down the way that voices, music and/or sound effects are used in the chosen form will help the student plan and produce more effectively.

It is always worth listening to products that aim to appeal to the target audience identified in the task to evaluate the techniques used by professional producers to attract and address the group. Students may find that style of presentation, tone and pace are quite specifically related to the target audience.

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23 of 28

Planning

Regardless of the type of audio production, it is always a good idea to write a production script. A script can include the words that are to be spoken and if the production will be using interviews, the questions (at least) should be planned and written beforehand. Scripts can include instructions for presenters/actors/participants in terms of tone and pace of speech.

A script could also include the recording locations, the inclusion of sound effects/music etc. This gives the students an opportunity to gather props together and check the recording locations that they wish to use. It is a good idea to do test recordings in all locations to check the sound quality and to see if there are any ambient sound issues.

Planning should allow the student to consider how to use (or subvert) the codes and conventions of the form and how to achieve the aims of their production. Students should be encouraged to consider how they will create interest using a variety of sounds or voices.

Audio productions often require multiple voices and so students should think carefully about making plans to gather their cast/contributors and any props that are required for recording. The larger the 'cast' the more complicated it can be getting everyone together.

A lot of time can be saved by ensuring that the planning for production is both detailed and carefully thought through.

How should the work be presented for marking and moderation?

Audio work can be submitted on USB or online via url

USB submissions

Standalone audio work should be presented as a universally accessible sound file. .wav or .mp3 would both be fine. The file should be sent for moderation on a USB. You can submit more than one candidate's work on one USB memory stick, but must indicate this clearly on the candidate record forms. Do make sure that each submission is labelled with the student's name and their candidate number. The USB and/or the digital file should be labelled with each student's details.

Where audio work is part of an e-media production, the sound can be embedded into the e-media production. The submission of this work should follow the submission guidelines for e-media work but it is good practice to send a standalone digital file to the moderator too.

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24 of 28

Online via url submissions

It is permissible for centres to submit broadcast productions that have been uploaded to video and/or audio sharing sites. However, centres must be sure that students do not have access to the files once the work has been submitted for marking. In addition, centres should ensure that the students' work is not in the public domain.

For example, centres wishing to submit videos via YouTube must set up a **dedicated YouTube channel** for their centre for the submission of coursework. Videos can then be submitted via the **centre**'s YouTube channel using an 'unlisted link' for each video so that only those with the link can see the videos. Students must not have access to this channel's password.

The 'unlisted links' for each video should then be pasted into a Word document next to each candidate's number. The Word document should be submitted to the moderator as a digital file, encrypted according to AQA guidelines.

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25 of 28

Notes

Notes

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28 of 28