Administration

Most administration was completed accurately and submitted on time. Thanks to everyone for this. This year was the first year that schools and colleges were asked to submit their marks online. This seemed to be a simple and efficient system. For larger schools and colleges it removed the waiting time between submitting marks and receiving details about which students to include in the sample being sent to the moderator. This was certainly helpful from the moderators’ perspectives and I hope this was seen as a positive move by teachers and course leaders. Occasionally marks were input incorrectly. Some errors may be picked up during moderation but as moderation is a sampling system it is possible that some will not. Do please check marks carefully before submitting them to AQA. Where errors are picked up in moderation, they can be amended online but this needs to be done by schools and colleges as moderators cannot alter them on their behalf.

The vast majority of schools and colleges are including Candidate Record Forms with all submissions and are signing and sending the Centre Declaration Sheet. A small number of schools and colleges send students’ work to moderators with little or no annotation or commentary. Please note that it is an Ofqual requirement to submit work with evidence of marking. It also helps the moderator understand the thinking behind the mark awarded.

Some schools and colleges are misunderstanding how group work should be managed. All students must complete at least one of the tasks as an independent production. If students create print or e-Media work in a group then the volume of work identified in the brief must be increased in line with the number of students in the group. So, where the task asks for ‘3-4 pages of A4’ a group of three students working together should produce 9-12 pages. It is assumed that groups will usually be involved in video or audio production and then the students will work on individual print or e-Media productions. Students should not be sharing photographs or other production elements, besides perhaps a logo/ident if this has been used in the broadcast production. All work submitted by the student for the second task should be the student’s own work.

Where students work in groups please give moderators as much information as possible to help them find and access work. Please use candidate numbers and names and ensure that all group members’ paperwork contains all the information a moderator might need. Moderation is a sampling process so please ensure practical work is easy to find regardless of which students are included in the moderation sample.

Some schools and colleges are not completing all of the candidate record form. Please ensure that information about software and any found images used is included on the front page and details about any group work and specific comments regarding the submission are included on the back page. Some schools and colleges make their own comments forms which is good practice and helps the moderator enormously. Do inform the moderator of any specific issues that you feel will help them understand the context of the productions and the marks.

Some schools and colleges are still sending work where all students have worked on the same brief and sometimes the same tasks. Research can sometimes be a class task rather than something undertaken by individual students. This does not follow the spirit of the unit.
Students should choose from the briefs on offer and from the tasks within that brief.

**Lots of schools and colleges are still sending far too much research and planning material.** Please note that only 5-6 pages of research and planning should be sent to the moderator. This is assumed to be a sample of the work undertaken. Please consider the practicalities of moderation when sending work to your moderator. Overly large folders, unlabelled work, sending multiple copies of productions/evaluations etc can make moderation very difficult.

Increasingly schools and colleges are submitting work online. Videos can be submitted via YouTube, Vimeo or when embedded within social media and/or blog sites. This is fine and often helps avoid some of the technical issues experienced when electronic work is sent on a disc or a pen drive. However, some schools and colleges are sending links to moderators as nothing more than handwritten or printed urls. Students often make errors in transcribing urls and their handwriting can be difficult to decipher. Even printed urls can be tricky to read as underscores disappear, 'I' (capital I) and 'l' (lowercase L) look the same etc. As more schools and colleges submit this way moderators are finding they often have to contact schools and colleges to send the urls again as work cannot be accessed. Please send all urls as links. The simplest way to do this would be to copy and paste urls from the browser into MS Word and then send the word document to the moderator on a disc or pen drive. You can send one Word file with all urls pasted in or one Word document per student. Word documents could be sent on one pen drive per school and college or one per student. Do please ensure that moderators can easily locate the urls for individual students by labelling using candidate names and numbers. This will ensure the moderators can access the work and will not come back to you creating an extra job later on.

A reminder that print productions should be printed for submission. Colours and proportions do not look the same on screen as they do on paper and so this can make moderation difficult. E-media work should be sent so it can be seen through a browser. Also be aware that moderators work on their home computers and may not have all browsers loaded. If you think your students work should be looked at using a specific browser, please inform your moderator but also ensure you have sent screen grabs or a video walk through of the e-Media work too - moderators may not have access to the browser you need them to use.

Please see the submission guidelines for specific advice on the submission of practical work.
http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/subjects/AQA-25702-SUB-GUIDE.PDF

**The Briefs and Tasks**

Schools and colleges are reminded that each brief and its associated task has specific requirements - some related to the institutional context, some with audience engagement. Some students are presenting folders that do not appear to have engaged with the specifics of the brief/task. This can impact on the production and the evaluation mark. The most successful folders were those that had engaged with the specifics of the brief/tasks selected. Many students seemed to have a general approach to the briefs and moderators saw a lot of openings, promotional websites and feature articles but not as many that engaged with the detail of the instructions within the brief/tasks.

The new Brief 1 (film competition) was a popular option as was the more familiar Brief 3 (music). Fewer students chose Brief 2 (lifestyle) this year. Where they did, there were some very interesting productions being created. Cookery, fashion and beauty were popular choices with some students looking at sport as a lifestyle. Stronger students engaged specifically with the brief's requirements
but many students made 'openings' for the broadcast task rather than a 'segment from a television magazine show' as per the brief. Weaker students tended to produce work that showed limited concrete engagement of codes and conventions of the forms they said they were creating (TV show, magazine etc) whilst stronger students made conscious use of media language techniques to emulate the style and tone of lifestyle programming.

Similarly, an engagement with the institutional context of the briefs helped support marks in the upper levels of the mark scheme for stronger students completing Brief 1. Some students appeared to mis-read the brief and moving image submissions included trailers, which are not requested, others seemed to imply that the student thought they had to create an opening sequence. The brief allows an opening to be selected but it is not a requirement. Students engaged with the idea that they were creating scenes to create a specific effect or reflect an approach to a particular aspect of narrative or genre often did very well indeed. Higher grades could be supported where students showed an awareness of the codes and conventions used in moving image storytelling as well as the conventions of the chosen genre, techniques to engage the audience/create a specific feeling or response etc. At the lower end of the mark scheme productions felt more like collections of images and lacked narrative cohesion. Lots of productions followed an actor - some walking, some running and some in forests, some in suburbia and others in urban streets. Work at the lower end of the mark range often missed the need to create work based on a theme.

Students selecting print productions in Brief 1 had a free-hand as the promotional booklet for the film competition allowed students to approach page design and illustration creatively. Stronger students were creative whilst using magazine/booklet design conventions. Weaker students tended to use very basic page design with a lack of attention to detail in terms of the use of images, columns and fonts. Stronger students considered the proportions of the page and the way images and texts create balance on the page. Some students created a front cover for this task. This is not part of the task's requirements but can be submitted in addition to the work that follows the instructions in the brief.

E-media submissions were varied. Some students showed creative and technical skills in their use of photography and the inclusion of creative content. Others simply added photographs to the pre-existing template. Teachers are reminded that marks can only be awarded for the technical and creative work of the student so using an online template makes the considered construction of photographs, short videos and/or audio material extremely important if high marks are to be supported. Students who engage with the role of social media by creatively using strategies to engage the audience encourage interactivity and sharing with others can also achieve well. Brief 1 asks students to create a film blog that makes reference to the film competition but also, simply discusses film as a special interest blog would. Many students produced websites to promote their film missing the intent of the brief.

Brief 3 generates a wide variety of responses and students present video work covering a range of genres - some lip-synching a performance, some creating narratives and some taking a more 'symbolic' approach. Stronger students take the opportunity that music video offers to experiment with media language and it was a pleasure to see post-production techniques being used as well as attempts to create in-camera effects. Weaker students often seemed bound by local issues such as having to film in school/college. Some videos had band members in school uniform and so communicating ideas of the musical genre were not fully successful. Only a small number of students are picking up on the idea in the brief that they should be trying to create some form of social media discussion/viral communication. Many students populate their social media templates with photographs and a few comments rather than attempt to demonstrate a social media strategy for getting the band/artist talked about. Some students used the same photographs across social
media sites and their print production. Some students use screen grabs from moving image production to illustrate their print or e-Media. Using the same image multiple times simply means there is less production work to reward and students should be encouraged to create images and illustrations for each element of their submission. The more original work included gives more opportunities for you to reward technical and creative skills. Stronger students engaged with the tasks more specifically and considered rewarding audience loyalty as well as communicating image and ethos.

Evaluations

Some students engage well with the evaluation and analyse the success of their productions in light of the brief/tasks’ requirements. Others still produce very descriptive evaluations that describe the research process (rather than show how the research influenced their approach to the production), they describe the process of production and/or they describe the productions themselves (rather than evaluate them). Stronger students use media concepts to show the relationship between their research, the finished productions and the instructions they had been given. Although the evaluation holds fewer marks than the production element, the 20 marks on offer can make all the difference to a student’s overall mark for the unit. Some evaluations appear to have been completed quickly at the end of the process and so some students miss out on valuable marks.

Stronger students discuss their work making specific reference to the brief - for example, how well they succeed in communicating their ideas in the theme they chose for Brief 1, how well the article in the specialist magazine helps raise interest in Synopticity’s lifestyle programme for Brief 2 or how successful the e-Media products contribute to a marketing strategy for Brief 3.

Further Support

As ever moderation has allowed the team to view some wonderful and creative work. The vast majority of the work we see shows real engagement and enthusiasm from the students and high level of support for creative and individual work from teaching teams. The e-submission system seems to have streamlined the mark submission and sampling process.

Further support materials are on the AQA website. Do make sure you contact your coursework adviser if you have any queries.

Email: mediastudies@aqa.org.uk

Coursework guidance and information including the latest briefs, brief guidance, submission guidance (including e-Media advice)  
http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/media-studies/as-and-a-level/media-studies-2570/coursework

Coursework briefs 2017
http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/subjects/AQA-W-2570-COURSEWK-BRIEF-17.PDF

Guidance on the briefs for 2017
Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator