GCSE
MEDIA STUDIES

8572/C CREATING A CROSS-MEDIA PRODUCT
Report on the Examination

8572/C
June 2023

Version: 1.0

Introduction

This was the first year of entry (since 2019) in which there were no Covid-related adaptations to the assessment. The potential to use found material was withdrawn, so that students were once again required to create all aspects of their products themselves. Most centres were aware of this change back to the original rubric, and there were almost no infringements.

On the whole, students have engaged really well with the unit, with some great work that made full use of available locations in visual work and of relevant technology across all the briefs.

A significant proportion of teachers aren't accessing the advice and guidance that would help them with this unit:

- Assessed folders of student work are available on the Teacher Online Standardisation system (TOLS) via AQA's Centre Services.
- Guidance documents are available on the GCSE Media Studies section of the AQA website, for both teaching and submitting the work. In particular the document 'Recording and Submitting NEA Evidence' outlines how work should be prepared and submitted for moderation.
- Teachers of GCSE Media Studies are also able to access one-to-one email advice from their assigned NEA advisor – any centres requiring this support who are not yet aware of their advisor should contact MediaStudies@aqa.org.uk citing their centre number.

Application of assessment criteria

Over 60% of centres' marking was within tolerance of the agreed AQA standard, applying the mark scheme in the specification. However, this also means that almost 40% of centres had marks outside tolerance of the AQA standard, with a high proportion of these centres showing inconsistent marking. The largest areas of discrepancy remain the marking for the statements of intent and for 'Production: Effectiveness'.

Statements of intent
Some excellent examples of statements of intent were seen, particularly where students had made use of bullet points to enable them to get more detail into their word count. These had very clear explanations of what the students would include and why. This included how they would use specific aspects of media language to convey meanings and to create representations that were pertinent to the brief and to the target audience. Having read these, the moderator can imagine what it is they are going to see and/or hear, and understand why specific decisions have been taken to fulfil the brief and to target the audience.

Some statements of intent are still over-reliant on explaining theory at the expense of actual intentions. With a 300-word limit, space taken explaining (for example) Young and Rubicam's 4Cs or the Uses and Gratifications theory, is doing so at the expense of writing about specific media language choices, and how and why these are going to be used to create key representations.

Some students appeared to not refer to the actual brief when writing their intentions. Therefore they missed out key aspects, such as the need for the music video to be establishing the brand or USP of a new artist, or for the adverts in brief 1 to be marketing the subscription for the newspaper

and not just the newspaper itself. This lack of intent was then carried over into the product itself in many cases.

Marking of the production

The moderation team have always found it most helpful to start with the Production: Effectiveness mark, to avoid penalising or indeed rewarding the same elements twice. Therefore, we will follow that model here.

Production: Effectiveness for an audience

Some centres were able to correctly give full marks or very high marks for this section. Students in the top band met every aspect of the brief, clearly having used it as a checklist to ensure full coverage. They had also used existing conventions consistently throughout their production, giving a high level of realism in all aspects of the product.

There is a tendency, however, to over-reward within this section of the mark scheme, especially at that top end of the mark range. Moderators use the briefs as a check-list when checking the work, and it is suggested that students do the same when creating it, and teachers do the same when marking it.

Production: Media language

Both media language and media representations tended to be more accurately marked than the other two aspects of the marking criteria. The emphasis here is on the choices the student has made and how well these convey meanings.

Some centres that submitted work for more than one brief struggled to mark across the briefs to the same standard. Those that did, tended to keep the need to 'convey meanings' at the heart of their thinking.

Production: Media representations

While generally marked accurately, there were centres that gave equal marks to media language and media representations. Although they may often be in the same level, the two marks are not necessarily the same. A student may, for example, have made poor choices of fonts, layout and colours in a production, which would affect their media language marks, but their decisions in photography and the content of the text might convey representations very strongly.

The return to using original images allowed students to more easily show how they were making decisions about representation, with more of the full mise-en-scene being chosen by the students.

Common misunderstandings of the criteria and rubric infringements

The most common misunderstandings are those caused by not reading the briefs fully, or not sticking to the briefs as set. Each brief includes a specified media format, a target audience and an industry context. Further details are provided in the wording, including the length / quantity of work to be created, and the minimum requirements within that work.

Student work that does not meet all the requirements of the brief cannot gain marks in the highest level for 'Production: Effectiveness'. It is strongly recommended that centres do not deviate from the brief as set, or students are likely to be penalised for not meeting the brief that has been given.

Students should have a copy of the brief they are answering, so that they can use it as a checklist. It did not appear that all centres had done this.

Responding to the briefs

The five briefs this year only included one print brief. We are aware that print is a preferred option for some centres, but cannot guarantee two print briefs every year, as the emphasis changes each year. There will always be at least one brief in each of these four media formats: print, audio, video, and e-media. All briefs are connected to one or more of the Close Study Products (CSPs), so that learning in the 'theory' part of the course can be used directly within the practical assessment.

Centres can choose how many of the briefs to offer to their students, and at what part of the course (after 1 March of the first year) the NEA is done. The range of work seen suggested that there was a more even spread across the five briefs this year than in previous years.

Judging by the work seen in the samples, approximately 35% of centres only offered one brief, with this usually being (in this order) the print brief, the website brief or the music video brief. Only about 3% of centres appeared to offer all five briefs, but slightly over 25% each offered either 2 or 3 briefs to students.

Brief One: Print or radio adverts for a newspaper subscription

Almost 70% of centres submitted work for this brief, with almost all responding in print only. However, responses to this brief were the most likely to not meet the requirements of the brief itself. The brief called for adverts to 'promote a joint subscription to a quality national newspaper's print and online products', with each advert describing 'a different aspect of the newspaper's appeal, emphasising the newspaper's unique coverage of and insight into current issues'.

Common issues in the responses included:
- The newspaper was local not national
- The newspaper was tabloid in style, focusing on gossip
- Only the online aspect of the subscription was mentioned
- There was no mention of the coverage of current issues
- The three adverts all gave the same aspect of appeal
- The subscription wasn't mentioned
- No details were given of how to subscribe
- Only three images were used, not six
- No narrative situation was included in the adverts, with no character, both of which were listed in the minimum requirements.

Where such issues were seen across a whole centre, it was evident that students were not being directed to use the brief as a checklist, and were therefore limiting the marks they could achieve.

The best work drew on existing conventions in advertising of newspaper subscriptions, and showed a really good understanding of both quality newspapers and the needs of their audiences. Photography in some centres was superb, with a really strong understanding of how mise-en-scene in images conveys meanings.

Brief Two: Television advert for a puzzle or slice-of-life video game

This was perhaps the brief with the fewest responses, but even so, almost a quarter of centres submitted video game adverts. There were some interesting submissions that used animation within the advert very effectively.

A very small number of students submitted work that was over-reliant on actual gameplay. As found footage cannot be used, the brief required an emphasis on 'the experience and feelings of the player when playing the game', rather than gameplay. There were some excellent responses that had this emphasis right, often with quirky humour, recognising that many gameplayers would enjoy this feature of the advert.

The best responses made very good use of external locations, representing the environments to be found in the game or other aspects of the players' daily lives.

Brief Three: Interview with a celebrity on commercial music radio

Almost 40% of centres submitted responses to this brief, with some superb examples encountered by moderators. On the whole, responses to this brief were well scripted, showing a good understanding of mode of address, and how radio interviews are carried out. The issues discussed within the interview varied widely, from the downsides of a celebrity lifestyle to more relevant issues for the public such as racism, gun control and the cost of living.

The main problem moderators saw was the lack of other 'audio features to establish the style of the show', which would position the radio station as a commercial music radio station. Often there were no stingers, no idents, and no use of a music bed. While none of these were called for individually, using any of them would have helped to meet the minimum requirements of the brief. This precluded top marking bands for 'Production: Effectiveness' for some students whose content would otherwise have merited this. Using the brief as a checklist would have helped students to remember to include these aspects.

Brief Four: Online promotional package for the actor in a superhero film

Website briefs have proved increasingly popular as centres have got to grips with online web design packages. Approximately 33% of centres submitted responses to this brief. The website and social media posts were to be created to promote an actor, with one page containing information about their involvement as the star of a new superhero film. While most students handled this brief well, a small number mistakenly created websites for the film or the main character in the film.

Interestingly, most candidates embedded their social media posts in their website, although this was not specifically called for in the brief. It was a good idea, and one that students could adopt in the future for similar briefs.

Some amazing work was seen that created a full back-story and persona for the actor, using a student's own photographic history. This was blended well with the text in each case, to make the images relevant to the actor's journey to success. There was a very good understanding of how a celebrity can use social media to relate to their fans.

Brief Five: Two-minute music video for an emerging artist or band

This brief proved to be the second-most popular, with over half of centres submitting responses, but most candidates took it to be 'create a music video' and missed out the requirement to represent an emerging artist or band, and to establish their unique selling point and brand. This was a key requirement of the brief, and should have been addressed clearly in the statement of intent. Very few candidates actually did this.

As the video was intended to introduce an emerging artist, it would also be conventional for the artist to be clearly recognisable in the video. A number of videos were seen with an emphasis on locations, environment, or a large group of people, none of whom was singled out as being the originator of the music. Students who had deliberately chosen to deviate from this convention should have explained their thinking about this in their statement of intent.

This was also the brief that made the best use of students' local environments. A small number of students had access to drones, which substantially added to their videos. Even without such technology, students created very convincing videos featuring their artists, for example, in urban environments for hip-hop and grime tracks or on the beach at sunset for more romantic pop music. Choosing content that is related to the environments students can use is obviously a good strategy.

Existing music is allowed within such products, but there were some memorable videos that included real performances or performances of new compositions. These were clearly heartfelt productions, and benefited from this enthusiasm and commitment.

Guidance given by teachers

Most centres are guiding students very well, as shown in the excellent range of responses from students. This year there was less evidence of the use of writing frames for the statement of intent that were unhelpful.

The answers to most questions from students can be found in the briefs themselves. Teachers should refer to the briefs themselves through the NEA production work, and point students back to these at each stage to ensure they are responding appropriately.

Teachers should note that there are two copies of the booklet, one for students with the distinct requirements of each brief, and one for teachers with further guidance notes.

Administration

In general, work from most centres was neatly packaged and in candidate order. Encryption of most USB submissions was correct. However, all moderators reported more administrative issues from centres this year than in the past.

Regularly-seen issues this year included:
- Not encrypting the USB stick, or using a centre-derived password which then had to be requested
- Not enclosing a completed Centre Declaration Sheet
- Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) not being collated with the statements of intent (or print products where submitted)
- CRFs not being signed by the candidate
- CRFs not containing any reference to unassessed participants. Almost all candidates should have something to write in this part of the form, as they have taken photographs or video footage of other people, or recorded audio of them. Failure to complete this box should trigger an automatic cap of the 'Production: Effectiveness' mark at no more than the top of level 2 (8 marks).
- No commentary to explain the marks awarded – the box on the CRF can be used for this, but many centres prefer to write on the back of the statement of intent. Either of these approaches is fine, but it is a requirement of submission that the centre provides some justification for their marks, to assist the moderation process.

Best practice

There were some excellent examples of work seen this year, with a clear sense that students had engaged well and learned from the process. Most centres ensured that all requirements were met for the work and the administration.

In the best submissions, moderators saw:

- Students who have clearly engaged with their brief and who have been able to explain their choices and decisions
- Well-reasoned and focused statements of intent, written when students knew the detail of what they were about to produce
- Adherence to the chosen brief in full
- Media production work that would engage the target audience
- Attentive use of media conventions
- Deliberate control of media language to create intended meanings
- Strong representations of issues, people and places, in words, sounds and images.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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