A-LEVEL

MEDIA STUDIES

7572/C: Coursework
Report on the Examination

General

This was the first time students had submitted work for the A-level NEA 7572/C. A total of 2389 students from 229 centres responded to the six set briefs.

The most popular brief by some margin was brief 3 (specialist magazine and advertising campaign) followed by briefs 1 (music video and newspaper) and 4 (film marketing). Some students completed brief 2 (radio drama and magazine) and 5 (opening scenes of a drama and related website) with brief 6 (celebrity news podcast and magazine) being the least evidenced brief in the samples seen in moderation. It has been a pleasure to moderate students' production work and see the enthusiasm and commitment shown in the work.

Submission of Work

One of the challenges this year was dealing with a range of recent developments that included Ofqual Safeguarding and GDPR requirements meant that submission processes for some productions had changed. This impacted on moving image and e-media submissions for the A Level NEA. The print brief was the most common choice so many centres avoided the issues associated with electronic submissions.

Student work sent as electronic submissions (off-line websites, video (and audio) productions and video walkthroughs) should be sent on encrypted pen-drives. Passwords for this were generated by AQA and sent to exams officers. A significant number of centres did not encrypt the work before sending it and this contravenes GDPR guidelines. Work sent back from moderators will be encrypted and will use the AQA-generated password.

Thanks to those centres that did encrypt pen-drives. Some errors were made in the transcription of the password (understandable confusion between O and 0, I (upper case i), l (lower case L) and 1 etc) unfortunately this generated additional work for both moderators and centres. Best practice would be to copy and paste the password from the AQA email to ensure no reading or typing errors occur. Please do not create your own password.

Some encryption methods put the work into an encrypted zip file leaving the original unencrypted files accessible. Please don't forget to delete these files before sending to your moderator. Some centres sent passwords with the encrypted files – please do not do this as it undermines the efforts to protect the work. You can encrypt multiple students' work in one folder or on one pen-drive and do not need to encrypt each submission individually. See below for notes on labelling student work.

Please send work to your moderator on a pen-drive and not a CD or DVD. Not all computers have disc drives and so moderators may not be able to easily access student work submitted this way.

Multiple students' work can be sent on one pen-drive. Please ensure the folders/files are labelled with names and student numbers on the drive and it is also a good idea to ensure the centre number is on the pen-drive in some way too – either by attaching a label or writing on the drive. It is a good idea to rename the file with your centre name and number. Where multiple pen-drives are sent please ensure the contents of each drive are provided on a separate sheet of paper or a physical label. Moderation is a sampling process to it is important that moderators are able to find specific students' work easily.

Some work was sent for moderation using file types that are not always accessible for moderators. Please avoid sending Photoshop, publisher or other files linked to specific software as moderators

may not have access to the programmes used to create the work. MP3s, MP4s, PDFs and html files are universally accessible so please consider the file formats you send to the moderator. It is recommended that you avoid submitting moving image work as Quick Time files as these often prove difficult to play properly.

Some websites and videos were submitted 'live' online despite the guidance making it clear this was not appropriate for this examination session. However, please note, the submission guidance has since been updated for 2020 submissions. It will be possible to submit live websites, videos or audio work via a URL but centres must ensure that student accounts are secure once the work has been submitted for assessment. For, example, work created on wix.com should be published to the web and then the student must be 'locked out' so the site cannot be edited further. In this example, teachers would need to change the password to the account. This principle applies to all work submitted live online. Students should not have access to videos uploaded to YouTube or audio uploaded to SoundCloud once the work has been submitted. If you choose to submit work this way, please submit as working links rather than printed or handwritten URLs. A word document listing the links sent on a pen-drive would be fine.

It is not appropriate to send moderators the log-in details and passwords that allow them to access students' web building accounts nor should raw data files (e.g. DTP files) be sent for either print or e-media work. Submissions should be 'finalised' (printed or published). Also, it is not possible to guarantee that the moderator will be able to access raw data files on their computers.

Print work should be printed for submission. Occasionally print work was offered as a final submission as electronic files. Proportions and colours look different on a screen so this is not a good way to view or fairly assess print productions. Centres may have to consider the practicalities of print submissions in advance of deadlines to ensure the students' work is seen as intended.

Admin

Each student's folder only needs to contain the Statement of Intent and the two production pieces but each should be accompanied by a completed Candidate Record Form signed by the teacher and the student. CRFs were usually included with submissions but a significant proportion were not completed fully. It is important to identify the software used and any sources of images, information, music etc. on this form. Please note, models and actors do not need to be named but any unassessed participants (someone who contributes to the production of the work) should and their role in the production should be specified. If centres wish to add more detailed commentary about the work on separate sheets or centre designed forms, this is fine.

Some centres forgot to include the Centre Declaration Sheet with the sample. This is an important document that needs to be signed and sent to your moderator.

A few submissions showed very little evidence of marking – in a few extreme cases there were no annotations or summative comments provided at all. Please note that it is a requirement to provide marking notes. Using the terminology from the mark scheme in the comments is useful, but comments should be directly related to the work being submitted showing how and where the student achieved the criteria being referenced.

The Statement of Intent

Students need to create one statement of intent that identifies their intentions for both tasks in the brief – in 500 words. The word count limit for the statement of intent creates a challenge as students will need to select and discuss examples of their intentions. It is better for students to offer fewer intentions but with more detailed explanations for the points they raise. Some students communicated what they wanted to do but higher marks were awarded to the students who were specific as what they want to achieve and **how** they intend to achieve these aims (specifically identifying media language and representation choices they intend to make). Students engaging with **why** by linking their ideas to areas of the theoretical framework and/or the brief itself were able to be rewarded higher in the mark scheme.

Lower in the mark scheme, students provided descriptions of what they wanted to do and many students focused on target audience, providing detailed descriptions and this left little room to engage with the details of the practical production intentions.

There was evidence that some statements of intent were written after production. Some students' tenses were muddled discussing their work in both the past and future tenses. Others offered post-production evaluations which meant their work could not be rewarded in the upper levels of the mark scheme.

Strong students used media terminology with some confidence and this use of specialist media language and theory terminology is an excellent way for them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Some work at the lower levels omitted links between their ideas and aspects of the theoretical framework and others used terminology within their statements but work at this level often used ideas inaccurately or with limited evidence of understanding.

The Mark Scheme

The Statement of Intent

The statement of intent is marked independently of the production work. Given its focus on intentions, it should be noted that not all intentions may come to fruition in the final production. The statement of intent is marked for its engagement with the brief/tasks and the informed plans that have been made based on the instructions and informed by research. Should the practicalities of production cause the students to change tack during production, this should not impact on the mark awarded for the statement of intent. Care should be taken not to reward the mention of ideas and terms from the framework unless they are used/applied appropriately within the work. The statement of intent should engage with the links between the two productions.

Production

Production work is marked using three sets of descriptors – media language, media representations and audience and industry. The largest proportion of marks is offered in the latter section.

Care should be taken not to use a 'best fit' model when applying the mark scheme to the two products. Most students present a 'stronger' and a 'weaker' production and this imbalance should be taken into account. The final mark should reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the two productions. Some folders were over-rewarded when issues with the second production were not reflected in the final mark.

The media language section assesses the choices made by the students in the production of their work. This section rewards the way messages are created including the use of media language to communicate narrative information. The media representation mark considers the use or subversion of stereotypes and the connotative meaning constructed by the representations created. The final section assesses the effectiveness of the work in terms of its industrial context, its appeal to audience and its use (or subversion of) codes of conventions. The marks in this section also reflect the way the work has fulfilled the brief's requirements and how it has approached the cross-media/convergent nature of the brief.

The Briefs

It is important that centres encourage students to focus on the requirements of the brief they have selected. Responding to all aspects of the brief and all the minimum requirements is reflected in the mark available for the work.

Some cohorts worked on the same brief. Centres should note that it is hoped that students will choose their own preference from the six briefs on offer each year as far as is possible. Whole group approaches tend to limit students from responding in an individual and creative way and marking is often difficult as differentiation is challenging when all students have taken very similar approaches to the task. It is understood that there may be practical reasons why some briefs are not available to students but whole cohort approaches should be treated with care. This approach can be helpful for students who need extra support, but it can hold stronger students back.

Print

Print was a popular option with Brief 3 offering two print tasks and print being part of all briefs other than Brief 5. Print should be sent to the moderator as a hard copy not as a data file. Work looks different on screen and so cannot be assessed and moderated accurately in this format.

To show the work in the way it is intended, work should be presented using good quality print and on an appropriate type of paper. Size of work is less important than proportion. A4 offers a narrow page that needs very specific design choices to ensure the pages are effective. Very few 'real' media products use the A4 shape. Where work is printed on A3 or A2 paper please consider the submission of the work for moderation. There is no need to send overly large prints (which are very expensive) it is fine to reduce the size of the submission for printing using the correct proportions.

Advertising/Posters

A range of approaches to the advertising task was evidenced. At the lower end of the range adverts lacked a brand identity and often omitted to act specifically to persuade. Higher level work communicated a marketing strategy, had clearly identifiable target audience(s) and demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of the persuasive function of advertising. Weaker submissions often used a single image and the name of the product but did not indicate how the audience could find out more/buy the product. These same ideas were as important in the film marketing task. Some posters included an image and the film's name whilst higher level work replicated the codes and conventions of the form, using a tag-line, the 'star' and/or 'director' etc. as selling strategies. They also included the appropriate industrial information and gave the audience release dates, web addresses to go to etc.

Some elements of the briefs were not always acknowledged. For example, not all film posters identified the film festival nor the specific audience segments being targeted. Some posters and

print adverts did not always identify where they would be placed. However, some students showed their adverts 'in situ' which was a very good way to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of the different codes and conventions within print advertising determined by where the adverts will be seen.

Photography is clearly very important in these types of briefs. Images at the lower end of the range tended to be quite literal – simply showing. Typically, work at the higher end of the range used the images to communicate a specific message about the product/idea/film.

Care should be taken when working with designs dominated by dark colours as they may look fine on screen but may not be clear when printed.

Magazines and Newspapers

The more successful magazine and newspaper productions engaged with the codes and conventions of their chosen form with some precision and detail. Higher level work used images that were clearly taken specifically for the production and were produced in an attempt to create a specific meaning and follow the conventions of the form being created. In some cases, students emulated visual styles really well making the genre of magazine/newspaper very clear. Work at this level also tended to be aware of issues such as readability in feature articles and they used columns, sub-headings, pull-quotes etc. to create visual appeal. Some work at the lower end of the range omitted these types of design features and others used them but with little evidence of detailed knowledge of the conventions of the form they were working in.

Page proportion has a real impact on the success of magazine and newspaper productions. Magazines and newspapers printed as A4 (size or shape) appear 'cramped' as most magazines and newspapers use wider paper – giving the page more space. Other proportion issues included font sizes, column sizes and the text/image ratio. Front pages and internal pages were often created and submitted on different sized pages which hampered the coherence of the production.

There are several reasons why this inaccuracy may occur:
- At the start of the production process the Desk Top Publishing page may not have been set to the correct size or shape
- Pages set to the correct size/shape were printed on different sized paper and the orientation of the page was set incorrectly
- Pages set to the correct size/shape were printed and the 'shrink to fit' option was checked

Proportion is always more important than size in print productions. A newspaper using the correct proportions but submitted smaller than the real thing will demonstrate a more sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the form.

Some productions demonstrated an engagement with the linguistic conventions of the form being replicated really well. The choices of content in the magazines or newspapers indicated good knowledge and understanding.

Centres are reminded that all images used in print productions should be created by the student for the task. No non-original images should be used. It was clear that some students rose to this challenge where models dressing-up and becoming named celebrities or characters in a story/film. At the other end of the range there was some evidence of personal snapshots being used and some use of found images. There was evidence of some students using image manipulation to help enhance their photography.

Moving Image

Moving image was not as popular as print but students did work on brief 1 and 4 with a smaller number of students completing brief 5.

The most successful moving image work showed evidence of planning and an engagement with the function of the work being created. Music videos needed to 'sell' the music/artist but also engage with a specific social issue. Stronger students managed to balance these two functions using codes and conventions of music videos as well as engaging with a specific issue/story. At the lower end of the range, the issue became the focus and the idea of it being a music video often got lost. Work at the upper end of the range also used imagery that showed a knowledge and understanding of musical genre.

Successful trailers for Brief 4 demonstrated and understanding of the advertising and marketing function of trailers and engaged with issues around film marketing. Weaker work presented a montage of genre related images whereas stronger work showed evidence of the way narrative works within trailers and used specific marketing strategies related to the genre/target audience.

There was evidence of students who chose media language (location, costume, props, make-up) with real care and used the technology demonstrating an understanding of the filming and editing conventions of the forms being created. For example, there was evidence of minimal editing and a reliance on mid-shots in the productions at the lower end of the range – some work was presented using shots taken in portrait rather than landscape. Stronger work used a range of camera shots with some creative uses of camera movements, close-ups and perspectives being offered. Some students used stop-motion animation segments or other effects that added to the effectiveness of their work. Post-production techniques were also used to enhance the footage in some production submissions.

E-Media and Audio

These two productions were only attempted by a small number of students. The audio work that was sampled evidenced a fairly simple approach using a single presenter and then one other voice in a recorded conversation. Similarly, only a few websites were submitted. Stronger websites engaged with the interactive nature of websites considering navigation of the website, multi-media functionality and some form of appeal to audience activity. Images taken directly from the moving image production tended to be less successful than those using images taken specifically for this production. Screengrabs from moving image work tends to be of a lower quality.

Further Support

Each centre has an NEA advisor allocated to them who can offer advice and guidance on the NEA/Briefs by email. If you do not know how to contact your NEA advisor, please contact mediastudies@aqa.org.uk

Marked NEA folders with commentaries demonstrating the application of the mark scheme are available on the Secure Key Materials area of the AQA website.

An NEA Teacher Guide and Submission Guidelines are available on the AQA website. These have been updated for the 2020 submission.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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