



A Level **Media Studies**

7572/C

Report on the examination

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Support

A number of resources are available to help you support your student's NEA productions. These guides are available to download from the AQA website. Your NEA advisors will also be able to provide them for you on request.

- Teaching Guide: NEA Production
- Teaching Guide: Non-Exam Assessment
- 8572/7572 Notes and Guidance: Recording and Submitting NEA Evidence
- Digital Media Submissions Portal: Guidance for Centres

NEA advisors can offer email-based support for any questions you may have about the briefs or the requirements of the NEA in general. If you do not have the contact details for your advisor, please contact mediastudies@AQA.org.uk

Marked student work is available with commentaries via the Teacher Online Stands area of the AQA's centre services.

If you don't have access to Centre Services, please speak to your exams officer.

Online training will be offered in the Autumn that will look back at student work from this year in relation to the NEA requirements and applying the mark scheme.

Curriculum Connect meetings are run termly by AQA's subject support team and will offer updates and information and an opportunity for you to ask questions on any aspect of the specification, including the NEA.

Contact mediastudies@AQA.org.uk for further details on all support.

Introduction and Administration

Students submitted a wide variety of NEA production pieces this year. One of the great pleasures of moderation is seeing how different students approach the briefs in their own unique ways.

The majority of centres applied the mark scheme fairly and with care.

This year was the second time centres submitted student work electronically. This proved to be very successful again. Centres were efficient and the vast majority of work was uploaded before the May 15th deadline. Where items were missing, centres responded quickly to allow moderation to continue.

As a reminder – all marks should be uploaded by May 15th and smaller centres will upload all of their cohort's work at this point. Larger centres will then have a sample identified and these

submissions should be uploaded within 5 working days of the deadline. If you experience any problems meeting the deadlines you should contact AQA to let them know.

Do please refer to the **AQA Digital Media Submissions Portal Guide** to help you submit the work with appropriate file names and using correct file formats. Where possible, do convert written and print submissions to pdfs to allow moderators to access your students' work easily – especially where software such as Photoshop or Publisher (etc.) has been used. Moderators use their home computers to view your students' work and may not have access to some of the more specialised software packages and file formats.

It was noted that some submissions were made up of many individual files that had to be uploaded. It may save time when uploading if documents are merged into fewer pdf files. However, the files are organised, please ensure that the file name indicates the file's content so specific parts of the submission are easy to find.

Candidate Record Forms

Please submit one CRF per student with that student's production work. Some centres submitted all CRFS in one file and this made it difficult for moderators to access the documentation.

Candidate Record Forms can be completed and submitted as electronic forms or handwritten and scanned for submission.

Some centres submitted work with limited comments on the way that the mark scheme had been applied to the work in sample. Teacher comments are an important part of the moderation process as it provides the opportunity to contextualise the work we are seeing, and it demonstrates teacher's thinking when applying marks. Teachers can use their own paperwork/additional pages to pass on comments if preferred.

It is important that all parts of the CRF are completed. Some forms omitted information about unassessed participants as well as any software used and/or internet sourced information etc. used for productions. All sources of information and content should be referenced when work is submitted as this has a direct impact on the way the mark scheme should be applied. This is especially important when students have elected to use non-original imagery in their work. Sources for each image should be provided, whether that is a screengrab or an image from google or an image bank.

The CRF should provide as much detail as possible on any AI generated content submitted for assessment. Students should provide their prompts so that the teacher (and then the moderator) can assess the students' contributions to the finished product. More information on assessing AI generated work is to follow, but as a quick reminder – AI is not allowed for any written content submitted for assessment. This must all be written by the student. Use of AI is permissible for imagery. The marks awarded should, however, reflect the student's input into the construction of meaning, control of connotations etc.

Finally, do please ensure that the form is signed by both the student and their teacher.

Use of Images/Imagery

Students should avoid the use of non-original imagery in their productions. This includes images found on the internet, screengrabs or footage from other media. The expectation is that students will create their own pictures, illustrations and/or moving image footage to demonstrate their understanding of the conventions of media production and the creation of meaning. Images that are downloaded and edited should also be avoided. It should be noted that the specification states that non-original work should not be used but if it is, the marks awarded in the Audience and Industry section of the mark scheme will need to be reduced to reflect this.

Some students illustrate their work with digitised drawings. This should only be done where it is appropriate to the codes and conventions of the form and/or genre being presented.

Use of Templates

Many software packages provide templates, and these should be avoided in the construction of work. Page design and layout decisions should be the students' own in order to access the full range of marks. Design and layout decisions demonstrate the students' understanding of codes and conventions and are part of the construction of meaning and audience appeal. The use of templates reduces the input from the student and marks should reflect this.

AI

Although AI generated imagery is permissible, it does complicate the application of the mark scheme in all areas other than the statement of intent. The marks awarded must be for the content of the imagery reflected in the prompts and not simply the finished image. Students cannot be rewarded for the way AI has 'selected and combined elements' or 'controlled connotations' (Media Language). It must be the student and not the programme that has constructed the meanings communicated in the work (Representation). They must make the choices that reflect the codes and conventions of the form and genre and create audience engagement (Audience and Industry). Marks need to be fairly applied in each area.

The guidance states that students should not use AI where a photograph/footage could be created, it can be used to supplement the imagery being presented but should not dominate. Another issue that can arise is that differentiation within a cohort's work can become very difficult. There were some examples of AI being used by several students in the same cohort who had chosen to create the same brief. AI created similar imagery for all students. Often AI images were literal depictions and so lacked any construction of meaning beyond denotations.

Although AI is permitted, students do not have to use it and it may have an impact on the marks they can achieve. Centres are urged to be cautious in the extent of its use and reminded that they need to reflect its use in the marks awarded to avoid marks being out of tolerance with national standards.

Choice of Briefs

Please note that it is expected that students will select the brief they complete from the 6 published each March. There is still some evidence of ‘whole centre’ approaches with all students completing the same brief and, in some cases, taking very similar approaches to the tasks, they are completing. The briefs relate to the media forms studied on the course and students should undertake research before they start their productions. Students don’t need access to professional equipment or expensive software to produce their work so teachers should encourage students to select briefs that interest them.

Print

Print productions are now being assessed on a screen but students should still be considering them as print products. There was some evidence that issues such as the size of the page, fonts, images and general balance was not carefully considered. Some design choices (e.g. the use of coloured text over a busy background) did not take into account the impact that being printed would have on legibility. It is recommended that students do at least one test print during production so that they can check how their decisions look on paper.

Applying the Mark Scheme

Statements of Intent

There were still a small number of students who wrote the statements of intent after rather than before production. These evaluated decisions already made, rather than discussed intentions and so could not match all the mark scheme descriptors.

Statements of Intent should be specific, detailing plans for the use of Media Language and explain these decisions in the light of the task’s requirements and ideas from the framework.

Some lower-level statements included theory but simply identified an idea or described the theory rather than explaining how the theory influenced their decisions. At lower levels theory is often missing.

Higher level statements provided clear and precise intentions that included specific media language choices they intended to make. At this end of the range, student intentions demonstrated a clear understanding as to the way theoretical ideas led to production choices. Stronger statements consider the way the target audience also impacts on production decisions.

Media Language

Media Language should be used to ensure that ideas are communicated clearly and a clear point of view constructed. Higher level marks can be given where there is evidence of careful selection of media language. For example, in photography and moving image productions, the dressing of the mise-en-scene or wardrobe choices show that the student is active in construction of meaning. Work at the lower end of the range tends to rely on what is there, rather than controlling the environment and carefully planning the imagery they are creating.

Similarly, for higher marks, the written word should create an appropriate tone or mode of address through the careful selection of language.

Representations

Work at the lower end of the range tends to use imagery to simply 'show' something without considering how it is being shown. Higher marks can be awarded where students are engaging with connotations, the construction of brand identity and the use and/or subversion of stereotypes.

Audience and Industry

Students can be rewarded here for their ability to create audience engagement and the accurate replication of codes and convention of the form and genre. Their production choices will engage with the industrial context and its limitations. For example, their choice of content will reflect both their target audience, and the regulations imposed on the area of the media they are working in.

Work lower in the mark scheme sometimes contains non-original imagery. This end of the range is often characterised by a lack of engagement in terms of the target audience discussed in the Statement of Intent and tends to be inconsistent in the use of conventions in the way the work is presented. For example, higher level work applies magazine layout conventions with care and attention whereas work in the lower levels is inaccurate and/or inconsistent in their approach to page design.

2025 Briefs

Brief 1: Reality TV Opening and Webpage plus Instagram

Students who approached this brief tended to show a clear understanding of this TV format and it was good to see conventions regarding the use of presenters, contestants and the construction of tension present in the work seen. At the lower end of the range, filming was limited in terms of location and the creation of mise-en-scene. Some videos consisted of a number of talking heads shots which did not reflect the style and approach of the reality/competition genre.

Some of the web and Instagram work used screengrabs from the video production rather than images created specifically for online products. This limited the ability to see the extent of the students' ability to promote the programme. Stronger work used the web and Instagram formats to create engaging images and written content that aimed to generate interest in the programme.

Brief 2: Gaming Magazine and Adverts

This was one of the most popular briefs this year and many students used it to demonstrate their understanding of the two media forms as well as how to engage with gaming audiences. Some students identified a specific niche audience, and this enabled them to focus their production choices on specific gratifications. These included constructing representations that subvert some of the stereotypes that exist in this area. Higher level magazines were effective in the use of media language, and we saw some excellent front covers and double page spreads where page design was carefully considered with images used to create audience appeal.

Higher level adverts created a brand identity for the products being advertised that clearly related to the target audience. This work demonstrated student's knowledge of advertising and marketing by creating a clear USP and using persuasive techniques to encourage audience action.

At the lower end of the mark scheme, magazine design was often inconsistent, and adverts tended to be an image of the product with some text overlay that was literal rather than persuasive. Where multiple students in a centre worked on this brief, it was not uncommon for all submissions to be advertising the same products and students work was very similar. This was exacerbated by the use of AI where AI images for adverts were largely the same.

This brief attracted more found images than any of the others which impacted on the marks that could be awarded. Gaming imagery from the games and the game's own promotional materials were used and in some cases were the dominant source of imagery. This was not always taken into account when the work was marked and, in these cases, this meant the marks awarded by the centre were out of tolerance.

The brief offered a number of suggestions of content that would not need to rely on imagery from games. Where students wanted to use images from a game, they needed to create the image themselves. For example, a screenshot from a game is a non-original image but a photo of someone playing the game (with the game visible on the screen) is original and can be rewarded. The use of a downloaded games cover image is not original but a photo of a games box on a console is. Some students used original photography and image manipulation filters to create images that look 'game-like' to great effect.

Brief 3: Film Promotion – TikToks and Posters

A large number of students chose this brief with both optional genres being selected. There were some interesting approaches to the TikTok videos and submissions included trailers, interviews and Q and As. Higher level work used a range of locations and demonstrated a good understanding of the way camera and sound can be used to create specific effects. The presentation style of work on TikTok was also considered. As with brief 1, there was evidence of considered planning where costume, make-up and lighting were carefully controlled to create meaning. Lower-level work tended to lack the evidence of planning and careful construction of shots. Student actors in school uniforms, single shot presentations of talking heads and basic use of framing and editing were common at these levels and there was often limited evidence of an understanding of TikTok as a platform.

Lower-level posters tended to use screenshots and often lacked the form's conventions. Stronger work created images specifically for this production and posters were designed with a knowledge of how placement impacts on the product. These communicated key information (film title, star names, certificate, release date etc.) and were clearly aiming to target their audience and persuade them to engage with the film.

Brief 4: Music Video and Music Magazine

With brief 2, this was one of the most popular briefs this year. The magazine task raised similar issues to the print task for brief 2 but students were far less likely to use non-original images or AI in this brief. Less successful magazine work tended to be down to a lack of engagement with the conventions of magazine page design and/or where images used were less considered in

terms of the way the band/artist and/or musical genre was being represented. Again, photo shoots in front rooms or classrooms were less effective than images dressed to look like a studio or where artists were pictured in genre appropriate clothing or locations. Some lower-level work used screengrabs from the music video rather than photos taken for the magazine. Most students engaged with the idea of the footwear sponsorship in the magazine as well as in the music video.

Stronger music videos used a range of shots to provide visual interest and variety whilst showing a recognition of genre conventions and audience expectations. There were some strong pieces of work that constructed a clear narrative and used performance elements in the video production. Some videos were more limited in terms of use of media language, for example, long takes following behind a walking performer/character without a clear engagement with the genre or the creation of audience appeal. Some videos included interviews which is not a convention of music videos.

Brief 5: Online awareness Raising Campaign and TikTok videos

This brief encouraged a range of approaches with anti-smoking/vaping, pollution, recycling and drink driving amongst the topics selected. As with the previous briefs, well planned and carefully constructed images supported higher level work. This work tended to use persuasive techniques that were related to their understanding of the target audience. Less strong work tended to simply present the issue with limited consideration of the importance of representations and the construction of a narrative. Students who engaged with the conventions of TikTok videos were able to demonstrate their knowledge of and ability to control media language.

Brief 6: Online Newspaper (local) and Audio News

The least popular of the briefs this year, it focused on content with a local interest. Websites tended to be more successful than the audio work, with stronger work showing a recognition of the need to integrate different types of sound into the production. Higher level websites engaged with conventions of website design, ensured their content was legible and easily navigated and included multi-media elements. Less successful work tended to use templates rather than students designing the pages themselves. Templates provide by Wix and Canva don't tend to be fully appropriate for online newspapers, so they often undermined the impact of the work.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.