

Media Studies Handbook for A Level Students



Why Media Studies Matters.

“An understanding of media is as essential a basic tool of survival in the modern world as IT or D&T. You may choose just to absorb it, but unless you can evaluate it, you lack necessary skills.”

- David Aaronovitch.

AS Media Studies

Course Outline

Unit 1 Investigating Media

50% of the AS grade will come from the exam. In Section A of the exam (1 hour and 15 minutes) you will need to analyse an unseen media text (40% of the exam grade). In Section B (1 hour) you will need to write an essay style answer using a case study you will have prepared about film (60% of the exam grade).

Unit 2 Creating Media

50% of your AS grade will come from coursework. You will be required to create two media products, based on briefs from the examination board. You will get marks for the research that you do, for the production itself and for the 1500 word evaluation.

Assessment Objectives

AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates.

AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products, evaluating coursework to show how meaning and responses are created.

AO3 Demonstrate the ability to plan, create and construct media products using appropriate technical and creative skills.

AO4 Demonstrate the ability to undertake, apply and present appropriate work for Production

Exam-Section A tests AO1 and Section B tests AO2

Coursework- tests AO2, A03 and A04

AS Coursework

The coursework comprises the following:

Research

Pre-production

Production

Evaluation (1500 words)

You are required to answer on 2 tasks from 2 different platforms

Brief One

Whichever tasks you choose to complete, you should provide a brief overview of the TV programme itself. You work for Silver Lining Productions, a multi-media production company that has had recent television success with fly on the wall documentaries, structured reality programming and fiction products. They have also developed supporting media for their broadcast productions in print, audio and e-media. The company is known for its work in pushing the boundaries of existing formats and so is willing to consider original and creative approaches to existing formats. You have been given an opportunity to prepare a pitch for development funding and so will need to present sample production work. The programme will have a target audience similar to E4's demographic (15-35) and will be suitable for pre-watershed broadcasting. You are free to work in any format you wish.

Tasks

(a) Broadcasting

(i) Produce the opening few scenes of your

TV programme establishing narrative themes, characters and location. You could include a title sequence and your finished product should be approximately two minutes long

or

(ii) Create viral marketing products for a new broadcast production. This could consist of one Two minute moving image product (not a trailer) or a number of shorter pieces. You should consider how your products will encourage audiences to become involved in passing your messages along.

or

(iii) Focusing on an idea that will be developed in your TV programme, create a two minute feature for an existing radio show. You should indicate which radio station would broadcast the feature and when it would be scheduled. You should demonstrate an understanding of target audience in the way the information is presented

(b) Print

(i) As part of the promotion for the TV programme, create a teaser ad campaign that will be published before broadcast which aims to generate discussion amongst your target audience. Your print based campaign may make reference to advertising materials on other platforms.

or

(ii) Create a front cover and two further pages from a specialist souvenir magazine that will be produced to promote the broadcast production at the time of broadcast.

(c)

e-Media

(i) Create a three page fan-site for the TV programme. Try to make your site as professional as possible. You should use the website to try to encourage as much audience interactivity and communication as possible.

or

(ii) Create an e-media marketing campaign for the TV programme using at least two types of advertising which could include:

Banner advertising

Official webpage/site

Pop ups

In page advertising

A Social Network page*

Other e-media advertising that you think would be appropriate

You can include moving image/audio in the advertising if you feel this would be appropriate.

You should identify the placement of the adverts and/or the ways the audience would access the materials created.

You should produce the equivalent of three pages of A4.

* A social network page constructed using a template can only count as one page.

MEST2 Mark Scheme

Productions (AO3 48 marks and AO4 12 marks) 60 marks

Level 5 (49-60 marks)

The candidate **demonstrates creativity** and clear technical proficiency in the use of the chosen technologies (AO3).

The candidate also demonstrates **sophisticated understanding** of the necessities and details of the production process (AO3).

Codes and conventions have been used appropriately and **with some flair** throughout (AO3).

The productions are clearly fit for purpose in the light of the candidate's research (AO4).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate considerable attention to detail and a genuine sense of engagement with both the chosen media and the subject matter.

Level 4 (37-48 marks)

The candidate demonstrates **some creativity** and technical proficiency in the use of the chosen technologies (AO3).

The candidate also demonstrates **good understanding** of the necessities and details of the production process (AO3).

Codes and conventions have been **used appropriately throughout** (AO3).

The productions are fit for purpose in the light of the candidate's research (AO4).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections of flair and/or sophistication in work that is otherwise good.

Level 3 (25-36 marks)

The candidate **demonstrates technical competence** in the use of the chosen technologies (AO3).

The candidate also demonstrates **satisfactory understanding** of the necessities and details of the production process (AO3).

Codes and conventions have been used **appropriately through most of the work** (AO3).

The productions are largely fit for purpose in the light of the candidate's research (AO4).

At the top of this level work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections of creativity and/or proficiency in work that is otherwise satisfactory.

Evaluation (AO2 16 marks and AO4 4 marks) 20 marks

Level 4 (16-20 marks)

The evaluation and pre-production materials contain **extended evidence and application of research** and give a **clear description of the target audience(s)** and how the candidate intended to target them (AO4).

There is **effective analysis** of the strengths and weaknesses of the productions which demonstrates sound understanding of the media concepts and contexts relevant to the work undertaken with **clear reference to the third media platform** (AO2).

The candidate **uses the language of Media Studies with confidence**. The work demonstrates a high level of accuracy in spelling and syntax and is expressed in a fluent and cogent manner (AO2). *At the top of this level* work will demonstrate confident understanding of the Key Concepts through an engaged analysis of the signification process.

Level 3 (11-15 marks)

The evaluation and pre-production materials contain **substantial proof, and competent application, of research** and offer evidence **of the target audience(s)** and how the candidate intended to target them (AO4).

There is **competent analysis** of the strengths and weaknesses of the productions which **demonstrates satisfactory understanding** of the media concepts and contexts relevant to the work undertaken with **some discussion of the third media platform** (AO2).

The candidate makes **appropriate use of the language of Media Studies**. The work may demonstrate some errors in spelling and syntax but will communicate meaning accurately (AO2). *At the top of this level* work will demonstrate some elements of the descriptor above, such as sections that are confident, extended and/or effective in work that is otherwise satisfactory.

Key Points to reach the higher bands:

Creativity in the production

Technical proficiency

Understanding of the codes and conventions

Thorough and detailed research

Evaluation that analyses the production and how it appeals to the audience

Discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the work.

When you have completed your work you will not be given a grade, but you will be given guidance as to what band you have achieved.

Exam Guidance

Example of a Media Studies exam paper

You are about to see *Embrace Life*, a British public information film made for the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership about the importance of wearing seat belts. The short film has become an international phenomenon, reaching 129 countries through social networking and video sharing sites, after it was launched on the internet in January 2010. Highly praised for its visual and emotional impact, the film has scooped a range of awards worldwide. By December 2011, the film had over 14 million views on YouTube and a Facebook group, 'This Ad Should be on TV', had been created. Executive Producer, Neil Hopkins, said that the film had originally been designed to be screened at local cinemas, on the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership website, and at local educational events. He added: 'We never dreamed that the campaign would touch so many people.'

1 Media Institutions How does the institution take an original and positive approach to road safety advertising? (12 marks)

2 Media Forms How does mise-en-scène contribute to the impact of the film? (12 marks)

3 Media Representations How is family represented in the film? (12 marks)

4 Media Audiences Why does the film appeal to such a wide audience? (12 marks)

Section B

Intertextuality describes the way in which media products make reference to other media products that producers assume audiences will recognise. Identify the ways intertextuality is used in your cross-media study. Support your answer with reference to a range of products from **three** media platforms. (32 marks)

Evaluate how new technologies have been used in the products in your cross-media study. Support your answer with reference to a range of products from **three** media platforms. (32 marks)

Section B

For the exam you will need to prepare a case study. In section B of the exam you will need to use the case study to answer the question.

The case study will need to include texts from across the 3 platforms.

You will also need a number of texts from each platform.

We will study a class case but then you will then be expected to create an individual study, either following the same genre, or choosing one of your own.

Exam Advice

To be successful in section A of the exam:

Make sure you read the information given about the unseen text as this may be very useful in your answers.

Answer the actual question,

Use references to the unseen text to support your points,

Use relevant terminology,

Use theory when relevant,

Use the checklist of media language to help you consider points you make,

Cover a range of different points,

Use the format- point, evidence and explain,

Checklist: camera angles, editing, sound, images, lighting, mise en scene, intertextuality.

To be successful in section B of the exam:

Use examples across the 3 platforms,

Use a range of examples from each platform,

Make sure your case study is individual,

Examples must be detailed so you need to know your case study very well,

Keep focused on the question throughout.

Use media terminology and use relevant theory

A2 Media Studies

Course Outline

Unit 3: Critical Perspectives

50% of the mark for A2 will come from the exam. Section A involves watching 2 unseen texts. You will then answer three questions.

Q1 - a media concept focused analysis of the unseen media products

Q2 - a discussion on a media issue suggested by the unseen texts to include evidence of broader media knowledge

Q3 - a discussion on a contextual issue suggested by the unseen texts
The topics of representation and new media will be covered somewhere in section A. (1 hour including 15 minutes viewing time).

Section B requires an extended essay response selected from two options from each of two pre-prepared topics

The topics are currently:

- **Identities and the media**

–and

- **The Impact of Digital and New Media**

Questions will be open and based on an issue related to the topic area. The answers should use knowledge gained in the completion of an independent case study prior to the exam

(1 hour writing time)

Section A tests (AO1) and is worth 40% of the marks. Section B tests (A02) and is worth 60% of the marks.

Unit 4: Media: research and Production

50% of the A2 grade will come from the coursework.

This involves a 2000 word critical investigation based on a self selected media issue or debate . The essay requires the selection of an issue that should be investigated conceptually, extended independent research, the selection of appropriate media products in order to demonstrate understanding through textual analysis. Critical autonomy is valued.

A linked production is also required. It should reflect the chosen issue or debate in the context of a realistic media production. The work should demonstrate the extension of practical skills from AS.

Critical research 60%, production 40%

Example of a Mest 3 exam paper

Section A

Answer all questions in Section A. Read the information and the three questions below.

You will be shown two media products three times. In between these viewings you should make notes in response to the questions below. These notes will not be marked.

You should spend approximately 45 minutes answering the questions in Section A.

Media Product One – The film trailer for Eclipse from www.eclipsethemovie.com Eclipse is the third instalment of The Twilight Saga film franchise, released in the UK in July 2010. The official website says ‘Bella once again finds herself surrounded by danger as Seattle is ravaged by a string of mysterious killings and a malicious vampire continues her quest for revenge. In the midst of it all, she is forced to choose between her love for Edward and her friendship with Jacob’. Edward is a vampire and Jacob is a werewolf.

The film is a mix of horror, romance and fantasy, with a UK cinema demographic of mostly women and 15–24 year olds. Although the film was a financial success, some reviews criticised the film. The official website contains the trailer, downloadable photos, an online store and community links to Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

Media Product Two – The film trailer for Let the Right One In from www.lettherightoneinmovie.com

Let the Right One In is a Swedish film released in the UK in August 2008. The official website describes the film as ‘disturbing, darkly atmospheric, yet unexpectedly tender’. Oskar, a lonely 12 year old boy who is bullied at school finds friendship and love with a young girl called Eli who turns out to be a vampire. Eli’s arrival coincides with a series of gruesome attacks and deaths. The film is a mix of horror, romance and drama. It was a critical success and won many awards at international film festivals. A US remake, Let Me In, was released in October 2010. The official website contains the trailer, a synopsis, press reviews, photos and a link to buy the DVD.

01 Evaluate how the two trailers use the narrative technique of enigma to encourage the target audience to watch the films. (8 marks)

02 Why are media products that represent outsiders, such as vampire films, so popular? You may also refer to other media products to support your answer. (12 marks)

03 Do you think that official and unofficial websites contribute to a film’s box office success? You should refer to other media products to support your answer. (12 marks)

Section B Answer one question from this section.

You are advised to spend one hour on your answer.

You will be rewarded for showing independent study by using:

- your own individual case study topic
- your own individual choice of media products.

EITHER

Identities and the media

04 Mainstream media is a powerful influence on the construction of an individual's identity. Use your case study to explore the impact of the media in the construction of identities. (48 marks)

OR

05 'We are defined by the media we use.' How does your case study suggest audiences use the media to construct their own identity?

(48 marks)

OR

The Impact of New/Digital Media

06 The only way to survive in the digital world is to keep innovating. Do you agree? (48 marks)

OR

07 Most of the traditional media's attempts to compete with new and digital media have been too little and too late. Does your case study support this view?(48 marks)

Advice for the Mest 3 Exam

As you will see with the coursework to be successful in at A2 the question of “Why” must be addressed. This will link to all the influences there are upon a media product such as the institution, economic, social and historical contexts.

For question 1 of section A there needs to be detailed analysis that addresses the specific question that is being asked.

For question 2 the task states “you may want to draw on other examples” (other than those in the exam). It is better to use other examples here so a wide knowledge of the media is essential. Have a range of points and develop them.

For question 3 examples from other media texts (other than those shown in the exam) must be used. Have a range of points and develop them.

Section B

Consider what the question is asking and then keep focused throughout. Use a range of examples from your individual case study. Make sure you develop points so the essay has breadth and depth. Use relevant terminology and theory.

Assessment of Mest 3 section B

Level 4

A sophisticated and comprehensive essay, showing very good critical autonomy. **Sophisticated and detailed understanding** of the topic. **A sharp focus on the question** throughout. **Sophisticated application of a wide range or media debates, issues and theories and wider contexts**. A **comprehensive individual case study**, with a **wide range of detailed examples**. Well structured, articulate and engaged.

Level 3

A good essay, showing good critical autonomy. **Proficient understanding** of the topic. A **clear focus on the question**. **Good application of range of media debates, issues and theories and wider contexts**. A clear individual case study, with a range of examples. Well structured and clearly expressed

Mark Scheme for Coursework

Critical Research Essay

Level 4

(37-48 marks)

A **fluent and analytical investigation** which explores the chosen topic from a clear, autonomous and critical perspective, making use of extensive and **wide-ranging research** which has clearly been employed in the investigation and **detailed in the bibliography**, making use of a wide range of academic, media and contextual sources. The investigation demonstrates **sophisticated research and engagement with the primary text(s) and a range of secondary texts**. It is well presented with a very detailed bibliography/source list (AO4).

The investigation demonstrates **sophisticated knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates** relevant to the chosen area of investigation. The work **contextualises the study** and the linked production piece effectively within the contemporary media landscape (AO1).

At the top of this level candidates demonstrate very good understanding of the chosen area of investigation, very good, independent research skills and very good application of media concepts, contexts and critical debates. The link between the investigation and the production is cogent, clear and evident.

Level 3

25-36 marks

A proficient investigation, exploring the chosen topic and demonstrating **autonomous research** and exploration. The work is appropriately presented with a **functional bibliography**/source list. **Significant research** has clearly been undertaken, employed in the investigation and detailed in the bibliography, making use of a range of academic, media and contextual sources. The investigation demonstrates significant research and engagement with the primary text(s) and a range of secondary texts (AO4). The investigation demonstrates knowledge **and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates** relevant to the chosen area of investigation. The work contextualises the study and the linked production piece within the contemporary media landscape (AO1).

At the top of this level candidates demonstrate good synoptic understanding of the chosen area of investigation and good research skills, as well as appropriate application of media concepts, contexts and critical debates. The link between the investigation and the production is evident.

Linked Production

Level 4

(25-32 marks)

A **creative and aesthetically successful** product which achieves **high production values and demonstrates highly competent use of technology**.

The production demonstrates **significant understanding** of relevant institutional and genre codes and conventions. **The production is highly appropriate** technically, aesthetically and institutionally within the contemporary media landscape.

At the top of this level candidates demonstrate very high production values and integrity, possibly approaching professional standards.

Level 3

(17-24 marks)

A fully realised product which achieves **appropriate production standards and demonstrates competent use of technology.**

The production **demonstrates understanding** of relevant institutional and genre codes and conventions. **The production is appropriate technically, aesthetically and institutionally** within the contemporary media landscape.

At the top of this level candidates demonstrate some of the features of the level above with high attention to detail and competent realisation although lacking the flair which would put it into the higher level.

Coursework Advice

Detailed and thorough research is a must. This must be logged in the bibliography; without which it would be hard to achieve more than a D grade.

The essay must analyse and not describe.

Throughout the essay the issue of “why” must be addressed, so **why** is the product as it is- consider contexts.

Close analysis of media products is very important to help inform practical choices and is an essential part of the essay.

Treat still image production like moving image production –use ‘story boards’ and shot lists, plan carefully.

Extend technical ability using YouTube/Web tutorials.

Be technically and creative ambitious.

It’s difficult to give maximum marks to a student that meets only the minimum requirements.

Terminology

Throughout the Media Studies course there will be a range of terminology to learn.

Creating your own glossary is a useful way to learn the appropriate terms. The following are a good start to the glossary.

- Mediation
- Construction
- Codes and Conventions
- Representation
- Stereotype
- Countertype
- Narrative
- Exposition
- Conflict
- Audience
- Gratifications
- Expectations
- Interactivity
- Institution
- Economic Imperative
- Synergy
- Integration
- Ideology
- Challenge
- Consolidate
- Question
- Democratisation
- Globalisation
- Gatekeepers
- Bias
- Persuasion

Reading List

Background reading is an essential aspect to success in Media Studies. The media is constantly changing and it is very important that you keep up to date with current issues in the media. There are a wealth of books and websites that you can use. At the very minimum you should regularly be using the texts listed in the key texts section. Other resources on the list will be important for the research for your coursework at both AS and A2. More guidance on these will be given to you during the course. Some of the following texts will provide you with a good introduction to Media Studies and the key concepts that form the basis of your studies, while others will offer a more detailed analysis of particular aspects of the media.

The Key texts

Media Studies Twitter: [@MilMediaStudies](https://twitter.com/MilMediaStudies)

The Mildenhall Media Studies Blog: <http://mildenhallmedia.wordpress.com/>

Newspapers- The Media Guardian is of particular importance. www.mediaguardian.co.uk

AQA Media Studies AS: Student Book, Julia Burton and Elspeth Stevenson, Nelson Thornes, 2008

Media Magazine: <http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/mm/index.html> Password will be given out in the first few weeks of term

Media Edu: <http://media.edusites.co.uk/> User name: Mildenhall, Password: Media

Radio 4: The film programme- search on BBC iplayer or website

Radio 4: The Media programme- search on BBC iplayer or website

Academic websites

- www.aber.ac.uk/media/
- www.arts.gla.ac.uk/tfts/FTVresconts.html
- www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/
- www.leeds.ac.uk/ics/david.htm
- www.litnotes.co.uk
- www.cf.ac.uk/jornec/vieira/index.html
- www.new2mediastudies.com/
- www.theory.org.uk/main.htm

Film websites

- <http://uk.imdb.com>
- www.cyberfilmschool.com/
- www.empireonline.com
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/movies/>

Regulatory and audience research

www.abc.org.uk

www.adassoc.org.uk

www.asa.co.uk
www.bacc.org.uk
www.barb.co.uk
www.bbfc.co.uk
www.ofcom.gov.uk
www.rajar.co.uk

BOOKS

- Media Studies- The Essential Introduction – Rayner, Wall & Kruger (Routledge)
- Desperately Seeking the Audience – Ang (Routledge)
- Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate– Barker & Petley (Routledge)
- Power Without Responsibility: The press and broadcasting in Britain – Curran & Seaton (Routledge)
- Reading Television – Fiske & Hartley (Methuen)
- Understanding news – Hartley (Routledge)
- How to Read a Film – Monaco (Oxford)
- Genre and Contemporary Hollywood – Neale (BFI)
- The Media Student’s Book (Branston, G, Stafford, R; 2006)
- AS Media Studies: The essential Revision Guide (Barker, J, Wall, P; 2006)
- Revision Express: Media Studies (Bennett, J; 2005)
- AS Media Studies: The Essential Introduction (Rayner, P, Wall, P, Kruger,S; 2004)
- Studying the Media (O’Sullivan, T; Dutton, B; Rayner, P; 2001)
- Advanced Studies in the media Price, J, Nicholas, J; 1999)

A2 Identities and the Media

Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction, Routledge, 2008

Bateman, Antony; Bennett Peter; Casey Benyahia, Sarah; Shirley Jacqui; Wall Peter

A2 Media Studies The Essential Introduction for AQA p154 -172, Routledge, 2010

- a useful chapter to introduce the topic

Giddens, Anthony. Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age, Polity Press, 1991

Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Routledge, 2006

Chandler, Daniel. ‘Personal Home Pages and the Construction of Identities on the Web’ [WWW document] URL. <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/short/webident.html> [15.03.01]. 1998

Shirky, Clay. Here Comes Everybody, Penguin, 2009

Cashmore, E *Celebrity Culture (Key Ideas)*, Routledge 2006

- An introduction to the key issues around the construction of celebrity (some of the examples are a little dated now) with a chapter ‘Worshipping/Afar’ on fan behaviour

Miller, L. ‘Women and Children First: Gender and the Settling of the Electronic Frontier’ in D. Trend (Ed.), (2001) *Reading Digital Culture* (pp. 214 - 220), Blackwell, 1995

