

VCE

Examiners' Report

**Edexcel VCE
Media: Communication and Production**

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Introduction

This series of tests was produced with reference to the review of previous rounds of tests and was revised to allow for candidates to demonstrate a range of ability across the E to A range.

The question papers and pre-seen material are designed to test candidates' understanding and knowledge of media theory and practice. Candidates were asked to demonstrate an understanding of issues such as analysing media products, the media industry, responding to a commission and writing to a commission. In the two optional unit tests, candidates were given a brief to produce appropriate pre-production paperwork for a vocationally relevant activity and then to respond to questions about their pre-production planning.

All of the test papers were written using appropriate language and media terminology. The papers were designed to allow students to demonstrate understanding and knowledge at all grades from E to A

General comments

The June 2004 series of tests provided an opportunity for some candidates to re-sit and for some to take them for the first time. There were clear indications that some candidates have insufficient understanding, knowledge and technical language to answer the questions. Centres should consider carefully when candidates are entered, as these tests are written to allow them to demonstrate an understanding and knowledge at advanced level standard. It may be inappropriate to enter candidates too early when they do not have the language or terminology to answer the questions at an appropriate level. This qualification must have the rigour of an advanced level qualification. This means that candidates should have developed an appropriate level of understanding, which is demonstrated by their use of language and terminology. In many cases this was not demonstrated at an appropriate level. Candidates still use inappropriate or low level language and terminology when describing or discussing for example, media texts.

There is clear evidence that many centres do not keep up to date with changes in the media industry. Candidates need to be fully aware of the technological changes and ownership issues that are taking place, and the impact this has on employment in the industry. Whilst many candidates can identify simplistically a range of media products, they do not seem capable of relating this to other production methods or means of distribution. It would appear from the test papers that some centres have not discussed the pre-release material for Unit 6 as many candidates simply re-iterated the text from the pre-release material. At this level this is not acceptable and centres should ensure that students undertake careful analysis and discussion of the material supplied.

It is clear that candidates need to be guided carefully through the pre-release brief material for Units 7 and 8, and centres should ensure that they have sufficient time and resources to prepare and develop appropriate pre-production material. Centres should also ensure that candidates are clear about the end product of the brief. It may

be acceptable to produce additional media products as a result of the brief, possibly undertaken through the optional units, but the difference between a proposal and the finished products needs to be clear. It should be made clear to students the style, content and nature of proposals and treatments.

The questions set for the tests are consistent with the assessment guidance grid for all externally assessed units. Centres must ensure that staff and candidates fully understand the requirements of the assessment guidance grid.

Unit 1 Analyse Media Products

Section A :

Question 1

This question was generally well answered with some candidates achieving high marks. However, there was some confusion amongst candidates who had not read the question carefully. The question asked for the candidate's response to *'how image, text and colour are used in this advertisement to attract a potential purchaser'*. Some candidates simply deconstructed the image and made no reference to the potential purchaser. Some candidates deconstructed the image without using any media language, describing in simplistic terms the image, fonts and colour. Candidates should be instructed to read the question carefully and to not rely on previous test paper examples. The excellent quality of reproduction of the advertisement, with all its underlying connotations of image, text and colour linking to potential purchasers, provided a wealth of opportunities for students to discuss a range of appropriate issues. There was generally a lack of sophisticated media terminology with some candidates using terminology without demonstrating understanding of its meaning. At this level candidates need to fully understand the terminology they are using and demonstrate this understanding in their answers. There were, however, some sophisticated responses particularly from centres that had developed a high level of understanding and knowledge with the candidates. Again it was apparent from some centres' scripts that little understanding, knowledge or media language had been developed. The Assessment Evidence grid for this unit indicates that for an E grade work must show *'a description, in general terms, of elements of text showing you know why/how they are used in media texts'* and *'technical language used accurately'*. At A grade candidates must show *'a sophisticated and personal response to analysing texts that is appropriate and justified'* and *'...highly effective and fluent use of media concepts and terminology'*. It is not sufficient to make sweeping statements about typeface (looks like computer type), background colour (the image looks scary as it is very dark) or the main focus (the *male* robot at the centre has bits missing so this must be sci-fi) without discussing why and how these have been used.

Using language and terminology such as *'...nothing is left behind, leaving the potential purchaser happy'* and *'she stands out in the centre of the advert dominating all around her so immediately you are drawn to her'* is not acceptable at this level. The advertisement is full of interesting meanings but many candidates were unable to put down their thoughts about the link between the image, the nature of the text and the colours used, into appropriate language. Many candidates simply deconstructed the image and stated the obvious and never went into any great depth. Simply stating *'the image is really good and I like it'* is insufficient for this level of qualification. Some candidates did relate the advertisement to a genre that would appeal to an appropriate audience. Many did see the link between the reviews and how this would attract an audience. Equally, many saw the robotic, animation theme as being a real draw to fans of Japanese style animated film. At this level, candidates must be able to relate the meaning behind all the elements in the cover to an understanding of why the advertisement has been designed in such a way as to attract potential purchasers. The centres that had worked hard on developing their learner's visual awareness and vocabulary did produce answers that gained the top mark. It is important that

candidates have appropriate teaching of relevant media theory to enable them to answer this question in a confident and fluent way.

As in previous examination series some candidates did include personal responses to Image 1 but many other candidates appeared to have missed this from their answers. Candidates must be instructed to read the question carefully before attempting their answer.

Section B :

Question 2

This question could be linked to Image 1, but the candidates should have discussed issues from a range of other advertisements. The question asked candidates to consider ethical and representational issues. This was designed to generate responses across a range of issues that an advertising agency would have to consider. In past series this question had been poorly answered with candidates generally gaining one or two marks. In this series this question generally generated a higher mark with candidates covering a range of issues. The majority of candidates did limit their answers to discussing Image 1 but some provided a good range of understanding when discussing other advertisements. There was some good understanding of issues relating to the issue of race, sexism and the use of a weapon. Some candidates clearly had little understanding of representation, although this is cornerstone of media theory. The candidates tended to rely on the ethical issues, although in some cases this related to legal issues such as copyright. Candidates were given the benefit of doubt when talking about issues such as copyright.

In this examination series, as in the last series, many candidates achieved higher scores in this question. This may be because of the use of a contemporary image (Image 1) and linking this to other advertisements.

Section C :

Question 3

The most popular genre chosen was horror film. Tabloid newspaper was less popular and talk radio was chosen by a minority of candidates.

(a)

The majority of candidates were able to answer this question, to different levels, related to their chosen genre. Often they relied on stereotypes of the audience rather than qualifying the target audience. Some candidates thought that horror films were only for young people and that tabloids were for people with limited mental capacity! Talk radio generated simplistic responses to audience with many candidates only being able to identify audiences from middle to old age rather than looking at the wide variety of audience for talk radio. Some candidates failed to clearly identify an appropriate audience. At this level, candidates need to be able to clearly define an

audience with clear understanding of the elements that make up an audience. They should be able to understand that many people of all ages are fans of a particular genre and that the genre can create an audience through its content, style and content. Where ever possible candidates were given the benefit of doubt when identifying audiences.

Candidates need to be advised to read this question and all its sub-sections carefully before deciding on the genre. What might appear a good genre initially can turn out to be very limiting.

(b)

Generally this question was well answered. Many candidates could find at least two or three examples of conventions and many did score full marks. There was some confusion over codes rather than conventions. Wherever possible, a positive approach to marking meant that if it was clear that a candidate did understand the conventions, they were marked appropriately. However, candidates must demonstrate clear understanding of conventions using relevant examples to achieve full marks for this question.

(c)

This question proved difficult for some candidates. If candidates had studied their chosen genre and followed the specifications, they should have been able to respond to this question in an appropriate way.

The development of the genre over time should have given candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of how their chosen genre has changed. There were lots of missed opportunities to discuss changes in technology, style and audience. Many candidates were able to identify changes to storylines, colour or black and white etc. but this was not developed in any depth. These could, of course, apply to a number of genres and it would seem that candidates are producing a formulaic approach to revision in the hope that their answers will cover all eventualities. This leads to lack of depth and poor marks!

Candidates who chose horror films seemed to think that the genre started with Hitchcock's Psycho and demonstrated little or no understanding of early horror films of the 20's and 30's. Similarly, some candidates thought that tabloids were a recent development in newspapers. Many of the candidates who chose talk radio did understand the nature of the genre and how it has developed.

Candidates need to have a full understanding of the development of their chosen genre, not just in their lifetime, but from its inception through to today's sophisticated approach to producing media products. Again, it is vital that candidates approach this question having carefully chosen the genre before they start their answers.

(d)

Some candidates did not read this question fully and provided examples of both technical and symbolic codes. Wherever possible this answer was marked to give candidates the best mark possible marks after the examiner had read through the answer. Wherever possible marks were awarded if the inclusion of both technical and symbolic codes was inter-linked.

Many candidates did not fully address this question and it was clear that many candidates had little understanding of what technical or symbolic codes are. There was little evidence of them making reference to a range of examples in their answer.

Section D :

Question 4

Given that storyboards are an integral part of the production process it was interesting to see, in some candidates, a real lack of skills in developing an appropriate storyboard for this scenario. Some candidates missed out the timing column and lost marks. Many storyboards were well drawn but lacked any real ideas. The marking of this question was not about the quality of drawing but about the ideas portrayed and the links between timing and sound. Some candidates produced good ideas but failed to recognise the needs to produce a fund raising video programme for a local charity. Many storyboards were inappropriate for the target audience with examples of violence towards animals that would be unacceptable for a wide audience. Some candidates failed to read the question and produced a complete video programme rather than the closing sequence as requested. This was evident from the timing of the video programme where it would appear to last for twenty-five minutes. Generally, many candidates failed to provide an appropriate narrative structure. Candidates could demonstrate understanding by adding suggestions as to appropriate transitions between scenes, short size, camera movements and graphics.

This question did, however, give weaker candidates an opportunity to gain good marks. In some instances candidates spent an inordinate amount of time developing their storyboards to the detriment of the other questions.

Question 5

Generally this question proved difficult for some candidates. Many candidates were only able to make simplistic suggestions about narrative structures. Many candidates provided simple storylines rather than narrative structures. Some candidates did demonstrate understanding of narrative structures and were able to allude to relevant theories. Candidates who made no reference to appropriate narrative structures gained no marks for this question. Candidates who identified some structures and could relate them to appropriate storylines e.g. 'going back in time' (non-linear narrative) were awarded a mark. Wherever possible marks were awarded if the examiner found evidence of some understanding of narrative structures, even though the language and terminology used was limited.

Unit 6 : Media Industries

It is now clear that candidates have taken on board the need to deconstruct the pre-release material. However, they still need to develop an understanding of the issues raised by the pre-release material. It is imperative that centres allow candidates to review, discuss and research information derived from the pre-release scenarios. The answers for Questions 2 & 3 must not just be a re-iteration of the supplied texts and there must be evidence of candidates having understood the issues. This can only be achieved by candidates having the time and resources for relevant discussion with staff and peers.

Section A :

Question 1

Generally this question was well answered, although it was disappointing to find candidates unaware of relevant funding sources for a typical commercial television company. These are clearly an important part of the candidates understanding of media organisations and the way they are funded. Many candidates obviously did not read the question as they gave 'government', 'lottery funds' or 'licence fees' as answers. Candidates at this level should be able to demonstrate their understanding of the funding of commercial, public, independent and voluntary organisations.

Question 2

This question provided an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the pre-release material. In part (a) an appropriate topic was chosen - the decline in advertising revenue. This should have been easy for the candidates to research and discuss. There should have been in-depth discussion of the traditional media industry and the way in which revenue has decreased over the years. Candidates were generally only able to identify one or two key issues, usually derived from the pre-release material, but there was little evidence of depth of understanding. A study of the traditional media industry over the last few years and the current trend towards the use of the Internet as an entertainment medium should have equipped candidates with the knowledge to answer this question. There was little evidence of understanding of why and how revenue had changed and the factors that had made this happen. Candidates could have identified a number of factors that could have included social and economic factors, as well as the growth of new technology. There are numerous web sites that would have supplied information. In general, candidates did manage to find one or two reasons why revenue had dropped, however, there was a reliance on the text and this generates no marks.

In part (b), candidates should have provided a personal response to the issue of what will happen to the traditional media industries if the decline in advertising revenue continues. There were some sophisticated answers but many candidates once again relied on reiteration of the given text. Candidates should have been able to identify issues such as going out of business, being swallowed up by larger companies and

buying in more material from overseas. Centres should have provided appropriate opportunities for examples of the issues surrounding advertising revenue. Again there are many resources available to centres such as web sites for regulatory bodies, production companies and advertising agencies. Subscriptions to magazines such as Broadcast and The Guardian Newspaper (Monday Media Guardian), as well as those on line, would have provided a valuable source of information. Candidates should be encouraged to communicate with industry professionals to gain insight into the industry.

As in the previous series of examinations, candidates had very limited personal views of the issues even, though they should have discussed this in the six week preparatory period. Many candidates relied either partly or solely on the given text without developing their ideas. The question states clearly that candidates should not rely solely on the text from Article 1 for their answer.

It is essential that candidates review the pre-release material in depth with the help of teachers. Discussion and research on the topic should allow students to develop appropriate knowledge and understanding in order to answer questions at this level. In order to gain the highest marks candidates need to express their own sophisticated personal responses to the issues using effective and fluent language.

Centres must look carefully at the assessment criteria requirements for this section.

Section B :

Question 3

The text in this pre-release material was designed to allow candidates to research into the print industry. The fact that there has been an increase in magazine production over the past few years should have allowed them to discuss the preposition that ‘All forms of print are dead’. It should also have led them to investigate how print is being delivered in other ways.

Part (a) specifically questioned the prediction that print was dead. The quote should have given candidates an opportunity to research the print industry and make decisions as to the validity of the quote. Many candidates limited their answers to a reiteration of the given text. Few candidates used the text as a starting point and clearly had little understanding of the print industry now, or in the past. Few candidates had any clear idea about how the print industry might change in the future. It was interesting to note that the centres that had clearly conducted research had found that there has been a real growth in magazine publishing and a drop in tabloid and broadsheet sales. This was an open-ended question and relied on the candidate having researched the pre-release material and understood the links between product and audience. As in previous examinations some candidates simply re-iterated the pre-release material rather than giving a personal response to the question. The Assessment Guidance grid for this unit asks at A grade for ‘*a sophisticated personal response based on a realistic appraisal of practices in the sector*’. Many candidates did not provide a personal response. Some candidates did provide a personal response

that demonstrated that they had undertaken careful research and had discussed issues with their teacher or peers.

Part (b) gave candidates an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the way that the printed word could be distributed if print did in fact die out. Many candidates scored highly on this question. They had a clear understanding of the way that the printed word could be distributed via the Internet, e-books and digital technology. Language and use of terminology was generally good, but with only a minority of candidates being able to express themselves in sophisticated media language.

In order to gain higher marks candidates must demonstrate a sophisticated personal response demonstrating understanding and using a wide range of examples. As in question 2 it is essential that candidates review the pre-release material in depth with the help of their teachers. Discussion and research on the topic should allow students to develop appropriate knowledge and understanding in order to answer questions at this level.

Teachers need to be fully up-to-date with current trends in the media industry and especially issues addressed in the pre-release material. They should understand how changes to regulation, ownership and advertisers can influence production and distribution.

Centres must look carefully at the assessment criteria requirements for this section.

Section C

Question 4

(a)

This question required in-depth understanding of the functions of one regulatory body. In some instances candidates gave full and effective answers using fluent language in their answers. However, many candidates demonstrated a lack of in-depth understanding of their chosen regulatory body. For instance, candidates suggested that the BBFC regulated films and were able to ban them. Some suggested that they watched every film and were able to order filmmakers to make cuts in order to gain a lower certificate. Some candidates did, however, give full answers that covered the full range of roles and functions across film, DVD and video games. . Ofcom was chosen because of its position in regulating the broadcast industry. There is a wealth of information on Ofcom available on the web, as well as material in the press. There was no excuse for centres who could not find relevant information. The development of Ofcom has been on-going for the past eighteen months. There was some confusion amongst candidates about the role of the ASA. It is true to say that the ASA have been in discussion with Ofcom about their role and the fact that the ASA might take a greater role in broadcast advertising regulation. This is on-going and not a reality at this time. However, candidates were given the benefit of the doubt if they referred to this in their answer.

There was general lack of understanding and knowledge of regulation issues and the full role played by the bodies. Candidates should have been able to explain clearly how these organisations function, how they were set-up, how they are funded and what they do. There is a wealth of evidence available on each of the respective websites, which would enable candidates to provide an appropriate answer. Some candidates referred to regulatory bodies as companies or conglomerates, showing little understanding of the nature of their role.

A general lack of understanding and knowledge of the bodies meant that many candidates did not attain high marks.

(b)

This question gave candidates an ideal opportunity to develop their own thoughts on regulation of the broadcast industries. Many candidates provided their own thoughts on this issue and made positive statements for and against regulation. It was good to see a real range of answers and candidates' use of sophisticated language when discussing relevant issues. This question gave weaker candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their personal responses to regulation, although some candidates clearly had real issues with regulation generally and the issues surrounding government control and the freedom of speech. It was good to see a real range of personal responses.

The question was open-ended in order to allow the candidates to have free reign and to discuss their own thoughts on the regulation of the broadcast industries. They should have discussed regulation at some stage in their course and this did, in many cases, stimulate individual thoughts on regulatory issues. Some candidates failed to read the question and only provided arguments for **or** against rather than a balanced view.

(c)

This question was designed to allow candidates an opportunity to discuss self-regulation. This question was not answered well and many candidates clearly did not understand the nature of self regulation. Some candidates thought that this was how an individual could regulate their viewing of programmes or the Internet. Some thought that it was about parental controls on television or the Internet. There were, however, some good responses where candidates understood the nature of self regulation and the benefits to the industry and to the consumer. References were made to the BBC and to the press. Generally candidates provided simplistic answers to this question.

Question 5

In this examination this question was split into two parts. This was an attempt to give candidates an opportunity to discuss issues of working on a short-term contract and then linking this to the skills needed.

Part (a) was generally well answered and the majority of candidates did demonstrate understanding of short-term contracts. However, some candidates assumed that this was a question about being a freelancer! Generally, working on a short-term contract is not the same as being freelance. It is true that freelance involves short-term work but a short term contract has implications for employees such as sick pay and rights. Some candidates only appeared to have looked at short-term contracts in one particular media sector. Some did, however, score highly on this question. Candidates must ensure that they do not provide simplistic bullet point answers that do not demonstrate appropriate language, accurate terminology or a range of relevant examples

Part (b) candidates had an opportunity to link their understanding of the freelance employment sector to the skills that someone working on a short-term contract needs to work in the industry. This question was generally well answered.

Generally, centres should ensure that rigorous discussion and development of the pre-release material takes place in an appropriate timescale. Candidates must be kept up to date with current trends in the media industry. Candidates must be aware of employment opportunities in the media industries.

Unit 7 Responding to a Commission

It was clear from this round of tests that some centres have still not covered the specifications requirement for *'There are standard industry practices for pre-production paperwork'* and *'you should be able to communicate with the client....'* Some candidates did not provide contact details for the client to respond to them although the majority of centres seem to have developed an appropriate response regime. Generally a fictitious name, address, telephone number or e-mail address would have shown an understanding of professional practice in proposal and treatment writing. The mark scheme reflects this issue and candidates that did not provide contact details on their proposal and treatment or a covering letter could only be given a maximum of four marks.

There were more responses to the television brief than to the radio brief

Proposal

Candidates appear to be coming to terms with proposal writing although there is still some confusion over format and style of presentation. Candidates should be made aware of the 'definition' of a proposal and treatment in the pre-release material. Although there is some confusion in centres over the nature of proposal and treatment writing, this definition should be used as a benchmark.

Generally there appears to be a lack of understanding of the nature and purpose of a proposal, even though this was highlighted on the pre-release material. A proposal should 'sell' an idea to a client and should therefore be exciting and to the point. The pre-release brief was designed to stimulate candidates' interest in an issue of the day.

It was clear that candidates had read and understood the brief. However, many of the ideas in the proposal were simplistic and lacked real depth. There was understanding of healthy eating issues by some candidates, but many produced formulaic suggestions that appear to have been generated by teachers and then re-written by the candidate. It is clearly unacceptable for candidates to merely re-write someone else's ideas. In a number of instances it was clear that candidates had produced similar ideas and this showed that they had been introduced to a limited amount of stimulus material. There were, however, some excellent proposals that demonstrated in depth understanding of the issues, well written and carefully addressed to the commissioner.

Some candidates simply put down one or two ideas in a format that suggested that they had little idea about proposal writing. It is clear that many centres do not work with the candidates in developing their proposal and treatment. Often many ideas were far too brief and gave no real idea to the commissioner of the strengths of the ideas. Overall, many ideas lacked realism and some were clearly impossible to produce. Some candidates had no idea of how much it would cost to use a theme such as 'The Simpsons', or if it would be acceptable to the copyright owners.

Many candidates did not elaborate on their ideas but simply put down the storyline with little reference to sound, graphics or effects. It was clear from much of the

evidence presented that very little research had been undertaken for the initial ideas. Where research had clearly been undertaken, the ideas suggested were, on the whole, relevant and achievable within the brief.

Generally the proposals that were presented lacked research, imagination and an appropriate vocational presentation of work.

Treatment

Again there appears to be a lack of understanding of treatments. The treatment should develop the initial proposal idea and confirm to the client that the work can be tackled effectively and within time-scale and budget. The definition in the preparatory material is that the treatment contains a schedule and budget but some candidates put this in the proposal and some candidates omitted this altogether. Some candidates combined the proposal and treatment but gave no explanation as to the reasons for this. It may be appropriate, in some instances, to prepare a combined proposal and treatment but this should be clearly explained by the candidate in a covering letter to the client. This would be a clear response to the client's instructions in the brief that they require a proposal and treatment.

Generally candidates demonstrated a lack of care when compiling their treatments. Often the treatment would be accompanied by copious amounts of downloaded Internet information. Unless this information has been annotated or re-worked by the candidate, it should not be included in the treatment. Internet downloads do not indicate that the candidate has undertaken research and, as such, is not given a mark by the examiner. Similarly, the use of a formulaic budget template does not demonstrate understanding of budgets. Too many centres appear to be giving candidates templates that include incredible amounts of information that is not relevant to the scale of the proposed commercial. Inclusion of Directors of Photography, Assistant Directors of Photography and Art Directors plus huge amounts of money spent on security re not appropriate for a product of this type.

Many candidates failed to address the issue of contingency. Some put a figure in their budget but did not identify how this might be used. This vocational qualification requires candidates to be aware of realistic costs, production processes and contingency issues. Budgets should reflect accurate production costs not the cost of airtime.

Where centres had developed a simple but effective format for the proposal and treatment, it is clear that candidates had understood the nature of the commissioning process. Teachers need to be quite clear as to the nature of proposals and treatments and should seek advice on an appropriate style and format.

Question 1

Many candidates found this question reasonably easy and gave a list of possible changes they could make to reduce their costs. Many of their ideas were acceptable and some were ingenious. Clearly some candidates had spent some time revising the potentials of raising and lowering the budget. Candidates should relate their answers to realistic opportunities to reduce budgets. Simply cutting the subsistence allowance for meals or mileage is not appropriate. Neither is cutting the costs of hiring security guards, using only one camera instead of two or three, making crew double up and do the work of a director or producer, or using music that is not in the charts.

Question 2

Candidates should have been able to identify ways in which the treatment for the finished television or radio commercial could incorporate the chart-topping band. The majority of candidates found one or two ways of doing this. The majority of candidates chose to put the name of the band with pictures of them at the beginning and/or the end. There was reference to voice over, band logo, the bands music and the name appearing in the top of the screen throughout the programme. Unfortunately, the majority of candidates did not include all of the opportunities. Some candidates thought that allowing the band to play their latest release would be appropriate, but no thought was given to product placement or to costs for copyright etc. Some candidates did discuss how the use of the bands music would help their budget, and this was taken into account when marking their answer. Clearly many candidates had not prepared for this question as many of the answers were simplistic and unworkable.

Question 3

Whilst the majority of candidates were able to talk about using the Internet and watching existing television commercials or listening to radio as a research method many candidates made only limited reference to primary research methods, for instance surveys, visits and focus groups. At this level, candidates should be able to at least identify a wide range of research methods. Candidates could have used a wide range of methods in order to inform their own understanding of the needs of the client and the target audience. Many candidates failed to show how their research was valid and effective. Centres need to give candidates access to a wide range of research tools. However, a number of candidates did identify a wide range of research methods, gave examples of how the research was valid and gained full marks.

Generally it would appear that some candidates had been given little guidance in the production of their proposal and treatment. Consequently they found it difficult to answer questions that were based on the proposal and treatment. It may be useful for the teacher to take the role of the client / commissioner in order to simulate the vocational nature of the activity. Where a formulaic approach to whole class delivery has been established, it has been found that candidates present the same limited ideas for their proposals. This results in a lack of individuality and limits the candidates' ability to gain high marks.

Unit 8 Writing to a Commission

It was clear from this round of tests that many centres have still not covered the specifications requirement for '*There are standard industry practices for pre-production paperwork*' and '*you should be able to communicate with the client....*' The majority of candidates did provide contact details for the client to respond to them. Generally this was a fictitious name, address, telephone number or e-mail address and candidates have shown an understanding of professional practice in proposal and treatment writing. The mark scheme reflects this issue and candidates who did not provide contact details on their proposal and treatment or a covering letter could only be given a maximum of four marks.

Proposal

Candidates appear to be coming to terms with proposal writing although there is still some confusion over format and style of presentation. Candidates should be made aware of the 'definition' of a proposal and treatment in the pre-release material. Although there is some confusion in centres over the nature of proposal and treatment writing this definition should be used as a benchmark .

Generally there appears to be a lack of understanding of the nature and purpose of a proposal even though this was highlighted on the pre-release material. A proposal should 'sell' an idea to a client and should therefore be exciting and to the point. Some candidates clearly had not read the brief and were proposing ideas for print products that clearly did not meet the brief. Centres must make it clear to candidates that this should be a realistic proposal and that print products should be viable within the constraints of the client's needs. Generally the proposals that were presented, once again, lacked imagination.

Many candidates had difficulty with recognising different types of print products. There seemed to be little understanding of the range of print products suitable for this particular brief.

Treatment

Again there appears to be a lack of understanding of treatments. The treatment should develop the initial proposal idea and confirm to the client that the work can be tackled effectively and within time-scale and budget. The definition in the preparatory material is that the treatment contains a schedule and budget, but some candidates put this in the proposal and some candidates omitted this altogether. Some candidates combined the proposal and treatment, but gave no explanation as to the reasons for this. It may be appropriate, in some instances, to prepare a combined proposal and treatment but this should be clearly explained by the candidate in a covering letter to the client. This would be a clear response to the client's instructions in the brief that they require a proposal and treatment.

Many candidates failed to address the issue of contingency. Some put a figure in their budget but did not identify how this might be used. Other candidates provided a budget that was prohibitively high for the brief; others used a template provided by

the centre that had no bearing on realistic costings for a print product. If a template approach to budgeting is to be used, then candidates must not simply cross out irrelevant items. Candidates must be aware that the budget should be for development and production costs of the final ideas, not for the cost of printing and distribution. As in previous tests, some candidates provided budgets for printing and delivering the material. There was a clear pointer in the pre-release material that this was not required. This vocational qualification requires candidates to be aware of realistic costs, production processes and contingency issues, not the cost of printing and distributing the finished products. Candidates must focus on the costs of developing the ideas and producing the final master version.

Question 1

Whilst the majority of candidates were able to talk about using the Internet and look at existing printed material as a research method, many candidates made only limited reference to primary research methods - for instance surveys, visits and focus groups. At this level, candidates should be able to at least identify a wide range of research methods. Candidates could have used a wide range of methods in order to inform their own understanding of the needs of the client and the target audience. Many candidates failed to show how their research was valid and effective. Centres need to give candidates access to a wide range of research tools. However, a number of candidates did identify a wide range of research methods, gave examples of how the research was valid and gained full marks.

Question 2

Many candidates found this question reasonably easy and gave a list of possible changes they could make to reduce their costs. Many of their ideas were acceptable and some were ingenious. Clearly some candidates had spent some time revising the potentials of raising and lowering the budget. Candidates should relate their answers to realistic opportunities to reduce budgets. Simply cutting the subsistence allowance for meals or mileage is not appropriate. Neither is 'undertaking all the work myself', using only one computer instead of two or three, making the team double up as designer and photographer, or using material taken from the Internet. The reductions should be about production process not the cost of printing and distributing the finished product.

Question 3

Candidates should have been able to identify ways in which the text of the publicity material could include the band. The majority of candidates found one or two ways of doing this. Some candidates chose to put the name of the band with pictures of them on the printed material. Some suggested including phrases from the band that could be included in speech bubbles. Many candidates suggested that the band are used as the main focus of their printed material, Unfortunately, many candidates only suggested using pictures although the question asked for examples of how the text of the publicity material could include the band.

Clearly many candidates had not prepared for this question as many of the answers were simplistic and unworkable.

Generally it would appear that some candidates had been given little guidance in the production of their proposal and treatment. Subsequently they found it difficult to answer questions that were based on the proposal and treatment. It may be useful for the teacher to take the role of the client / commissioner in order to simulate the vocational nature of the activity. Where a formulaic approach to whole class delivery has been established, it has been found that candidates present the same limited ideas for their proposals. This results in a lack of individuality and limits the candidates' ability to gain high marks.

Grade Boundaries

Z301T ANALYSE MEDIA PRODUCTS

Unit no		A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Z301T	Upper	60	41	36	31	26	21	16
	Lower	42	37	32	27	22	17	
	Cumulative % of candidates	4.7	13.2	27.5	47.5	67.7	86.7	100.0

Z306T MEDIA INDUSTRIES

Unit no		A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Y305T	Upper	60	41	36	31	26	22	18
	Lower	42	37	32	27	23	19	
	Cumulative % of candidates	1.2	3.1	11.9	26.0	44.5	64.4	100.0

Z307T RESPOND TO A COMMISSION

Unit no		A	B	C	D	E	N	U
Y307T	Upper	60	42	36	31	26	21	16
	Lower	43	37	32	27	22	15	
	Cumulative % of candidates	1.3	4.8	12.0	28.9	51.7	76.1	100.0

Chief Moderators Report

VCE Media: June 2004

Following this year's external moderation of VCE Media coursework portfolios, all centres will receive a written report from their moderator giving feedback on the students' work and the tutors' assessment. The report outlines evidence of strength and good practice in the work sampled from specific units as well as highlighting areas of concern and weakness and, where appropriate, recommendations for action.

Centres are advised to read these reports very carefully and ensure that the examples of good practice are maintained and further developed in subsequent years, and that any areas of weakness and concern are addressed for the next moderation series.

As in previous years, the presentation of the sampled work varied from centre to centre. There were many examples of very well presented portfolios that were clearly labelled, indexed and annotated in a manner that allowed moderators to quickly identify the relevant work, understand why a particular grade had been awarded, and arrive at a judgement as to the validity of the grading decision.

However there were also far too many examples of very poorly presented portfolios that lacked a coherent form or structure and in which it was often very difficult to identify or locate the relevant work. The Centre Guidance Document on the Moderation of Portfolios is essential reading for all centres submitting VCE Media portfolio work as it explains in some detail the sampling process, the way in which portfolios should be presented and the relevant paperwork that needs to be completed.

It was also evident that some centres still do not fully understand the way in which student work for a particular unit needs to be assessed against the relevant assessment criteria, and were unaware of the need for explicit evidence of that assessment by the tutor via annotations of the student work and the completion of appropriate unit assessment sheets.

It is perhaps worth reminding centres of paragraph 5.2 in the Centre Guidance Document that reads "A portfolio is defined as a selected collection of the candidate's best work, which meets the requirements of the assessment grid for the unit".

Too many centres are still submitting work that shows little evidence of careful reference to the requirements of the particular unit, and that appears to have been assessed with little or no reference to the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment grid. It is recommended that centres who are unsure about this process read the relevant sections of the Centre Guidance Document and use the portfolio unit assessment grids and cover sheet that are available on the Edexcel web site.

Much of the work moderated this year was of a very good standard and had been accurately marked and internally verified by centres. Moderators reported many examples of very creative, interesting and technically professional pieces of video, sound, photographic, print and multimedia coursework that were clearly the result of

much hard work and dedication from students, and fully committed support from staff.

However, as in previous years, moderators also cited examples of practical work that clearly did not meet the required standards but had been over-generously marked by tutors who often demonstrated little understanding of the need to meet the banner and relevant grade criteria.

A more frustrating situation was where the finished media product was of a very good standard, but the supporting paperwork detailing the research and investigations, production processes and evaluation were very weak or in some cases absent. In such cases moderators were given scope to apply a small degree of leniency following the revised guidance from the Joint Council for General Qualifications, but this can not be applied to work that fails to meet key banner criteria or a significant number of assessment criteria. More information about this can be found in Section 13. *Assessment Rules: Best Fit and Small Parts* of the Centre Guidance Document.

Centres in which specific units gave moderators cause for concern will have this concern highlighted in their centre report, and it is important that any recommendations made are acted upon as moderators in subsequent years will refer back to this years report to identify relevant action points and the extent to which improvements have been made.

Perhaps the most problematic unit again this year was Unit 2: Skills Development. The Chief Moderator has, in previous reports, highlighted the need to present a discreet portfolio of evidence for this unit that includes the appropriate records of progression on a planned programme of production skill development in TWO chosen areas as detailed in the banner and grade criteria. It is perhaps surprising that the current Chief Moderator also needs to highlight these points in this year's report, and a significant number of centres will be receiving reports that include important recommendations for action relating to Unit 2.

As with all units, centres are advised to read the unit specifications very carefully, and in particular the assessment grids, before writing assignments and producing schemes of work to ensure that the planned programme of work will enable students to generate sufficient evidence to meet all of the banner and grading criteria.

This should be supported by a thorough and robust internal verification system that highlights any problems at an early stage and ensures that assessment decisions are accurate and in line with the national standards.

As has been stated already, the Centre Guidance Document on the Moderation of Portfolios is essential reading for all centres submitting VCE Media portfolio work in the 2004/5 academic year, and it is also important that centres take careful note of the points made by their moderator in their individual report, particularly where specific concerns have been highlighted and where recommendations for action have been made.

Overall a successful moderation series for most centres, and clear evidence that our media students are continuing to produce very creative and interesting work that is often of a professional standard and which embraces new media technologies.

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