

# 4 SPECIFICATION CONTENT

## Overview

The WJEC's GCE in Media Studies aims to provide a coherent and integrated approach to studying the media at AS and A Level. The distinctive features of the specification are:

- an introduction to analysing a range of media, including the rapidly developing digital media
- an emphasis on the key role that representation plays in the media
- a focus on the way audiences/users are positioned by the media but may still respond or interact in diverse ways
- an opportunity to explore media issues raised in MS1 in a creative context as well as to develop appropriate production skills
- an opportunity to research topics in the media which form the basis for production work, thus enabling students to develop research and production skills
- a progression towards exploring the relationship between media texts, their audiences and the organisations which produce and distribute them.

## Advanced Subsidiary

### MS1: MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS AND RESPONSES

#### Introduction

This unit aims to provide candidates with a framework for analysing the media and requires them to explore representations and audience/user responses. Candidates will be encouraged to explore the media through a study of genre, narrative and representation and make connections between the texts and audience/user responses to them. In the developing area of interactive media, this involves considering users and their interaction with texts. It will be important for candidates to be provided with a range of examples which will enable them to understand and interpret the media independently.

The representations of social/cultural groups, events, issues and their underlying messages and values will be explored using a range of approaches.

#### Content

Candidates will be required to study how media texts are constructed and how audiences and users respond to and interpret them using the following framework:

#### (a) *Texts*

- genre conventions
- narrative construction
- technical codes such as camerawork, lighting, editing and sound for audio-visual media and graphic design elements for print-based and interactive media
- language used and mode of address.

**(b) Representations**

- the role of selection, construction and anchorage in creating representations
- how the media uses representations
- the points of view, messages and values underlying those representations.

Candidates will be expected to have studied a range of representations of:

- gender
- ethnicity
- age
- issues
- events
- regional and national identities.

**(c) Audience Responses**

Candidates will need to consider the ways in which different audiences can respond to the same text in different ways. This will involve studying:

- the ways in which audiences can be categorised (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, social & cultural background, advertisers' classifications)
- how media producers and texts construct audiences and users
- how audiences and users are positioned (including preferred, negotiated and oppositional responses to that positioning).

Any media can be explored but the media texts used in the examination will be selected from the following:

- advertisements
- DVD covers
- CD covers
- newspaper front pages
- magazines (including comics)
- radio sequences
- film extracts
- television sequences
- music videos
- websites (if selected for examination, websites will be reproduced in print-based format)
- computer game extracts.

**Assessment**

A written examination paper of **two and a half hours**, assessing AO1 and AO2. This will consist of three compulsory questions:

- **Question 1** requires an **analysis** of an audio/visual or print-based extract (40).
- **Questions 2 and 3** will be based on representation and audience issues and may be subdivided where appropriate (30 and 30).

*Note: for questions 2 & 3, candidates will be expected to draw on their own studies of representation and audience response issues.*

## MS2: MEDIA PRODUCTION PROCESSES

### Introduction:

This unit is designed to enable candidates to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills in media production processes through research, planning, production and evaluation.

### Content

Candidates will be required to produce **three** pieces of **linked** work. These will comprise:

- a **pre-production** reflecting research and demonstrating planning techniques
- a **production** which has developed out of the pre-production
- a **report** of 1200 - 1600 words.

It is anticipated that one brief will be set outlining pre-production and production tasks. Although there must be a link between pre-production and production, there is some flexibility in the nature of the tasks which can be set for pre-production and production.

Examples of linked pre-production and production tasks include:

- A storyboard of the trailer for a new BBC1 television crime drama (**pre-production**) and the trailer for that drama (**production**)
- A script or shooting script for the opening sequence of a teen horror film (**pre-production**) and a marketing campaign for a new teen horror film, to include at least the dvd cover and one poster (**production**)
- Draft designs for two magazine front covers (**pre-production**) and a double page spread for one of those magazines (**production**)
- Prototype design for a new website (**pre-production**) and the completed website consisting of a home page and at least two associated web pages (**production**).

The production tasks must enable candidates to demonstrate competent technical skills. It is essential they have access to appropriate technical equipment and that they have been taught how to use it prior to undertaking their productions.

### (a) Pre-production

Pre-production tasks must be undertaken **individually** but may be set on a whole class basis. Pre-production work will focus on the research and planning skills needed to create media productions. Pre-productions may, for example, involve research into comparable products, key aspects of the appropriate industry relevant to the pre-production as well as research into the target audience.

**(b) Production**

The production must develop out of the pre-production planning.

Audio-visual productions can be produced **individually** or by a **group** (maximum of four). For group tasks the candidates will need to select one of their pre-productions to develop into a production. There must be appropriate opportunities for a significant and definable contribution to be made by each candidate. Audio-visual productions should be up to 3 minutes in length, depending on the nature of the production and the number of candidates.

Interactive media (other than audio-visual productions) and print-based productions **must** be produced **individually** and must contain at least two pages of original material. The majority of the images within the production should be originated by the candidate.

**(c) Report**

The pre-production and production must be accompanied by a report of 1200 – 1600 words. This report must be completed **individually** and will include:

- a discussion of the most significant research findings which informed the pre-production
- a brief justification of the target audience for the production
- an evaluation of the production which highlights its strengths and weaknesses through, for example, a comparison with existing media products.

The report may be submitted in one of the following formats:

- an illustrated report
- an essay
- a suitably edited blog.

**Assessment:**

This unit will be internally assessed and externally moderated, assessing A02, A03 and A04, with the following mark allocations:

- Pre-production (20)
- Production (40)
- Report of 1200-1600 words (40)

Each of the **three** pieces of work will be assessed separately and then combined to achieve a total mark.

*For further supporting information and examples, see the Notes for Guidance.*

## Advanced Level

### MS3: MEDIA INVESTIGATION AND PRODUCTION

#### Introduction

This unit develops the knowledge and skills acquired at AS and as such contributes to synoptic assessment. In particular, it is designed to demonstrate the importance of research in informing media production and to develop the skills acquired in MS2.

#### Content

Candidates are required to produce three pieces of linked work:

- a **research investigation** (1400 – 1800 words)
- a **production** (informed by the investigation)
- a brief **evaluation** (500 – 750 words).

#### (a) *Research Investigation*

Candidates are required to undertake an **individual** investigation into a specific area of study focused on **one** of the following concepts: **genre, narrative or representation**. Their research should draw on a range of both primary and secondary sources. It should enable candidates to reach conclusions that will inform their production.

Examples of investigations include:

- the representation of teenagers in two British films
- the generic similarities between *Dr Who* and *Stargate*
- the narrative structures of *The X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing*.

#### (b) *Production*

Candidates are required to submit a production which should develop from and be informed by the candidate's research investigation. This production **must be** in a different form from the AS production.

Audio-visual productions should be **up to** 4 minutes in length (depending on the nature of the production). Print-based productions (or their digital equivalent) should be a minimum of 3 pages.

Digital media (other than audio-visual productions) and print-based productions **must** be individual. Audio-visual productions can be produced either **individually** or in **groups** (maximum 4). Group tasks must offer appropriate opportunities for each candidate to demonstrate an individual contribution.

**(c) Evaluation**

The production must be accompanied by an **individual** evaluation which explores how the production has been informed by the research undertaken into the relevant media concept.

The evaluation can be produced in any appropriate form such as:

- a discursive essay (with or without illustrations)
- a digital presentation with slide notes (such as a PowerPoint)
- a suitably edited blog.

**Assessment**

This unit will be internally marked and externally moderated, assessing AO2, AO3 and AO4.

Candidates are required to submit:

- a **research investigation** (1400 – 1800 words): 45 marks
- a **production** (informed by the investigation): 45 marks
- a brief **evaluation** (500 – 750 words): 10 marks

Each of the **three** pieces of work will be assessed separately and then combined to achieve a total mark for the unit.

*For further supporting information and examples, see the Notes for Guidance.*