

International GCSE **Media Studies**

(9257) Specification



For teaching from September 2024 onwards

For exams May/June 2026 onwards

For teaching and examination outside
the United Kingdom

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Are you using the latest version of this specification?

- You will always find the most up-to-date version of this specification on our website at oxfordaqa.com/9257
- We will write to you if there are significant changes to the specification.

1 Introduction

1.1 Why choose OxfordAQA International GCSEs?

Our international qualifications enable schools that follow a British curriculum to benefit from the best education expertise in the United Kingdom (UK).

Our International GCSEs offer the same rigour and high quality as GCSEs in the UK and are relevant and appealing to students worldwide. They reflect a deep understanding of the needs of teachers and schools around the globe and are brought to you by Oxford University Press and AQA, the UK's leading awarding body.

Providing valid and reliable assessments, these qualifications are based on over 100 years of experience, academic research and international best practice. They reflect the latest changes to the British system, enabling students to progress to higher education with up-to-date qualifications.

You can find out about OxfordAQA at oxfordaqa.com

1.2 Why choose our International GCSE Media Studies?

We have worked closely with teachers to develop a relevant, engaging and up-to-date media studies specification to inspire, motivate and challenge all students regardless of their academic ability.

Particular care has been taken to make the language used in question papers as accessible as possible and suitable for those students for whom English is not their first language. UK English spellings will be used in examination papers. British idiosyncratic terms will be avoided to aid students' understanding.

It is often said that we live in a media-saturated world; a world in which every aspect of life from social interaction, leisure and entertainment to work, education, commerce and international relations is thoroughly permeated by the communication media. This specification is written by and for those of us who believe that a critical understanding of and informed engagement with the media is vitally important in such a world.

Our course offers students the opportunity to understand themselves as media users, to engage in issues and debates about the media and to develop their own practical, creative skills in media production. The specification encourages a global approach and gives teachers substantial flexibility in selecting media products through which to deliver the course. This means a freedom to choose, with guidance, the films, social media, videogames, podcasts and other media products that your students will find relatable, stimulating and interesting.

This specification will provide your students with important skills for life as well as a firm foundation for the further study of the mass media or related subjects. It places emphasis on the application of knowledge and understanding in both academic and practical contexts. It is designed to be absorbing and rewarding for teachers and for students.

You can find out about all our International GCSE Media Studies qualifications at oxfordaqa.com/9257

1.3 Recognition

OxfordAQA meet the needs of international students. They are an international alternative and comparable in standard to the Ofqual regulated qualifications offered in the UK. Our qualifications have been independently benchmarked by UK ENIC, the UK national agency for providing expert opinion on qualifications worldwide. They have confirmed they can be considered 'comparable to the overall GCE A-level and GCSE standard offered in the UK'.

To read their report and see the latest list of universities who have stated they accept these international qualifications, visit oxfordaqa.com/recognition

1.4 The Oxford International Programme learner attributes

In order to equip students with the skills they need for success both now and in the future, we have worked with Oxford University Press to create the Oxford International Programme. This combines the Oxford International Curriculum with OxfordAQA qualifications, creating an integrated offer for international schools, from Early Years to A-level.

At its core we have introduced the Oxford International Programme learner attributes – the skills and competencies that enable our students to thrive academically, socially and personally.

The learner attributes, alongside our focus on demonstrating higher order critical thinking skills, ensure that students are equipped to get the grades that will take them places, and build the skills they need to be successful when they get there.



1.5 Support and resources to help you teach

We know that support and resources are vital for your teaching and that you have limited time to find or develop good quality materials.

That's why we've worked with experienced teachers to provide resources that will help you confidently plan, teach and prepare for exams.

Teaching resources

You will have access to:

- sample schemes of work to help you plan your course with confidence
- training and support to help you deliver our qualifications
- student textbooks that have been checked and approved by us
- command words with exemplars
- GCSE Media Studies vocabulary with definitions.

Preparing for exams

You will have access to the support you need to prepare for our exams, including:

- specimen papers and mark schemes
- exemplar student answers with examiner commentaries.

Analyse your students' results with Data Insights

After the first examination series, you can use this tool to see which questions were the most challenging, how the results compare to previous years and where your students need to improve. Data Insights, our free online results analysis tool, will help you see where to focus your teaching.

Information about results, including maintaining standards over time, grade boundaries and our post-results services, will be available on our website in preparation for the first examination series.

Help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at oxfordaqa.com/9257

You can contact the subject team directly at info@oxfordaqa.com or call us on +44 (0)161 696 5995 (option 1 and then 1 again).

Please note: We aim to respond to all email enquiries within two working days.

Our UK office hours are Monday to Friday, 8am – 5pm.

2 Specification at a glance

The title of the qualification is:

- OxfordAQA International GCSE Media Studies.

The guided learning hours (GLH) for this qualification are 120–140. This figure is for guidance only and may vary according to local practice and the learner’s prior experience of the subject.

2.1 Subject content

- Media Language
- Media Representations
- Media Industries
- Media Audiences

2.2 Assessments

Paper 1: Media knowledge and understanding	+ Non-exam assessment (NEA): creating a media product
<p>What's assessed</p> <p>Analysing media products, focusing on media language and representations, using a prescribed episode from a television series for close study:</p> <p>Doctor Who, 'Kerblam!' – Series 11, Episode 7</p> <p>The prescribed episode for study will be updated every three years.</p> <p>Questions will focus on both a selected study sequence in the episode and the episode in its entirety. The details of the selected study sequence will be released on 1 May in the same year as the June examination and on 1 October in the same year as the November examination.</p> <p>Producers and audiences, focusing on media industries and audiences. Questions in this section will invite responses that may use any appropriate media form or media product, including the prescribed television product, for exemplification and illustration.</p> <p>Media Issues in context focusing on the cultural, economic, historical and technological contexts. Questions will invite responses that relate issues concerning media contexts to media forms, products, and any area of the media studies framework.</p>	<p>What's assessed</p> <p>Application of knowledge and understanding of the Media Studies framework.</p> <p>Ability to create media products.</p> <p>Students will be expected to draw on knowledge and understanding of the entire course of study in the exam, to show a deeper understanding of these topics.</p>
<p>How it's assessed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Written exam – 2 hours ● 100 marks ● 50% of the GCSE 	<p>How it's assessed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NEA: responding to a choice from one of six briefs that change every three years ● 100 marks ● 50% of GCSE ● Assessed by teachers ● Moderated by OxfordAQA
<p>Questions</p> <p>The question paper will have the following structure:</p> <p>Section A: Analysing media products 40 marks, comprising short answer, analysis and extended response questions</p> <p>Section B: Producers and audiences 30 marks, comprising short answer, analysis and extended response questions</p> <p>Section C: Media issues in context 30 marks, comprising short answer, analysis and extended response questions</p>	<p>Tasks</p> <p>Students produce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A media product for an intended audience, in response to a brief – 80 marks ● A written explanation of the meanings created and the decisions made for the media production – 20 marks

3 Subject content

GCSE Media Studies engages students in the in-depth study of media products in relation to the four areas of the **Media Studies Framework**:

- Media Language
- Media Representations
- Media Industries
- Media Audiences

Students are required to study media products from all of the following **Media Forms**:

- Audio
- E-media
- Print
- Video
- News
- Advertising

Throughout, there is an emphasis on critical understanding. Students need to reflect upon, analyse and evaluate media products, the making and consumption of these products and the ideas presented in the media studies framework.

3.1 Prescribed television product for study

Students are also required to study a selected episode from a television series:

Doctor Who, 'Kerblam!', Series 11, Episode 7.

This episode will be the focus of the assessment in Section A of the examination. Questions will focus on both a selected 2-3 minute study sequence in the episode **and** the episode in its entirety. Additionally, this Selected Media Product (SMP) fulfills the same role as all other SMPs in Sections B and C. Students should study the episode in relation to Media Languages, Media Representations, Media Industries and Media Audiences and all four contexts of the media.

In order to facilitate a close study of the episode, the details of the selected study sequence in the episode will be released to schools on 1 May in the same year as the June examination and on 1 October in the same year as the November examination.

The prescribed episode for study will be updated every three years.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that students have access to the prescribed episode.

3.2 Selected Media Products (SMPs)

In addition to the broad coverage of the above media forms and the prescribed episode from a television series, students must study individual media products that exemplify these forms. In both the exam and the NEA, students need to draw on their study of SMPs in order to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the Media Studies Framework, including contexts of the media, and their ability to analyse media products.

Section A of the exam will focus primarily on the prescribed television product and on Media Language and Media Representations. The extended response question (Q2) will invite comparison between the prescribed television product and

other SMPs.

In Section B of the exam (focusing on Media Industries and Media Audiences), questions do not refer to specific media forms. However, students will be required to support answers using examples from relevant SMPs. Therefore, when teaching Industries and Audiences, schools should select those media forms and SMPs they feel are most appropriate. For example, Advertising and associated SMPs could be used to focus the teaching and learning of audience effects theory and active audiences.

Section C focuses on Contexts of the Media and includes questions that relate to a specific media form or forms.

In the Written Explanation of the NEA, students are expected to draw on their study of the media form and associated SMPs most closely associated with their chosen brief.

When selecting the products for close study, schools need to consider the requirement that all four areas of the media studies framework **and** all four contexts of the media must be addressed. See Section 3.2 below for further details on the contexts of the media.

Taken as a whole, SMPs must:

- meet the parameters set out in section 3.2.1 below
- enable the study of different types of audience and different types of producer
- provide rich and challenging opportunities for interpretation, analysis and critical understanding
- enable the study of emerging developments and issues in the media.

Unless otherwise stated, all products should be contemporary. For the purposes of this specification, this means the products should have been first made available to the public audience no more than ten years before the date of examination (e.g. SMPs for students taking their exams in June 2026 should have been first made available to the public after June 2016). It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that the products selected are appropriate to the age and understanding of their International GCSE Media Studies students.

3.2.1 Selection parameters

Audio

- One radio station that incorporates both music and spoken word, and the radio station's online presence
- One podcast, unrelated to the radio station, that incorporates both music and spoken word
- At least one of the products selected should be a commercial product, i.e. should carry paid-for advertising, sponsorship or subscription

E-media

- One video game playable on a mobile phone and/or tablet
- The online presence of a significant person or group with multimillion social media followers. The person or group may be a celebrity, opinion leader, influencer, blogger or similar but not a company, government department or other large organisation. The study should focus on three postings in the space of a single week

Print

- One magazine focusing on the arts **or** entertainment **or** lifestyle/leisure, plus the magazine's online presence represented by at least one website or two social media feeds

Video (film)

- One film produced and made available to the public between 1960 and 2000

Note: this is in addition to the specified episode from a television series which is the focus of the assessment in Section A of the

examination. See section 3.1 for more details.

News

- The same news story across a range of media, including at least one national or regional newspaper, one television news programme and one news website that is separate and distinct from the newspaper and TV news programme

Advertising

- One print **or** moving image advert created before 1980
- One contemporary print **or** moving image advert

Note: The two adverts should be for a similar product, but not necessarily for the same brand of that product.

It is essential that students study all of the above through the centre's chosen SMPs, but it is advisable to supplement these with examples of other media products in order to practise analysis and to develop a full knowledge and understanding of the media studies framework including the contexts of the media.

The SMPs together with any supplementary products should be seen as a means to deliver the specification rather than 'key texts' to be learned in detail. The teaching and learning of SMPs should foster an understanding of the interconnectedness of the four media studies framework elements and the four contexts of the media.

Centres should note that although the chosen SMPs could have been produced in any language, exam responses must be written in English, including the reference to and quotes from these products.

Further guidance on the selection and use of SMPs will be available on the OxfordAQA website, oxfordaqa.com/9257.

3.3 Contexts of the media

Students need to analyse, discuss and compare media products in relation to the **cultural, historical, technological and economic** contexts in which they are produced and consumed.

A study of the contexts of the media will enable students to develop critical thinking skills through discussion of issues and evaluation of arguments in relation to each of the contexts. It is recognised that there is a good deal of overlap between the contexts and that there are many equally viable approaches to teaching and learning media in context.

Cultural Context

'Cultural' refers to the beliefs, values, practices and expectations of a social group. This group may comprise the whole of a society or any of the numerous sub-groups within that society. As we grow up, we all learn the 'rules' of the groups to which we belong through the process of enculturation/socialisation. The media have a key role to play in this process.

Culture is always dynamic; the values of dominant groups may be challenged by other groups or by breakaway members of the dominant group. In studying media products, we can often see these competitions about ideas unfold. Dominant or traditional values may be heavily promoted by a media product, or we may see alternative representations. Sometimes cultural clashes involving the media are obvious, for example, when certain media products or organisations are banned or when the media are used for overt propaganda. More often, though, the friction between cultural values is more subtle, leading us to look for 'hidden meanings' that lie below the surface.

Economic Context

Studying the media in economic context involves:

- the economic value of media industries to society
- the influence of that value on the organisation, control and ownership of society
- the impact of competition, supply and demand and the profit motive on media industries and the products they make
- the effect of increasingly globalised economies on media industries, products and audiences
- how economic factors affect the accessibility of the media to audiences; not everyone can afford streaming services or state of the art communication devices.

Technological Context

Digitalisation, the internet and mobile communication technology have had a huge influence on the making and distribution of media products, both by media industries and by prosumers. Media audiences have come to expect increasingly complex and sophisticated media products that are instantly and continuously updated.

Technological development accelerates change in every aspect of the media, contributing to the ascendancy of some media forms and processes at the expense of others.

Interactive technology works both ways; (almost) everyone has access to the internet, but data about users flows back to service providers and platforms. The sale and use of this data creates concerns about human rights, whilst counter arguments point to the liberating effect of technology on freedom of expression. Optimists see technology as putting the media into the hands of people, enabling grassroots production and networking in a connected age. Pessimists point to technology that enables the commercialisation of everything and the concentration of power into the hands of a decreasing number of massive global conglomerates.

Historical Context

The requirement to study non-contemporary examples of media products within a historical context is designed to help students understand the constantly evolving nature of the media and the contingent nature of meaning. It is a challenge to the uncritical acceptance of contemporary media and a reminder that our perception of media products depends very much on who we are and when we are. It is much easier to see the assumptions implicit in, say, a 1940s advertisement than it is to recognise the assumptions implicit in a contemporary advertisement. However, studying the former with an awareness of the values and beliefs prevalent at the time is extremely useful when it comes to analysing a modern advertisement.

Of course, making historical comparisons between the products of different eras also involves the other three contexts, but this time through the lens of history. There is no expectation that the historical context can be taught and learned in isolation from cultural, economic and technological factors.

SMPs and Contexts in the exam

A broad understanding of the relationship between framework areas, contexts and media products will always be beneficial to students. However, some exam questions will require students to link SMPs to contexts. These questions will be restricted as follows:

SMP	Context
Audio (radio)	Cultural and Economic
Audio (podcast)	Cultural and Technological
E-media (video game and personality online presence)	Cultural, Economic and Technological
Print (magazine)	Cultural and Economic
Video (film)	Cultural, Economic, Historical and Technological
Video (drama single episode of a series). This SMP is pre-selected, see 3.1	Cultural, Economic, Historical and Technological
News (news story)	Cultural, Economic, Historical and Technological
Advertising (video and print)	Cultural and Historical

3.4 Integration and extended response

Teaching and learning programmes should emphasise the integrated, interdependent and dynamic nature of the mass media.

The assessment includes tasks that require students to demonstrate skills of long-form writing (extended response). These tasks comprise three examination questions Q2 (20 marks), Q5 (16 marks) and Q8 (20 marks) and the written explanation component of the NEA (20 marks).

The extended response tasks will assess students' ability to:

- write coherently and rationally in English
- use evidence in support of arguments, critical understanding and evaluations
- demonstrate understanding of the integrated nature of the mass media.

3.5 The Media Studies Framework

The Media Studies Framework comprises four broad topic areas: Media Language, Media Representations, Media Industries and Media Audiences; and four Media Contexts: Cultural, Economic, Historical and Technological. It is advisable to teach these using Selected Media Products to provide examples and clarity.

The tables below, one for each area of the framework, set out the key topic areas in the left-hand column and, in the right-hand column headed Further Detail, the skills, techniques, concepts, theories and terminology with which students will need to be familiar and be able to exemplify.

The final section for each aspect of the media studies framework suggests some relevant issues to consider for each of the four contexts of the media. It should be noted, though, that these are indicative. Schools are encouraged to develop their own approach to teaching contexts, reflective of and appropriate to their own learning environment.

3.5.1 Media Language

Students should have knowledge and critical understanding of how the media, through their forms, codes and conventions, communicate meanings. Students will also need to apply this knowledge and understanding in the practical analysis, evaluation and creation of media products.

3.5.1.1 Media Forms and Meanings	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How media forms, media language, media platforms and media audiences are related 	<p>The meanings of media products to their audiences are influenced by the media form, language and platform. For example, the language and conventions of television or radio or film are distinctive and are shared by the producer and audience.</p> <p>The media platform may also influence an audience's perception. For example, a film may have different meanings when exhibited in a cinema, broadcast on free-to-air television, purchased as a Blu-Ray/DVD or bought via a streaming service.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How media language is used to create and communicate media messages 	<p>Different types of media messages and associated language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuasive Informative Entertaining Interactive, eg social media.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the medium influences the message 	<p>The way a media message is communicated is just as important as <i>what</i> is communicated. For example, a television sitcom may only seem funny when a laughter track is added.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to analyse media products to understand the different meanings that are communicated 	<p>The basic principles of semiotic analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denotation and connotation Codes Signs, icons, symbols Dominant signifier and anchorage. <p>Targeting an audience.</p> <p>Ambiguous messages and reducing ambiguity.</p> <p>Diegesis.</p>

3.5.1.2 Codes, Conventions and Genres	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the codes and conventions of media language function to create meanings 	<p>The 'rules' of media language.</p> <p>How signs are selected, deselected and put together to conform to codes and make meanings.</p> <p>Codes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal and non-verbal Technical Symbolic Design, layout, typography Video and photographic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shot types Composition, mise-en-scène Digital and post-production codes, CGI Sound <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diegetic Non-diegetic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the choice of elements in a media product can work to create stories, portray different aspects of reality, put over points of view and represent the world in different ways 	<p>A basic understanding of ideology and the ways in which media language can be used to make things seem very real or very unreal.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How and why codes and conventions are used to establish genres. The appeal of genre products to producers and audiences 	<p>The principles of repetition and variation.</p> <p>The dynamic nature of genre.</p> <p>Factors influencing the creation of genre products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Cultural Audience-led. <p>Examples of genres in various media forms and their defining characteristics (codes and conventions).</p> <p>Hybrids.</p> <p>Intertextuality.</p>

3.5.1.3 Narrative	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How stories are structured as narratives 	<p>How all media products embody narratives by telling a story in a way that organises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causality: why things happen Time: when things happen Space: where things happen.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms of narrative organisation 	<p>There are many ways of describing 'story structure' such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposition Disruption Complication Climax Resolution. <p>Others include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equilibrium (state of balance) Disruption Recognition of disruption Attempts to restore equilibrium New equilibrium.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vladimir Propp and narrative The Quest as a distinctive type of narrative stories 	<p>Propp identified a set of character types widely used in the narrative of 'quest' type stories. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the hero the villain the donor the helper the dispatcher the princess the princess's father the false hero. <p>Another approach to characters in narrative is the archetype or archetypal characters.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How narratives engage the audience. 	<p>Binary opposites.</p> <p>Enigma codes and action codes.</p> <p>Resolution and closure.</p> <p>False trails and pathetic fallacies.</p> <p>Subverting narrative expectations by challenging or undermining typical narrative conventions.</p>

3.5.1.4 Media Contexts and Media Language (Examples)

Below are some Media Contexts issues relevant to Media Language. It should be noted, though, that these are indicative. Schools are encouraged to develop their own approach to contexts teaching, reflective of and appropriate to their own learning environment.

Cultural

- What is the link between media language and the identity of different groups or cultures?
- How do we use our knowledge of media language to make value judgements about products and their consumers as 'one of us' or 'other'?

Economic

- What are the economic reasons for the emergence of media language forms that are global rather than regional or local?
- How successfully have local media producers resisted economic pressure to use global codes and conventions of media language?

Historical

- What explains the differences in media language when comparing similar media products produced today with those produced in different time periods?

Technological

- How have technological developments impacted the relationship between the form, content and meaning of media products?
- What are the implications for media production of:
 - Image manipulation
 - CGI
 - User generated content
 - AI?
- If all the codes of media language can be learned by machines, will all media products be produced artificially?

3.5.2 Media Representations

Students should have knowledge and critical understanding of how the media portray events, places, issues, individuals and social groups. Students will also need to apply this knowledge and understanding in the practical analysis, evaluation and creation of media products.

3.5.2.1 Representations and the representation of reality	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ways in which the media represent (rather than simply present) the world, and construct versions of reality ● The relationship between ideology and representations 	<p>Realism: reasons why some representations seem more truthful or realistic than others.</p> <p>Critical exploration of views including these contrasting ideas about the authenticity of media messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the media are a 'window on the world' ● the medium is the message.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theoretical perspectives on representation including the processes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● selection ● construction ● mediation. 	<p>These theories (for example Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding approach) suggest that the selection and omission of material in the construction of media products means that they can never present us with reality, only a mediated version of reality.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ways aspects of reality may be represented differently depending on the purposes of the producers and the choices they make 	<p>Techniques of persuasive communication.</p> <p>Advertising, marketing, brands and branding, bias, propaganda.</p> <p>Audience positioning.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How and why particular social groups, individuals (including celebrities), places and issues may be under-represented or misrepresented 	<p>Relationship between media representations and the dominant value system in a society.</p> <p>Dominant representations and subversive representations.</p> <p>Cultural hegemony.</p> <p>Selective representations.</p>

3.5.2.2 Stereotypes	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The different functions and uses of stereotypes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How stereotypes become established ● How stereotypes may vary over time ● Positive and negative stereotypes ● How stereotypes enable audiences to interpret media quickly 	<p>A range of different stereotypes should be discussed and exemplified in order that students understand the problems with and usefulness of stereotypes.</p> <p>Role models.</p> <p>In-groups and out-groups.</p> <p>Use of stereotypes in genre (for example stock characters).</p> <p>Use of stereotypes in narrative.</p>

3.5.2.3 Representations in the News	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the news media construct versions of reality 	News values. Agenda-setting. Fake news, misinformation. Partiality and impartiality. Authenticity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How and why versions of the same event, person or issues may be represented differently by different news media 	Objectivity and subjectivity in news reporting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How social media and user-generated material has an impact on news representations 	Citizen journalism. Social media user's ability to customise their news feeds. Use of clickbait to attract online news audiences.

3.5.2.4 Audiences and Representations	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How individuals and groups represent themselves to communicate ideas about their identity, values and beliefs 	Role of individuals as producers (as well as consumers) of media messages in which the self is represented.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why audiences accept or reject versions of reality presented to them by the media 	Decoding – the influence of demographic variables such as age, class, gender, ethnicity on the interpretation of media representations.

3.5.2.5 Media Contexts and Media Representations (Examples)

Below are some Media Contexts issues relevant to Media Representations. It should be noted, though, that these are indicative. Schools are encouraged to develop their own approach to contexts teaching, reflective of and appropriate to their own learning environment.

Cultural

- 'Culture wars' are often fought over the ways in which various groups, issues or events are represented in the media. How are these disputes reflected in your SMPs?

Economic

- What are the economic advantages for media producers of using stereotypes and over-simplified or misleading representations?

Historical

- How have representations changed and developed over time?
- What are the social forces that have driven these changes?

Technological

- How have technological developments influenced:
 - the representations of news events?
 - the ability of individuals to represent themselves?

3.5.3 Media Industries

Students should have knowledge and critical understanding of how the media industries' processes of production, distribution and circulation affect media forms and platforms. Students will also need to apply this knowledge and understanding in the practical analysis, evaluation and creation of media products.

3.5.3.1 Ownership and Media Production	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nature of media production; from large and diversified multinational and national companies to smaller and more specialist producers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effects of ownership and control of media organisations on media products The role and power of 'media barons' 	Ownership structures and patterns, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conglomerate ownership concentration of ownership diversification vertical integration horizontal integration public ownership private or commercial ownership.
3.5.3.2 Convergence	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of the increasingly convergent nature of media industries across different forms and platforms 	Cross-media ownership. Convergence of content providers, network providers and platform providers. Mergers, demergers, takeovers.
3.5.3.3 Globalisation	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The increasingly multinational nature of media production The relationship between national and multinational organisations, including between nation states and global media conglomerates 	Cultural imperialism. International agreements (and disagreements) on regulation and freedom to trade media products.

3.5.3.4 Funding and Regulation	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different funding models such as state funded, not-for-profit and commercial models 	Advertising. Sponsorship. Product placement. Direct sales. Subscription. Franchising.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The functions and types of regulation of the media 	Independence of media organisations. International agreements on regulation. Disputes about freedom, censorship and control. Deregulation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-regulation and state regulation 	The responsibilities of platform owners (ISPs, social networks) for online content.

3.5.3.5 Media Contexts and Media Industries (Examples)

Below are some media contexts issues relevant to Media Industries. It should be noted, though, that these are indicative. Schools are encouraged to develop their own approach to contexts teaching, reflective of and appropriate to their own learning environment.

Cultural

- Do media industries have a responsibility towards every different sector of society?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a global media culture?

Economic

- How do media industries control the supply and demand of media products?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of controlling competition between media industries?
- How can local or national media industries compete successfully with economically powerful multinational media conglomerates?

Historical

- How have media industries changed and developed over time?
- What are the social and/or political forces that have driven these changes?

Technological

- How have technological developments influenced the ways in which media products are produced and distributed?
- How have digital technologies affected traditional media products and platforms?

3.5.4 Media Audiences

Students should have knowledge and critical understanding of how the media forms target, reach and address audiences, how audiences interpret and respond to them, and how members of the audience become producers themselves. Students will also need to apply this knowledge and understanding in the practical analysis, evaluation and creation of media products.

3.5.4.1 The nature and significance of the audience	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dependence of media industries on creating and continuing to satisfy audiences The power of audiences and the power of media content to influence audiences 	<p>Strategies used by media industries to stimulate and maintain audience demand eg trailers, teasers, promotional campaigns, creation of ongoing series or genre products.</p> <p>The significance of audience behaviour in influencing media industries, including feedback, purchasing or cancelling subscriptions, participation in content creation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How and why media products are aimed at a range of audiences, from small, specialised audiences to large mass audiences 	<p>Declining size of the mass audience for single media events or products.</p> <p>Niche audiences.</p>
3.5.4.2 Defining and categorising media audiences	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audience categories used by media industries 	<p>Audience segmentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> geographic demographic psychographic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Types of media consumption by audiences 	<p>Social and shared consumption.</p> <p>Individual and private consumption.</p>
3.5.4.3 Targeting	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ways in which media organisations target audiences through marketing and product design Understanding of the assumptions organisations make about their target audience(s) 	<p>Role of genre and narrative conventions in the targeting of audiences. Techniques used in the marketing of media products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> guerrilla and viral marketing trailers, tasters and teasers.

3.5.4.4 Theoretical perspectives on the audience	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theoretical perspectives on audiences including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● effects theory ● active and passive audiences ● audience response ● audience interpretation ● audience positioning ● reception theory ● diffused audience. ● Blumler and Katz’s Uses and Gratifications theory 	<p>Cultivation theory and desensitization.</p> <p>Hypodermic syringe theory.</p> <p>The role of audiences in the creation of meaning and the degree of effect of media messages upon audiences.</p> <p>Preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings.</p> <p>Interactive Audiences, audience as producers.</p> <p>Uses and Gratifications include needs for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● entertainment and diversion ● information and education ● social interaction ● personal identity.

3.5.4.5 Audience Practices	Further Detail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Audience members as active producers of media products. 	<p>Using the resources of the internet to create products and project personal identity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prosumer ● Blogging and vlogging ● Citizen journalism ● Livestreaming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ways in which people’s media practices are connected to their identity, including their sense of actual and desired self. ● Audience pleasures. 	<p>Identity and audience membership.</p> <p>Fans and fandom.</p> <p>Talking about the media.</p> <p>Types of audience pleasure include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● aesthetic ● cerebral ● visceral ● voyeuristic ● vicarious ● cathartic.

3.5.4.6 Media Contexts and Media Audiences (Examples)

Below are some media contexts issues relevant to Media Audiences. It should be noted, though, that these are indicative rather than mandatory, in contrast to the rest of the subject content. Schools are encouraged to develop their own approach to contexts teaching, reflective of and appropriate to their own learning environment.

Cultural

- “Our culture and its shared value system suffers because we no longer share media moments and media experiences”. Do you agree?

Economic

- Do audiences control media industries through their economic power or are audiences exploited by profit-hungry media conglomerates?

Historical

- How have the audience’s needs and expectations changed over the years?
- What are the social forces that have driven these changes?

Technological

- How has digital technology affected the audience’s access to mass media?

4 Scheme of assessment

Find mark schemes, and specimen papers for new courses, on our website at oxfordaqa.com/9257

This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all assessments at the end of the course and in the same series.

Our International GCSE exams and certification for this specification are available for the first time in May/June 2026 and then every May/June and November for the life of the specification.

All materials are available in English only.

Our GCSE assessments in Media Studies include questions that allow students to demonstrate their ability to:

- draw together their knowledge, skills and understanding from across the full course of study
- provide extended responses.

4.1 Aims and learning outcomes

The aims of this syllabus are to enable students to:

- demonstrate skills of enquiry, critical thinking, analysis and creative production
- acquire knowledge and understanding of the global media through the study of a range of important media concepts, processes, contexts and issues (the Media Studies Framework)
- enhance knowledge and understanding of the media through the planning and creation of media products
- engage with and appreciate a selected range of local and international media products (the Selected Media Products or SMPs).

4.2 Assessment Objectives

The assessments will measure how students have achieved the following Assessment Objectives:

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of the media studies framework, including media contexts
- AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the media studies framework to support analysis and evaluation
- AO3: Interpret a brief in order to plan and construct media products demonstrating research, creative and technical skills, and applying knowledge and understanding of the media studies framework

4.2.1 Assessment Objective weightings

Assessments Objectives (AOs)	Paper 1 (%)	NEA (%)	Overall weighting of AO's (approx. %)
AO1	30%	0%	30%
AO2	20%	10%	30%
AO3	0%	40%	40%
Overall weighting of units (%)	50%	50%	100%

4.3 Assessment weightings

Component	Maximum raw mark	Scaling factor	Maximum scaled mark
Paper 1	100	X1	100
NEA	100	X1	100
Total scaled mark:			200

4.4 Question Paper structure

The assessment comprises two components: one examined question paper and non-exam assessment (NEA). The examined question paper has three sections:

Section A: Analysing Media Products (40 marks)

- One 4 mark short answer question requiring definition and/or exemplification of term(s) used in textual analysis (AO1)
- Two 8 mark analysis questions based on a study sequence from the prescribed episode from a television series (Both questions AO1 4 marks, AO2 4 marks)
- One 20 mark extended response question based on a comparison of the prescribed episode from a television series and another SMP of the candidate's choice (AO1 12 marks, AO2 8 marks)

Section B: Producers and Audiences (30 marks)

- Three questions based on terms and concepts used in the discussion and analysis of Media Industries and/or Media Audiences (2 and 4 mark questions are both AO1; 8 mark question is AO1 4 marks, AO2 4 marks)
- One 16 mark extended response question requiring application and/or evaluation of concepts relating to the discussion and analysis of Media Industries and/or Media Audiences sections of the Media Studies Framework (AO1 8 marks, AO2 8 marks)

Section C: Media Issues in Context (30 marks)

- One 2 mark short answer question requiring definition and/or exemplification of a term related to media contexts (AO1)
- One 8 mark question referring to specific contexts and/or media forms (AO1 4 marks, AO2 4 marks)
- One 20 mark extended response question requiring the application and/or evaluation of a media contexts issue, using concepts from the Media Studies Framework and examples from Selected Media Products (AO1 12 marks, AO2 8 marks)

4.5 NEA structure

The NEA will be marked according to five criteria:

The Submission Statement

Students will be awarded marks for their response to the brief and their ability to communicate their knowledge and understanding of language and representations (AO2, 20 marks)

Production: Effectiveness in meeting the brief

Students will be rewarded for how far they have met the requirements stipulated in the brief in their practical production (AO3, 20 marks)

Production: Media Language

Students will be rewarded for the degree of expertise they demonstrate in using media language within the chosen media form (AO3, 20 marks)

Production: Media Representations

Students will be rewarded for their ability to understand and create representations in the chosen media form (AO3, 20 marks)

Production: Effectiveness in communicating meaning to an audience

Students will be rewarded for how well their media product communicates meanings (AO3, 20 marks)

5 Non-exam assessment (NEA)

The NEA element requires students to apply their knowledge and understanding of media language and representations to create a media product, and to express and communicate meaning to an intended audience. Students will use one of the following media forms:

- Audio
- E-media
- Print
- Video
- Advertising
- News.

5.1 The Briefs

To complete the NEA, students must independently create a media product in response to a brief set by OxfordAQA. There will be six live briefs at any one time, covering the six media forms above. The set of briefs will change every three years, and will be released by OxfordAQA on 1 July, two years before the first assessment for that set of briefs.

The briefs will be linked to the International GCSE Media Studies Selected Media Products (SMPs).

OxfordAQA will specify the media form, the commission and the intended audience for the media product. The media product that is devised and realised by the student must communicate meaning to the intended audience and must draw on what they know and understand about media language and media representations.

Students will submit:

- a Submission Statement
- a Media Product.

5.2 The Submission Statement

Students must complete a Submission Statement that:

- outlines how their product meets the brief and the needs of the audience
- analyses how their product uses conventions, and how it uses specific media language and constructs specific representations to convey meaning to the intended audience
- includes further ideas to create a cohesive series of products, as required by the chosen brief.

This must be submitted to OxfordAQA with the media product.

This Submission Statement should be a maximum of 1000 words. The template for the Submission Statement will be supplied by OxfordAQA in the NEA Student Booklet along with the briefs.

5.3 Size and duration of products

Each brief will specify the required length, amount or duration of the media product that must be created.

5.4 Unassessed participants

Students must complete an individual media production. Students may, however, use unassessed participants to:

- appear in their media products
- operate equipment under the direction of the assessed student.

Assessed students can only be credited for work they have undertaken themselves or that has been completed **under their direction**. Students and teachers will be required to sign the Candidate Record Form to confirm that this is the case.

An explanation of how the unassessed participants contributed to the product and how the assessed student directed that contribution should be included on the Candidate Record Form.

5.5 Time spent on the NEA

There is no limit to the amount of time that students can spend on their NEA but we recommend they spend around 30-40 hours on the physical creation of their NEA products. Although the NEA is worth 50% of the overall marks, it should not take 50% of the time of the course. Just as with the examined material, it is intended that students spend time learning the relevant concepts and skills before they embark on the assessed work itself.

Teachers should strike a balance between the preparation for and completion of the NEA and preparation for the examined component. Additionally, demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the Media Studies Framework is key to success in the NEA so time spent teaching the framework will inform the NEA products.

5.6 Use of non-original material

All images, footage and text are to be created by the student, with the following exceptions:

- Logos for existing companies where these do not form part of the requested material and where these demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media conventions, such as social media logos and icons, or sponsorship from major companies
- Special effects added to original images and footage, that would be impractical or unsafe for students to capture themselves, such as fire and explosions

Students must acknowledge any non-original material on the Candidate Record Form.

Students do not have to write and record their own musical performances, either to use as part of a soundtrack or in a music video. Musical tracks that they use should be acknowledged on the Candidate Record Form.

5.7 Use of online apps and assets

5.7.1 Use of templates

For briefs where website or video game creation is required, students do not need to be able to code. Students can use website design apps, online templates and game design software.

Students are responsible for the design of the website or game and the content (such as written text, images, audio-visual material) must be created by the student.

Students may also use online logo creators and layout apps for print products but must create all images and text within the layout themselves.

Students must acknowledge any online software or templates which have been used on the Candidate Record Form.

5.7.2 Use of AI

The use of generative AI is permitted for the creation of images where it is impractical or unsafe for students to take photographs themselves, such as for news images showing explosions, earthquakes or fires. Students must acknowledge any use of AI on the Candidate Record Form, including both the name of the AI app, the date of access, and the generative wording used.

The use of AI is not permitted for the creation of text and would be considered as candidate malpractice.

5.8 Marking criteria

5.8.1 Guidance on applying the marking criteria

Level of response marking instructions are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's media product, review the product and annotate it and/or make notes on it to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the marking criteria.

Start at the lowest level of the marking criteria and use it as a ladder to see whether the product meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's product for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the product.

You can compare your student's product with the standardisation examples to determine if it is of the same standard, better or worse.

When assigning a level, you should consider the overall quality of the product. If the product covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the product to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the product is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

No marks should be awarded for an NEA response containing nothing worthy of credit.

The Submission Statement should be marked separately on its individual merits.

Only the quantity of work stipulated in the Tasks section of the brief should be considered for assessment. If a student creates more work than is stipulated in their chosen brief, you should review the entirety but only give credit for the best section in relation to the brief. You should use the notes section of the Candidate Record Form to direct the moderator to the start and end timings of the excerpt to be assessed within an audio-visual product, or the specific pages to be assessed within a print or online product. If no timings or pages are specified, the moderator will consider the first section or pages up to the set limit.

If a product is shorter than the stipulated size or duration no penalty is to be applied as the work is likely to be self-penalising – particularly in relation to the Production: Effectiveness in meeting the brief (page 33) section.

If a student has used any non-original images, footage or text other than the exceptions listed in 5.6 (page 30), they should not be awarded marks above Level 2 in the Production: Effectiveness in meeting the brief (page 33) section of the marking criteria.

5.8.2 Submission Statement

In this section students will be awarded marks for their response to the brief and their ability to communicate their knowledge and understanding of language and representations.

Level	Mark	Description
5	17-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An excellent, detailed statement that analyses directly and effectively how media language and representations create meanings; and that explains deliberate, highly appropriate uses or subversions of codes and conventions. ● The decisions outlined in the statement are consistently appropriate to the brief and target the intended audience in a clear and direct way. ● Excellent evidence of the application of knowledge and understanding of the media studies framework through extensive and sustained use of relevant and accurate subject-specific terminology. ● The ideas for further examples show deliberate creation of a unified series that fully meets the brief.
4	13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A good, detailed statement that analyses uses of media language and representations to create meanings, as well as explaining appropriate uses or subversions of codes and conventions. ● The decisions outlined in the statement are mostly appropriate to the brief and target the intended audience. ● Good evidence of the application of knowledge and understanding of the media studies framework through frequent use of relevant and accurate subject specific terminology. ● The ideas for further examples show deliberate creation of a series in response to the brief, though this may not always be unified.
3	9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A satisfactory statement that analyses some uses of media language and some aspects of representation that create meaning, as well as explaining some appropriate uses of codes and conventions. ● The decisions outlined in the statement are generally appropriate to the brief and target the intended audience in a satisfactory way. ● Satisfactory evidence of the application of knowledge and understanding of the media studies framework through some use of relevant and accurate subject specific terminology. ● The ideas for further examples are generally suitable for the brief.
2	5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The statement provides occasional analysis of uses of media language and/or aspects of representation and their intended meanings, and occasional reference to appropriate uses of codes and conventions. ● The decisions outlined in the statement are inconsistently appropriate to the brief and only sometimes target the intended audience. ● Basic evidence of the application of knowledge and understanding of the media studies framework through very little use of relevant and accurate subject specific terminology. ● Ideas for further examples show some understanding of the brief.
1	1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A statement has been submitted. ● The decisions outlined in the statement are unlikely to be appropriate to the brief and have minimal sense of the intended audience. ● Minimal evidence of the application of knowledge and understanding of the media studies framework in which any attempt to use subject specific terminology is likely to be inaccurate. ● Ideas for further examples may be incomplete, irrelevant or missing.
	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

5.8.3 Production: Effectiveness in meeting the brief

In this section students will be rewarded for how far they have met the requirements stipulated in the brief in their practical production.

Level	Mark	Description
5	17-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An excellent product that meets all the requirements of the brief and completes all of the tasks fully. ● The brief has been fully understood, correctly interpreted in all aspects, and the product created is consistently appropriate to the commission given.
4	13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A good product that meets most of the requirements of the brief and most of the tasks are completed. ● The brief has been understood, correctly interpreted in most aspects, and the product created is in most respects appropriate to the commission given.
3	9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A satisfactory product that meets the main requirements of the brief and most of the tasks are completed but some of the details are missing. ● The brief has been generally understood, correctly interpreted overall, but with some inconsistencies. The product created is occasionally appropriate to the commission given.
2	5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A basic product that meets some of the requirements of the brief but only a few of the tasks have been completed and it may fall below the specified length/duration. ● The brief has been understood at a basic level, though with some misinterpretation, and the product created shows little awareness of the commission given.
1	1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A minimal product that meets very few of the requirements of the brief and it is likely to fall well below the specified length/duration. ● There is minimal understanding of the brief, and the product created shows minimal or no awareness of the commission given. <p>Note: for marks towards the top of this band this must be, at least, a recognisable media product.</p>
	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

5.8.4 Production: Media Language

In this section students will be rewarded for the degree of expertise they demonstrate in using media language within the chosen media form.

Level	Mark	Description
5	17-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Excellent application of knowledge and understanding of media language, demonstrated by the consistently appropriate and effective selection and combination of elements to communicate very clear meanings throughout the product. ● An excellent and compelling product that constructs very effective narratives and shows deliberate control of connotations; it clearly and purposefully constructs points of view. ● Excellent technical skills have been used to manipulate the chosen aspects of media language. The product has a strong sense of authenticity and close resemblance with professional media products.
4	13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good application of knowledge and understanding of media language, demonstrated by the frequently appropriate and effective selection and combination of elements to communicate clear meanings throughout the product. ● A good product that constructs effective narratives and shows some deliberate control of connotations though this may not be throughout and constructs points of view. ● Good technical skills have been used to manipulate the chosen aspects of media language. The product resembles media professional products in some aspects.
3	9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Satisfactory application of knowledge and understanding of media language, demonstrated by the generally appropriate but inconsistently effective selection and combination of straightforward elements to communicate generally clear meanings throughout the product. ● A satisfactory product that constructs suitable narratives and shows occasional control of connotations but rarely constructs points of view. ● Satisfactory technical skills have been used to manipulate the chosen aspects of media language. The product occasionally resembles media professional products.
2	5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basic application of knowledge and understanding of media language, demonstrated by the occasionally appropriate selection and combination of simple elements to communicate basic meanings. ● A basic product that constructs simple narratives and shows little awareness of connotations. ● Basic technical skills have been used to manipulate the chosen aspects of media language. The product only rarely resembles professional media products.
1	1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimal application of knowledge and understanding of media language, demonstrated by little appropriate selection and combination of very simple elements to communicate very limited meanings. ● A minimal product that shows little awareness of narrative. ● Minimal technical skills have been used to manipulate the chosen aspects of media language. Products at the top of the band will be recognisable as media products conveying a meaning.
	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

5.8.5 Production: Media Representations

In this section students will be rewarded for their ability to understand and create representations in the chosen media form.

Level	Mark	Description
5	17-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Excellent application of knowledge and understanding of media representations, demonstrated by the consistently effective use or subversion of stereotypes and/or stereotypical representations. These representations are highly appropriate to the intended audience, form and genre. ● Excellent creative skills have been used to construct representations that are particularly apt or inventive, as required for the meanings being conveyed. ● Excellent use of media representations to communicate clear and highly appropriate meanings throughout.
4	13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good application of knowledge and understanding of media representations, demonstrated by the frequently effective use or subversion of stereotypes and/or stereotypical representations that are appropriate to the intended audience, form and genre. ● Good creative skills have been used to construct representations that are mostly relevant to the meanings being conveyed. ● Good use of media representations to communicate appropriate meanings throughout.
3	9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Satisfactory application of knowledge and understanding of media representations, demonstrated by the sometimes effective use or subversion of stereotypes and/or stereotypical representations that are generally appropriate to the intended audience, form and genre though there are likely to be some inconsistencies. ● Satisfactory creative skills have been used to construct representations that are generally relevant to the meanings intended. ● Satisfactory use of media representations to communicate generally appropriate meanings though this is unlikely to be throughout the product.
2	5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basic application of knowledge and understanding of media representations, demonstrated by the rarely effective use of stereotypes and/or stereotypical representations that are only occasionally appropriate to the intended audience, form and genre. ● Basic creative skills have been used to construct representations that are only occasionally relevant to the meanings being conveyed. ● Basic use of media representations to communicate only occasionally appropriate meanings.
1	1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimal application of knowledge and understanding of media representations, demonstrated by a lack of appropriate use of stereotypes and/or stereotypical representations that are very rarely appropriate to the intended audience, form or genre. ● Minimal creative skills have been used to construct representations that are rarely relevant to the meanings intended. ● Minimal use of media representations to communicate very little discernible meaning.
	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

5.8.6 Production: Effectiveness in communicating meaning to an audience

In this section students will be rewarded for how well their media product communicates meanings. Teachers/assessors are to use their professional judgement rather than looking for evidence of testing the product on a live audience.

Level	Mark	Description
5	17-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An excellent product that would successfully engage the intended audience by employing a consistently effective and appropriate mode of address throughout. ● An excellent product which is clearly targeted at the intended audience through the use of highly relevant genre conventions. ● The product uses highly appropriate conventions, or the creative and deliberate subversion of conventions, to convey meanings that are highly appropriate to the intended audience.
4	13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A good product that would interest the intended audience by employing a frequently effective and appropriate mode of address throughout. ● A good product that is targeted at the intended audience through the use of mostly relevant genre conventions. ● The product uses mostly appropriate conventions, or the deliberate subversion of conventions, to convey meanings that are appropriate to the intended audience.
3	9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A satisfactory product that would be of some interest to the intended audience by employing a sometimes effective and appropriate mode of address throughout. ● A satisfactory product that is sometimes targeted at the intended audience through the use of generally relevant genre conventions. ● The product uses some appropriate conventions to convey meanings that are generally appropriate to the intended audience. Any subversion of intentions is likely to be accidental.
2	5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A basic product that would only be of occasional interest to the intended audience by employing a mode of address that is only occasionally effective or appropriate. ● A basic product that is inconsistently targeted at the intended audience through the use of occasionally relevant genre conventions. ● The product makes basic use of conventions to convey meanings that are only occasionally appropriate to the intended audience.
1	1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A minimal product that would be unlikely to interest the intended audience and has little sense of mode of address. ● A minimal product that only very rarely uses genre conventions. ● For marks towards the top of this band this must be, at least, a media product with recognisable meanings.
	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

6 General administration

We are committed to delivering assessments of the highest quality and have developed practices and procedures that support this aim. To ensure that all students have a fair experience, we have worked with other awarding bodies in England to develop best practice for maintaining the integrity of exams. This is published through the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). We will maintain the same high standard through their use for OxfordAQA.

More information on all aspects of administration is available at oxfordaqa.com/exams-administration

For any immediate enquiries please contact info@oxfordaqa.com

Please note: We aim to respond to all email enquiries within two working days.

Our UK office hours are Monday to Friday, 8am – 5pm local time.

6.1 Entries and codes

You need to make only one entry for each qualification – this will cover all the question papers and certification.

Qualification title	OxfordAQA entry code
OxfordAQA International GCSE Media Studies	9257

Please check the current version of the Entry Codes book and the latest information about making entries on oxfordaqa.com/exams-admin

Exams will be available May/June and in November.

6.2 Overlaps with other qualifications

This specification overlaps with the AQA UK GCSE in Media Studies (8572).

6.3 Awarding grades and reporting results

In line with UK GCSEs, this qualification will be graded on a nine-point scale: 1 to 9 – where 9 is the best grade. Students who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade 1 will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

To find out more about the new grading system, visit our website at oxfordaqa.com

6.4 Resits

Students may resit this qualification any number of times within the life of the specification. NEA results can be carried forward for any students re-sitting the qualification.

6.5 Previous learning and prerequisites

There are no previous learning requirements. Any requirements for entry to a course based on this specification are at the discretion of schools.

6.6 Access to assessment: equality and inclusion

Our general qualifications are designed to prepare students for a wide range of occupations and further study whilst assessing a wide range of competences.

The subject criteria have been assessed to ensure they test specific competences. The skills or knowledge required do not disadvantage particular groups of students.

Exam access arrangements are available for students with disabilities and special educational needs.

We comply with the *UK Equality Act 2010* to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage that affects a disabled student. Information about access arrangements will be issued to schools when they become OxfordAQA centres.

6.7 Working with OxfordAQA for the first time?

You will need to apply to become an OxfordAQA centre to offer our specifications to your students. Find out how at oxfordaqa.com/centreapprovals

6.8 Private candidates

This specification is not available to private candidates.

6.9 Age-appropriateness

Care and discretion should be exercised to ensure that media products and topics selected for study, and students' own production work are age appropriate. Although no topic, product or media category is explicitly excluded by this guideline, particular sensitivity is required in relation to the selection or exclusion of material which may be divisive, offensive or which may give rise to safeguarding issues.

7 Glossary of terms

The following glossary provides definitions of key terms used in the International GCSE Media Studies specification. Students should be familiar with these terms and be able to define, use and exemplify them.

A more extensive list of subject specific terms can be found on the OxfordAQA GCSE Media Studies website.

Active audience

The theory that media audiences engage with or interact with media products by contributing, participating or creating their own meanings. See Reception Theory and Uses and Gratifications.

Agenda setting

The theory that the media have a powerful and influential role in telling politicians and the public what they should be thinking about.

Ambiguous/Ambiguity

A sign or a media product with several possible meanings which could be confused.

Anchorage

The text (copy) that fixes (anchors) an image to its intended meaning.

Archetype

An original on which many copies are based. Often used in relation to characters in fictional works. Examples include the rebel, the mother figure and the villain.

Audience

The people who consume a media product by watching, listening to, and/or reading it.

Audience positioning

The technique used to persuade the audience to interpret a media product in a particular way.

Bias

A prejudice for or against a particular idea, place, group or individual. Biased reporting in the media may be demonstrated by tone or style, but also by selection or omission. A newspaper story may be biased not because of what's included, but what's left out.

Binary opposition

The contrast between two ideas or concepts, such as good/evil. Usually the contrast causes conflict that drives the narrative.

Blog

A personal, small group or business webpage or website that is usually informal and frequently updated. Bloggers also use social media platforms.

Brand

An identity imposed on a product or range of products in order to encourage consumer awareness and loyalty. Individuals with a high media profile, such as social media influencers, may also cultivate their own brand.

Censorship

The controls and regulations that exist about media content. Censorship powers can be held by governments or regulatory bodies.

Cerebral pleasure

Pleasures of the mind rather than the body.

CGI

Computer-generated imagery is the application of computer graphics to printed or moving image media. The term CGI commonly refers to 3D computer graphics used for special effects in film sequences.

Citizen journalists

Non-professional people who post news and other information to social media, blogs, vlogs and websites.

Code

A communication system which includes signs, rules and shared understanding. Examples include the English language, non-verbal codes, print codes and editing codes.

Commercial broadcasting

Privately owned media broadcasting of television and radio programmes.

Concentration of ownership

Refers to the number of organisations or individuals who control ownership of the media. Fewer stakeholders hold increasing shares.

Conglomerate

A media conglomerate is a large corporation that owns many media companies, such as television, radio, internet, publishing – giving the conglomerate greater competitive advantage in the market.

Connotation

The meanings of a sign or media product that are made by cultural association. These are often the deeper or underlying meanings. For example, images of a sunset in a film may connote ending or closure.

Consumption

The act of using media products by watching, listening to or reading them.

Content provider

Any company or organisation that makes material for consumption by media audiences.

Context

We use this term in two ways in media studies:

- 1 The immediate surroundings of something, ie a news photograph on the front page of *The Times* newspaper.
- 2 The wider cultural, economic, technological or historical circumstances of a media product or process.

Conventions

Established rules or shared understandings used in the creation of media products. Conventions are more likely to be taken for granted as 'the way we do things' rather than formally written down.

Convergence

The coming together of technologies and institutions to create a new product or media experience.

Cross media ownership

This describes any company whose assets include two or more media forms.

Cultivation Theory

This is a media audience theory based on long-term studies proposing that as people become saturated by media messages their views of reality become ever more closely aligned to the content of the media.

Cultural hegemony

The process of making people see the beliefs and values of the most powerful group as being natural and common sense.

Cultural Imperialism

The power and influence of one nation's media over other places in the world.

Cultural values

A culture's values are its core ideas and beliefs about what is right and wrong; acceptable and unacceptable. A wider culture, for example Latin American culture or Italian culture, will also include groups within them (sub cultures) which do not share all of the mainstream values.

Cultural sensitivity

Consideration for the beliefs, expected and accepted behaviour of other cultures.

Demerger

Separating a large corporation into two or more smaller organisations.

Demographics

The characteristics and make-up of a sample of the population, eg age, gender, nationality. The study of populations.

Denotation

The literal or surface meaning of a sign or media product.

Dialogue

Words spoken by characters in media products such as films or television dramas.

Diffused audience

For members of a diffused audience the media are totally integrated into all aspects of life. Media are consumed, interacted with, and used to perform.

Diegesis/Diegetic

These terms relate to the world of the characters in a story. Information available to any of these characters is diegetic.

Diegetic sound

Sound from the world created by a film or video, whether on or off screen.

Deregulation

The reduction or removal of a government regulation in a particular industry such as radio or television. Usually, this is done in the belief that increased competition will improve the quality of the service to provide more choice for consumers.

Disruption

In narratives, this is an event that disturbs the Equilibrium.

Distribution

The ways in which media products are made available to audiences either physically or online.

Diversification

This occurs when a media company branches out to offer services in more than one media form, for example when a magazine publishing company buys a radio station. See also, cross-media ownership.

Dominant cultural value

The beliefs held by the majority of people in society about what sort of behaviour is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. These beliefs are so strong that they seem 'just natural' but if they are not constantly reinforced they can break down.

Dominant signifier

On a page or a poster or in a photo containing a number of signifiers grouped together, the dominant signifier is simply the most important (usually the largest) of these signifiers.

Effects Theories

These theories of the Media Audience suggest a strong causal relationship between the media messages people receive and how they think, behave and perceive the world.

Encoding/Decoding

This model of communication claims that media products contain various messages that are made (encoded) using codes and conventions. The ways in which audiences make sense of (decode) these messages depend on the social context of the audience member. The decoded message may not be the same as the encoded message.

Enigma

A narrative device in the form of a mystery or puzzle that is not immediately resolved. An enigma is a way of hooking the audience into the story.

Equilibrium

In narratives, this is the state of balance or harmony that exists at the beginning. A restored but different equilibrium is achieved at the end of the narrative.

Form

The various formats that media texts and products come in, such as newspapers, magazines and films. Each media form will have its own set of codes and conventions.

Genre

A way of describing texts which share recognisable characteristics, for example men's magazines, TV crime dramas or role-playing games (RPGs).

Globalisation

The process that has seen international flows of trade, business, media and cultural products become speedier and more intensive.

Guerrilla marketing

The focus of guerrilla advertising or marketing is on the creative, the imaginative, the unexpected – something that will generate a social buzz. Based on low-cost unconventional tactics which aim to capture the attention and interest of consumers.

Hegemony

The dominance in the media of a particular social group. For example, in the UK, middle class people dominate the media workforce.

Horizontal integration

Companies that acquire other companies operating in the same sector. Horizontal mergers and acquisitions can increase the market power of the newly formed and larger company, but can be to the disadvantage of consumers because competition and therefore choice is reduced.

Hybrid

A genre that combines two or more pre-existing genres to create a new category. Romcom, combining characteristics of romance and comedy genres is an example.

Icon

In semiotics, an icon is a sign that physically resembles the thing it stands for (compare with symbol).

Ideology

A shared set of beliefs and ideas about what is right and what is wrong.

In-groups and out-groups

An in-group is a social group to which a person belongs and identifies with. An out-group is any group that person doesn't associate or identify with. In-groups often reinforce members' loyalty and sense of belonging by speaking and acting negatively towards out-groups, creating a 'them and us' situation.

Intellectual property

Ideas and designs that are copyright to a company or individual. For example, the characters and stories of the Marvel Universe are the intellectual property of Walt Disney Studios, and the subsidiary (wholly owned) company, Marvel Studios.

Interactivity

Two-way communication in which the participants both actively engage in the process.

Intertextuality

A feature of media products that borrow or quote from other media products.

ISP

Internet service provider; a company that provides access to the internet for homes and businesses.

Lighting

Lighting is a technical code that can add dramatic effects to images. Lighting can be high key (everything brightly lit), low key (a lot of contrast between light and shadow), or natural (trying to look 'like real life').

Livestreaming

Broadcasting an event or presentation over the internet as it happens.

Media consumption

Audiences and individuals are often described as consumers of the media. Media consumption is any engagement with the media by an individual or audience.

Media Industries or Media Institutions

The organisations that create and distribute media texts, such as the BBC and News Corporation.

Mediation

The process by which a media product represents an idea, issue, event or group of people to the audience. 'Mediation' suggests that this process always changes the perception of whatever is represented by the media.

Merger

A combination of two media companies into one – usually to gain more power and influence in the market.

Message

The content of a media product; the meanings it communicates.

Mise-en-scène

All the elements chosen by producers to make up the content of images, including codes such as location, lighting, non-verbal communication (NVC), props, accessories, etc. are often referred to as the mise-en-scène. It is a French term meaning 'put in the scene' which emphasises the idea that elements are included deliberately to communicate specific meanings.

Mode of address

Involves the style and tone of a media message's presentation; not so much what is being said but the way in which it is said. Formal/informal, direct/indirect are examples of modes of address.

Monopoly

A situation in which one company totally dominates a sector of the marketplace. There is no competition, leaving customers with no choice to buy elsewhere.

Narrative

The way in which a story or a sequence of events is put together. Narrative organises chains of events telling us why, when and where things are happening. A simple narrative structure is equilibrium, disruption, recognition of disruption, attempts to restore equilibrium, new equilibrium. See Equilibrium, Disruption.

News values

Ways in which media companies will assess and categorise news stories and decide on their newsworthiness. Each media publication will have its own news agenda and set of news values.

Newsworthiness

Relates to a topical event that is considered sufficiently interesting to the public to be worthy of reporting as news. News media will judge the newsworthiness of an event by applying in their own set of news values. These may differ. For example, a UK-based news organisation is likely to see events in the UK as more newsworthy than similar events in, say, Brazil.

Niche audience/market

A relatively small segment of an audience with specific tastes and interests.

Non-diegetic sound

Sound that is neither on the screen nor features in the 'world of the film/ tv drama'. Typically, non-diegetic sound will be sound effects or background music added to create mood and atmosphere. Voiced narration and theme music are examples of non-diegetic sound.

Non-verbal communication/codes (NVC)

These are all those methods of communication that do not include spoken or written language. Dress and appearance, facial expression, eye contact and body movement are examples of NVC.

Objectivity

Information that is based on facts and analysis or scientific reason. Objectivity is based on observable and measurable evidence. Objective views are often backed up by statistics. Something claimed to be 'objectively true' will be supported by hard evidence.

Ownership

The companies who own the companies that produce and distribute media products.

Paralanguage

How we convey meaning through aspects of speech other than the words we use. Examples include speed of delivery, rhythm, tone, volume and hesitation.

Passive audience

Passive audience theories stress the power of the media to directly influence the ways in which audiences think or behave.

Photographic codes

Techniques used to add meaning to images. These include lighting, framing, composition, camera position, lens type, focus and length of exposure are all photographic codes.

Platform, Media Platform

The technologies, software or apps that allow media producers to deliver media to audiences. Social media platforms also allow users to provide feedback and/or interact with each other.

Polysemic

A sign or message that can have many different meanings.

Preferred reading

The interpretation of a media text that the producers intended the audience to have.

Prejudice

Preconceived ideas or opinions that have no basis in reason or evidence. Some stereotypes and representations are prejudiced.

Private sector

This comprises all those companies which are not owned or controlled by the state but which are run for profit. Also known as the commercial sector, commercial broadcasting.

Prosumer

An individual who both consumes and produces, for example, media products.

Producer

The people who plan, coordinate and create media products.

Product

Any media text can also be called a media product.

Propaganda

Using the media to promote a biased viewpoint, usually for political purposes.

Props

Short form of property. Objects that appear on screen or stage.

Protagonist

The main character in the story. The protagonist is actively opposed by another character: the antagonist.

Psychographic

Marketing and advertising often categorises consumers using psychographic variables: different psychological categories that are linked to aspirations, lifestyle, personality or spending habits, for example.

Public sector

Companies that are owned or controlled by the state. In the UK, the BBC is an example of a media organisation in the public sector.

Public service broadcasting

Television and radio programmes that are broadcast to inform, entertain or educate the public, without trying to make a profit.

Quest narrative

A type of narrative in which the protagonist (hero) strives towards a certain goal. All sorts of challenges and obstacles, including the efforts of an antagonist (villain) lie between the protagonist and the goal. Narrative theorists have identified many of the key characteristic and typical characters associated with a quest narrative.

Realism

The use of codes and conventions to make a media product seem realistic rather than contrived.

Reception theory

These are theories of the media audience that see audiences as 'active' because they make their own meanings out of the messages received from the media. The meanings we make out of media products are just influenced by who we are as by the content of the message, according to reception theory.

Regulation

Rules or sets of standards that are expected to be adhered to. Regulatory bodies oversee that this is being done by media companies.

Representation

The way in which the media portrays people and the world around us.

Segmentation

The division of audiences into segments and categories.

Self-regulation

This occurs when media industries set up and pay for their own regulatory bodies. Unlike statutory regulators, these do not have legal powers, but they rely on companies within the industry to accept a code of practice. In the UK, examples include IPSO (newspapers and magazines) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

Semiotics

The use and study of signs, sign systems and their meanings. Also known as semiology.

Shot

A single image taken by a camera, or a single take of video footage.

Sign

Anything that expresses meaning is a sign. Examples include written or spoken words, an image, a sound, a gesture or an item of clothing.

Social construction

The belief that masculine and feminine behaviours, values and beliefs are constructed by society and not by nature.

Social group

Two or more people who share a common sense of identity.

Social media/networking

Websites, platforms and apps that enable users to communicate with other people across the world.

Sponsorship

A marketing technique involving the funding or support of, for example, a person, media product or event in order to increase exposure for a brand or product or service.

Statutory regulation

Statutory regulators have legal powers to control the industry for which they are responsible (a statute is a law). For example, Ofcom is the UK regulator for TV, radio, video-on-demand and phones. It sets rules and enforces them in these sectors.

Stereotyping

The reduction of a social group to a limited set of characteristics or pre-conceived ideas. Stereotyping may be positive, for example an assertion that 'Irish people are always friendly,' or negative, for example 'young people are all so badly behaved'.

Subculture

A group with beliefs or values or behaviours that differ from most people in the wider culture to which it belongs.

Subjectivity

Information that is based on an individual interpretation or opinion. It can be clouded by bias, values or beliefs. Subjective views may not be backed up by scientific proof or hard evidence, but they can still have great value in opening our eyes to a deep understanding of something that is not measurable such as humanity, love or grief.

Subversion

The act of overthrowing, undermining or destabilising something. In media studies, this is often applied to the 'taken for granted' conventions of cinematography, editing, genre or narrative. These conventions are sometimes subverted (ie broken) for creative reasons, to shock or stimulate the audience, for example. When conventions are systematically subverted over a period of time, they simply become new conventions.

Symbol

A sign which doesn't physically resemble the thing it stands for. Words are symbols because they don't look like the idea or object that they stand for. The red, white and blue tricolour flag is a symbol of France.

Synergy

Where two or more media products are linked for commercial purposes, for example a film and a video game based on the film.

Target audience

Producers of media products always have in mind an intended audience, often defined by age, gender or social class. The product is fashioned to appeal to the specific wants and needs of this group, a process called targeting the audience.

Typography

The design and arrangement of written material for a printed page or screen.

Unique selling point (USP)

The factor that makes a specific product or service stand out in comparison to other similar products. The USP of a community radio station could, for example, be that it plays music by local artists or that it features news about the local area.

User generated content (UGC)

Any content created and distributed on a particular platform by a user of that platform.

Uses and gratifications

A theory associated with Blumler and Katz suggesting that audience members seek out and actively *use* media products to *gratify* different sorts of need.

Verbal codes

These include any examples of written or spoken language.

Vertical integration

A strategy that involves bringing supply, production, distribution and sales together into one unified company.

Viral marketing

A method of marketing which encourages media consumers to share opinion and information about a media product on the internet and on social media.

Visceral pleasure

A type of audience pleasure that is like a physical experience.

Vlog/Vlogger

A video blog or video log, usually shortened to vlog, is a form of blog that uses video rather than written text.

Voyeuristic pleasure

An audience pleasure based on the thrill of watching people secretly, without their knowledge.



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