

Cambridge International AS & A Level

MEDIA STUDIES**9607/21**

Paper 2 Key Media Concepts

May/June 2026**MARK SCHEME**Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

This document consists of **17** printed pages.

General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: - the specific content defined in the mark scheme - the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions - the standard of response required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award whole marks (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks positively . This means that: - marks are not deducted for errors or omissions - marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for other valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate - the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged only when the mark scheme indicates that these features are specifically assessed in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must consistently apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and must not award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

English & Media-Specific Marking Principles**(To be read in conjunction with the General Marking Principles (and requiring further guidance on how to place marks within levels))****Components using level descriptions:**

- We use level descriptions as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptions are a means of general guidance and should not be interpreted as hurdle statements.
- Where indicative content notes are supplied for a question, these are *not* a prescription of required content and must not be treated as such. Alternative correct points and unexpected answers in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the knowledge and skills demonstrated.
- While we may have legitimate expectations as to the ground most answers may occupy, we must at all times be prepared to meet candidates on their chosen ground, provided it is relevant ground (e.g. clearly related to and derived from a relevant passage/text and meeting the mark scheme requirements for the question).

Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Unclear expression
	Credit-worthy point made
	Unclear expression
	Valid point/answer
	Blank page
	Example used
	Knowledge
	Response is mainly narrative
	Directly addressing the question
	Page has been seen by examiner
	Use of appropriate terminology

Assessment Objectives

The Assessment Objectives are applied to each question. The assessment objectives for the paper are:

- **AO1** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately (60%).
- **AO2** Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, supported with relevant textual evidence (40%).

The Level Descriptors guide examiners to an understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a band. They are a means of general guidance and must not be interpreted as hurdle statements. For the purposes of standardisation of marking, they are to be used in conjunction with the Standardisation scripts discussed during the coordination meeting and with Team Leaders, as well as the question-specific notes.

The indicative content provided is for general guidance; it is not designed as prescriptions of required content and must not be treated as such. Whilst there are legitimate expectations of the content of most answers, examiners may see responses that include ideas not covered in the indicative content. For these cases, examiners should credit valid responses fairly and not penalise candidates for including valid points outside the mark scheme.

Using a banded mark scheme

Place the answer in a level first. Look for the 'best fit' of the answer into a level. An answer needs to show evidence of most but not necessarily ALL of the qualities described in a level in order to be placed in that band. Then award a mark for the relative position of the answer within the level.

Higher level responses (Levels 4 and 5) will demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding of the key concepts (AO1). They should use a wide range of terminology accurately (AO1). They should show clear understanding of how meaning is created in the text (AO2). They should support their answer with many detailed references to the text (AO2).

Middle range responses (Level 3) will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the key concepts – there may be uneven coverage or some misunderstanding (AO1). They should use some terminology, but not always accurately (AO1). They should show some understanding of how meaning is created in the text (AO2). They should support their answer with some references to the text (AO2).

Basic responses (Levels 1 and 2) will demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of the key concepts – misunderstanding might be common (AO1). They might use some terminology, but rarely accurately (AO1). They will have limited understanding of how meaning is created in the text (AO2). They rarely support their answer with references to the text (AO2).

Section A: Media Texts

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	Analyse how the extract from <i>The Curse</i> constructs meaning, including the specific representations of individuals, groups, events or places, through the following technical elements: • camera shots, angles, movement and composition • sound • mise-en-scène • editing. <u>Specific notes on the sequence – likely areas of coverage</u> Camera: • The extract begins with a slow zoom – the initial focus is on a window in a nondescript residential building where we can hear a character talking. As the camera movement progresses, the focus of the shot becomes clear that the window in the centre of the frame is guiding the viewer to the heart of the action and to the character (Fernando) who is talking. The slow camera movement eventually reveals the male character talking and then a female character by his side. As the camera movement progresses, the frame of the window is ever present – framing the characters and putting barriers on their lives – imprisoning them. This visual motif is also used elsewhere in the extract with the shots of the camera recording the characters talking from the sofa. • These windows – the real one, and the camera window – point out to the viewer that they are outsiders, observers here on somebody else's world – replicating the status of Asher and Whitney	25	Candidates will be assessed on their ability to understand how meaning is constructed in a media text through the analysis of different technical areas. Marks are awarded for exploration of the following areas of the AOs: • Media concepts (AO1) [5 marks] • Contexts and debates (AO1) [5 marks] • Use of terminology (AO1) [5 marks] • Analysis of how meaning is created (AO2) [5 marks] • Use of examples (AO2) [5 marks] Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria, and marks awarded according to the level attained. It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion. A positive approach to marking is encouraged. Reward alternative valid responses. Clip details: Extract: <i>The Curse</i> (episode 1, 'Land of Enchantment', 2024, dir. Fielder)

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	• Slow zoom into a tightening CU on Whitney's face (as the electronic symphonic music is introduced to the soundtrack) showing a fake smile which disintegrates revealing her emotional discomfort at the exploitation of the elderly, terminally ill woman Sound: • The majority of the extract features only diegetic sound – the sound of the characters talking, the sounds of movement – this helps to construct a sense of realism to the this fictional world – when the camera crew is revealed to the audience, this then gives the feel of a Pennebaker-style fly on the wall documentary which the viewer is being given privileged access to these characters and this environment • Fernando (the first character to speak) is revealing details of his life – revealing his inability to get a job, thus indicating the that he is lives in relative poverty – this establishes a class divide between Fernando and his mom and the interlopers of Whiten and Asher with their deire to magically improve people's lives with money and home swapping • Later in the sequence, as Whitney becomes more obviously uneasy with the overly constructed nature of the programme being made, with the producer stepping in to inject fake tears into a woman who is terminally ill, and as she and Asher leave the apartment / house, some electronic symphonic music plays to reinforce this moment of transition in emotional state.		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	Mise-en-scene: - Costume – the clothes of the man talking and his mother are very ordinary casual clothes – style wise entirely fitting for their approximate ages. As the sequence progresses and we see more of Fernando, the audience becomes increasingly aware of the tattoos around his head that are visible and as he narrates his difficulties with finding a job ‘ people take one look at me’ – the tattoos become a visual signifier of Fernados’s social outcast sense of status also. - Setting / location – the slow zoom into a bland looking building revealed nothing extraordinary about the environment - and the very ordinariness of the environment then begins to anchor where in the social class strata the characters whose lives the audience is about to inspect are. - Props – the range and the extent of the video production facilities being used in Fernando's home indicate a sense of professionalism and expertise amongst the crew and also reflect that Whitney and Asher are relatively wealthy European Americans opening a double binary opposite with the Hispanic Americans whose home they are in and whose lives they are filming and intervening in Editing: - There is a long take at the beginning of the extract – the slow zoom in to Fernando last for almost a minute		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	- For the remainder of the extract, the pace of cutting between shots is quite sedate, but what the editing structure of the sequence works to construct is three sets of relationships by cutting between repeated 2 shots – we regularly see Whitney and Asher on screen together, Fernando and his mother, and the mother with the producer – the cutting between these three sets of relationships constructs the narrative thrust of the extract – Whitney and Asher with their naive sense of trying to do good, the relatively impoverished Fernando and his mother being exploited in different ways by Whitney and Asher and by the programme producer Meaning: - The opening of the first episode of <i>The Curse</i> establishes the main trio of characters: Asher and Whitney, the couple conducting the interview, and Dougie, the producer of the show they are making. It is revealed that this privileged group is recording an interview with a Hispanic mother and son, documenting the philanthropic work that Asher and Whitney are doing, by procuring a job for the son. But this philanthropic work is also shown to be a performance for the show and the couple seem ill at ease with Dougie's techniques of making the mother look happy about the news of the job. Asher also seems uneasy in the house and in his interviewer role, wanting to cut and re-record a comment when he realises that it might be offensive in a religious household. The scene is generally unsettling – the 'cold open' begins with a slow track into a window from outside with the interior sound of the son explaining his employment predicament, making it difficult initially to make sense of what we are seeing and hearing. It is not until we cut to Asher and Whitney (the 'white saviours') that we realise we are witnessing an interview.		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	The shots of the mother and son are predominantly from outside, creating an impression of voyeurism, and the idea that these impoverished people are a spectacle for other people's entertainment is reinforced by Dougie's 'tricks of the trade' to make it look as if the mother is crying with happiness. Whitney is clearly appalled by this and the scene culminates with her berating Asher for this betrayal of their 'principles'.		

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Marking criteria for Section A Question 1				
AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately.			AO2: Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, to explain how meaning is created, supported with relevant textual evidence.	
15 marks			10 marks	
Media Concepts 5 marks	Contexts and Critical Debates 5 marks	Use of Terminology 5 marks	Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory 5 marks	Use of Examples 5 marks
Sophisticated understanding of and insightful reference to the key concepts of language and representation 5 marks	Insightful understanding of the social significances explored in the extract 5 marks	A wide range of media terminology is used precisely and accurately, and with sophistication, to make subtle points 5 marks	Sophisticated and insightful analysis of the ways technical aspects are used to construct meaning in the extract 5 marks	Insightful and fully appropriate selection of examples fully supports expression 5 marks
Thorough understanding of and effective reference to the key concepts of language and representation 4 marks	Effective understanding of the social significances explored in the extract 4 marks	A range of media terminology is used accurately, and help to make effective points 4 marks	Thorough and effective analysis of the ways technical aspects are used to construct meaning in the extract 4 marks	Effective and appropriate selection of examples fully supports expression 4 marks
Clear understanding of and appropriate reference to the key concepts of language and representation 3 marks	Clear understanding of the social significances explored in the extract 3 marks	Media terminology is used appropriately, to make clear points 3 marks	Clear analysis of the ways technical aspects are used to construct meaning in the extract 3 marks	Clear and appropriate selection of examples supports expression 3 marks

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AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately.			AO2: Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, to explain how meaning is created, supported with relevant textual evidence.	
15 marks			10 marks	
Media Concepts 5 marks	Contexts and Critical Debates 5 marks	Use of Terminology 5 marks	Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory 5 marks	Use of Examples 5 marks
Limited understanding of but generally appropriate reference to the key concepts of language and representation 2 marks	Limited understanding of the social significances explored in the extract 2 marks	Limited use of media terminology is mainly used accurately, to make simple or obvious points 2 marks	Limited analysis of the ways technical aspects are used to construct meaning in the extract 2 marks	Limited but generally appropriate selection of examples supports expression 2 marks
Basic understanding of and minimal reference to the key concepts of language and representation 1 mark	Basic understanding of the social significances explored in the extract 1 mark	Basic use of media terminology, with frequent errors which impede communication 1 mark	Basic analysis of the ways technical aspects are used to construct meaning in the extract 1 mark	Basic and minimal selection of examples, may lack relevance in parts 1 mark
No creditable content 0 marks	No creditable content 0 marks	No creditable content 0 marks	No creditable content 0 marks	No creditable content 0 marks

Section B: Media Contexts

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2	EITHER Explain the advantages and disadvantages of different marketing strategies in the media area you have studied. <u>Indicative content</u> With detailed reference to at least one case study, candidates <i>may</i> address: • Traditional marketing strategies • Digital marketing strategies • Synergies • The use of social media • Assumptions about audiences • Strategies for targeting niche audiences • How audiences use media in different ways and how marketing may appeal to/construct a sense of identity • Candidates may focus on the advantages and disadvantages of marketing strategies from the perspective of institutions or audiences; or may attempt a mixture of both - all approaches are valid	25	Candidates should be given credit for their knowledge and understanding, illustrated through case study material, relevant to the question. Marks are awarded for exploration of the following areas of the AOs: • Media concepts (AO1) [5 marks] • Contexts and debates (AO1) [5 marks] • Use of terminology (AO1) [5 marks] • Analysis of how meaning is created (AO2) [5 marks] • Use of examples (AO2) [5 marks] Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained. It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion. The indicative content demonstrates how candidates might approach the question. It is a description of possible content only. It is not prescriptive, nor is it exclusive; examiners must be careful to reward original but well-focused answers.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	OR Explain how media products are influenced by particular technologies of production. <u>Indicative content</u> With detailed reference to at least one case study, candidates <i>may</i> address: • how processes of production shape media products in terms of time, scale, aesthetics (e.g. virtual production, digital recording, digital postproduction) • processes of production by organisations, groups and individuals in a global context • the specialised and institutionalised nature of media production • the relationship between technological change and media production, • the impact of convergent media platforms on media production	25	Candidates should be given credit for their knowledge and understanding, illustrated through case study material, relevant to the question. Marks are awarded for exploration of the following areas of the AOs: • Media concepts (AO1) [5 marks] • Contexts and debates (AO1) [5 marks] • Use of terminology (AO1) [5 marks] • Analysis of how meaning is created (AO2) [5 marks] • Use of examples (AO2) [5 marks] Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained. It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion. The indicative content demonstrates how candidates might approach the question. It is a description of possible content only. It is not prescriptive, nor is it exclusive; examiners must be careful to reward original but well-focused answers.

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Marking criteria for Section B Question 2 and Question 3				
AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately.			AO2: Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, to explain how meaning is created, supported with relevant textual evidence.	
15 marks			10 marks	
Media Concepts	Contexts and Critical Debates	Use of Terminology	Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory	Use of Examples
5 marks	5 marks	5 marks	5 marks	5 marks
Sophisticated understanding of and insightful reference to the key concepts of audience and industry	Insightful understanding of the wider issues, explored with sophistication in the response Factual knowledge of contexts and debates is relevant, detailed and accurate, and sophisticatedly linked to the question	A wide range of media terminology is used precisely and accurately, and with sophistication, to make subtle points	Sophisticated and insightful analysis of texts from multiple case studies is used to explore the chosen area in depth Relevant theories are sophisticatedly used to explore the question	Insightful and fully appropriate selection of examples from a wide range of texts
5 marks	5 marks	5 marks	5 marks	5 marks
Thorough understanding of and effective reference to the key concepts of audience and industry	Effective understanding of the wider issues explored Factual knowledge of contexts and debates is relevant, and effectively linked to the question	A range of media terminology is used accurately, and help to make effective points	Thorough and effective analysis of texts from multiple case studies is used explore the chosen area Relevant theories are used effectively in response to the question	Effective and appropriate selection of examples from a range of texts fully
4 marks	4 marks	4 marks	4 marks	4 marks

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Marking criteria for Section B Question 2 and Question 3				
AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately. 15 marks			AO2: Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, to explain how meaning is created, supported with relevant textual evidence. 10 marks	
Media Concepts 5 marks	Contexts and Critical Debates 5 marks	Use of Terminology 5 marks	Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory 5 marks	Use of Examples 5 marks
Basic understanding of and minimal reference to the key concepts of audience and industry 1 mark	Basic understanding of the wider issues explored Minimal knowledge of the relevant contexts and debates 1 mark	Basic use of media terminology, with frequent errors which impede communication 1 mark	Basic analysis, from case studies which may not be appropriate to the question Minimal references to even basic media theory. 1 mark	Basic and minimal selection of examples, may lack relevance in parts 1 mark
No creditable content 0 marks	No creditable content 0 marks	No creditable content 0 marks	No creditable content 0 marks	No creditable content 0 marks