



CAMBRIDGE  
International Education

# Cambridge International AS & A Level

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**MEDIA STUDIES**

**9607/04**

Paper 4 Critical Perspectives

**For examination from 2028**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

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**Specimen**

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This document has **14** pages.

## Generic Marking Principles

All examiners must apply these general marking principles when marking candidate responses. Examiners must apply them alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme must also comply with these marking principles.

### GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptions for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptions for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

### GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

### GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

### GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptions.

### GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however, the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

**GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:**

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

**English & Media-Specific Marking Principles**

(To be read in conjunction with the Generic 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).

**Components using point-based marking:**

Point marking is often used to reward knowledge, understanding and application of skills. We give credit where the candidate's answer shows relevant knowledge, understanding and application of skills in answering the question. We do not give credit where the answer shows confusion.

From this it follows that we:

- a DO credit answers which are worded differently from the mark scheme if they clearly convey the same meaning (unless the mark scheme requires a specific term).
- b DO credit alternative answers/examples which are not written in the mark scheme if they are correct.
- c DO credit answers where candidates give more than one correct answer in one prompt/numbered/scaffolded space where extended writing is required rather than list-type answers. For example, questions that require  $n$  reasons (e.g. State two reasons ...).
- d DO NOT credit answers simply for using a 'key term' unless that is all that is required. (Check for evidence it is understood and not used wrongly.).
- e DO NOT credit answers which are obviously self-contradicting or trying to cover all possibilities.
- f DO NOT give further credit for what is effectively repetition of a correct point already credited unless the language itself is being tested. This applies equally to 'mirror statements' (i.e. polluted/not polluted).
- g DO NOT require spellings to be correct, unless this is part of the test. However spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. Corrasion/Corrosion).

## Section A: Media debates

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	<p><b><u>Media regulation</u></b></p> <p><b>Evaluate the reasons for and against stricter media regulation.</b></p> <p>Mark according to the marking criteria in Table A.</p> <p><b><u>Indicative content</u></b></p> <p>Candidates may draw upon a wide range of contemporary and historical case studies which can be used to support and illustrate key points. They should be able to articulate the key question at the heart of debates around regulation: should governments protect people from 'harmful content' or should audiences be treated as mature and enlightened and therefore able to make their own decisions. Candidates should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contextual issues surrounding media regulation and be able to link them to their chosen case studies.</p> <p>Candidates may address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulation in a particular media context, such as film, TV, the press, the internet;</li> <li>• Public and policy debate about the need for tighter regulation in this area;</li> <li>• The basis for arguments for and against tighter regulation (e.g. moral, democratic, pluralistic);</li> <li>• Technological challenges such as fake news, deep fakes, AI, bots;</li> <li>• Historical perspectives illustrating shifting values relating to language, ethnicity, religion and sex;</li> <li>• The role of key regulatory bodies, such as the BBFC, Ofcom, PEGI, IPSO, ASA;</li> <li>• Theoretical approaches to regulation from, for example, Martin Barker, Julian Petley, Des Freedman, and the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law.</li> </ul>	15	<p>Candidates should be given credit for their knowledge and understanding, illustrated through case study material, relevant to the question. Assessment will take place across five criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media concepts (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Contexts and critical debates (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Use of terminology (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory (AO2) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Use of examples (AO2) [3 marks]</li> </ul> <p>Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained.</p> <p>It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion.</p> <p>This guidance should be used in conjunction with the Level Descriptors. It is not prescriptive, nor is it exclusive; examiners must be careful to reward original but well-focused answers. This indicative content is intended to indicate aspects of questions that may feature in candidates' answers.</p> <p>It is not essential for candidates to name theorists – it is more important that they understand the ideas and are able to apply them in some form.</p>

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2	<p><b>Postmodern media</b></p> <p><b>Explain the knowledge and understanding needed by audiences to make sense of postmodern media texts.</b></p> <p>Mark according to the marking criteria in Table A.</p> <p><u>Indicative content</u></p> <p>Candidates may draw upon a wide range of contemporary and historical case studies which can be used to support and illustrate key points. Candidates should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of postmodernism and be able to link them to their chosen case studies.</p> <p>Candidates may address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concepts of postmodernism;</li> <li>• Notional differences between postmodern and 'traditional' texts;</li> <li>• Modes of address to audiences;</li> <li>• Understanding of characteristics of postmodernism in the media e.g. pastiche, parody, intertextuality, irony, homage, self-referentiality, simulation, hyper-reality, remixing, playfulness;</li> <li>• The repertoire of resources needed by an audience to interpret postmodern media texts;</li> <li>• Film and TV texts and how they use postmodern strategies e.g: <i>Borat Subsequent Movie Film</i>, <i>The Personal History of David Copperfield</i>, <i>Lovecraft Country</i>, <i>I'm Thinking of Ending Things</i>, <i>Stranger Things</i>, <i>Community</i>;</li> <li>• The ways in which images, song lyrics and video clips become memes – the production of a shared reference designed to comment on something else;</li> <li>• Theories of postmodernism derived from writers such as Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva, Fredric Jameson, and Jean-François Lyotard.</li> </ul>	15	<p>Candidates should be given credit for their knowledge and understanding, illustrated through case study material, relevant to the question. Assessment will take place across five criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media concepts (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Contexts and critical debates (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Use of terminology (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory (AO2) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Use of examples (AO2) [3 marks]</li> </ul> <p>Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained.</p> <p>It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion.</p> <p>This guidance should be used in conjunction with the Level Descriptors. It is not prescriptive, nor is it exclusive; examiners must be careful to reward original but well-focused answers. This indicative content is intended to indicate aspects of questions that may feature in candidates' answers.</p> <p>It is not essential for candidates to name theorists – it is more important that they understand the ideas and are able to apply them in some form.</p>

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	<p><b>Power and the media</b></p> <p><b>'Now that everyone has a voice in the media, everyone has equal power to influence.' How far do you agree with this statement?</b></p> <p>Mark according to the marking criteria in Table A.</p> <p><u>Indicative content</u></p> <p>Candidates should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of power and the media and be able to link them to their chosen case studies.</p> <p>Candidates may address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utopian vs dystopian perspectives on the ease of publishing to a mass audience;</li> <li>• Notions of the 'public sphere' (although not essential, candidates may show an awareness of Jürgen Habermas's ideas that the public sphere is distinct from official areas of discourse and that it may be critical of the state);</li> <li>• Historical perspectives – the shift from 'one to many' to 'many to many';</li> <li>• Asymmetry in online communication, e.g. Twitter (X) and Elon Musk – the hierarchy of voices in the digital public sphere;</li> <li>• The affordances of social media in creating a space and channel for public voices;</li> <li>• The impact of those 'voices' (e.g. via Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other channels);</li> <li>• Examples such as the MeToo movement and Black Lives Matter – the ways in which social media facilitate immediate sharing of and response to social issues;</li> <li>• Theories of Dominant Ideologies and resistance to them;</li> <li>• Ownership – the continuing power of those who control mass media outlets and the ways in which this limits plurality';</li> <li>• The relationship between the press and social media;</li> <li>• Key examples of 'people power' – Henry Jenkins' participatory culture, for example;</li> </ul>	15	<p>Candidates should be given credit for their knowledge and understanding, illustrated through case study material, relevant to the question. Assessment will take place across five criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media concepts (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Contexts and critical debates (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Use of terminology (AO1) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory (AO2) [3 marks]</li> <li>• Use of examples (AO2) [3 marks]</li> </ul> <p>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.</p> <p>This guidance should be used in conjunction with the Level Descriptors. It is not prescriptive, nor is it exclusive; examiners must be careful to reward original but well-focused answers. This indicative content is intended to indicate aspects of questions that may feature in candidates' answers.</p> <p>It is not essential for candidates to name theorists – it is more important that they understand the ideas and are able to apply them in some form.</p>

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Debates around ‘cancel/accountability’ culture – the ways in which some voices are silenced;</li><li>• The reach and impact of different distribution channels;</li><li>• Contextual factors which create conditions for particular interpretations.</li><li>• Curran and Seaton’s work on influence of the press – <i>Power Without Responsibility</i>;</li><li>• The nature of influence – ways of reading, audience theory – e.g. Stuart Hall, David Morley;</li><li>• Antonio Gramsci and hegemony – the nature and degree of possible oppositional positions;</li><li>• Approaches to power and participation in the media by, for example, David Gauntlett, Will Merrin, Clay Shirky, Evgeny Morozov, James Curran &amp; Jean Seaton.</li></ul>		

## Marking criteria for Section A Question 1, Question 2 and Question 3

Table A

<b>AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately.</b>			<b>AO2: Analyse media products, and research, plan and evaluate their own work, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying knowledge and understanding of how meaning is created through theoretical and creative approaches taken by media producers</li> <li>Selecting relevant textual evidence in support of their views.</li> </ul>	
<b>9 marks</b>			<b>6 marks</b>	
<b>Media Concepts</b>  <b>3 marks</b>	<b>Contexts and Critical Debates</b>  <b>3 marks</b>	<b>Use of Terminology</b>  <b>3 marks</b>	<b>Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory</b>  <b>3 marks</b>	<b>Use of Examples</b>  <b>3 marks</b>
Sophisticated understanding of and insightful reference to several relevant key concepts  <b>3 marks</b>	Insightful understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question  <b>3 marks</b>	A wide range of media terminology is used precisely and accurately, and with sophistication, to make subtle points  <b>3 marks</b>	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  <b>3 marks</b>	Insightful and wholly appropriate selection of examples from a wide range of texts  <b>3 marks</b>
Clear understanding of and appropriate reference to some key concepts  <b>2 marks</b>	Clear understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question  <b>2 marks</b>	Media terminology is used appropriately, to make clear points  <b>2 marks</b>	Clear analysis of texts from one case study (or more) is used to respond appropriately Occasional references to relevant theories, not always accurately used or understood  <b>2 marks</b>	Clear and appropriate selection of examples from a range of texts  <b>2 marks</b>

<b>AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately.</b>			<b>AO2: Analyse media products, and research, plan and evaluate their own work, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying knowledge and understanding of how meaning is created through theoretical and creative approaches taken by media producers</li> <li>Selecting relevant textual evidence in support of their views.</li> </ul>	
<b>9 marks</b>			<b>6 marks</b>	
<b>Media Concepts</b>  <b>3 marks</b>	<b>Contexts and Critical Debates</b>  <b>3 marks</b>	<b>Use of Terminology</b>  <b>3 marks</b>	<b>Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory</b>  <b>3 marks</b>	<b>Use of Examples</b>  <b>3 marks</b>
Basic understanding of and minimal reference to any key concepts  1 mark	Minimal understanding of the wider contexts or critical debates raised in the question  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

**Section B: Changing media environments**

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4	<p><b>Explain how changes in technology and audience behaviour have had an impact on how the media is funded.</b></p> <p>Mark according to the marking criteria in Table B.</p> <p><b>Indicative content</b></p> <p>The material listed below illustrates 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.</p> <p>The focus in this question is on the degree to which technology and associated audience consumption have brought about different media funding strategies and models. It is a question about the 'political economy' of the media, in other words, it focuses on how media texts are produced and consumed within complex relationships with audiences, technologies, economic pressures, legislation and regulation.</p> <p>Candidates should assess the current media landscape, with a focus on a few apposite examples, and use this to generate an informed discussion about the effects of the changing media environment on how media products and companies find and sustain sources of revenue.</p> <p>Generally, it may be useful to consider how candidates have engaged with:</p> <p><b>Audience behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• audience engagement with evolving media environments</li> <li>• changing modes of reception and their impact on audiences.</li> <li>• the changes to audiences' perception of knowledge, truth and reality</li> <li>• Fan and 'prosumer' culture</li> </ul>	30	<p>Assessment will take place across five criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media concepts (AO1) [6 marks]</li> <li>• Contexts and critical debates (AO1) [6 marks]</li> <li>• Use of terminology (AO1) [6 marks]</li> <li>• Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory (AO2) [6 marks]</li> <li>• Use of examples (AO2) [6 marks]</li> </ul> <p>Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained.</p> <p>It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion.</p> <p>This guidance should be used in conjunction with the Level Descriptors. It is not prescriptive, nor is it exclusive; examiners must be careful to reward original but well-focused answers. This indicative content is intended to indicate aspects of questions that may feature in candidates' answers.</p> <p>This question is synoptic so candidates should draw on their learning throughout the course, and may also make connections between this learning and other, related, areas.</p> <p>It is not essential for candidates to name theorists – it is more important that they understand the ideas and are able to apply them in some form.</p>

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4	<p><b>Economics of media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the changing nature of media ownership and distribution models</li> <li>changing media funding models</li> <li>the nature of globalisation and the responses of audiences and institutions</li> </ul> <p><b>Ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the responsibilities of digital platforms for what is ‘published’ on them</li> <li>impact on society of technological change including the collection and sharing of information and data protection</li> <li>the representation of public and private personae</li> </ul> <p><b>Technological convergence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the blurring of boundaries between ‘old’ and ‘new’ media</li> <li>convergence of personal communication technology and mass communication technology</li> <li>the relationships between software, hardware and audiences</li> <li>the impact of developing technologies on media language, codes and conventions</li> </ul> <p>More specifically, candidates may address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concepts of the creative or cultural industries relating to economic value (e.g. the British Council’s mapping document, <i>Mapping the Creative Industries: A Toolkit</i>);</li> <li>Historical perspectives on companies such as Netflix, moving from a postal model to an online model facilitated by the widespread adoption of broadband (note – the Time Warner/AOL merger in 2000 was too soon in this regard);</li> <li>Move to subscription-based funding – <i>Guardian</i>, Amazon, Netflix etc. Patreon and Substack allow audiences to directly fund creators as do crowd funding sites;</li> <li>Move online of traditional media, e.g. <i>London Evening Standard</i>;</li> <li>Threats to public service broadcasting, and the BBC licence fee in particular from subscription models;</li> <li>BBC Studios and BBC Worldwide as a possible commercial response to this pressure;</li> </ul>		

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to subscribe to multiple providers may prompt piracy and the rise of torrent sites;</li> <li>• Strategies by media companies to consolidate market position, e.g. vertical and horizontal Integration;</li> <li>• Market Dominance of 'Magnificent Seven' Apple, Meta, Alphabet (Google parent), Amazon (Cloud services), Microsoft, Nvidia (AI);</li> <li>• Lobbying of US government to retain oligopoly (advantages of scale, etc.) vs legislative response threatening regulation (breaking up Google);</li> <li>• Contemporary examples of tensions between politics and 'cultural production', such as TikTok under pressure to reform – facing US ban which would threaten its funding model (US 120 mn second largest audience – Indonesia 157 mn). Network effect – when more people use a product or service its value increases, thus there is an incentive to offer provocative content;</li> <li>• Impact of this on legacy companies / content providers / copyright holders – Lanier calls Google a giant photocopying machine. AI production in conflict with artists / Rights owners of creative work. SAG/ writers' strike to acquire share of profits;</li> <li>• Advertising on streaming platforms to add revenue stream (only Netflix makes a profit at present);</li> <li>• Facebook etc. provide market for highly targeted advertising (based on different factors such as age, gender, location, interests, and behaviours) on various Meta social media platforms and apps, including Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp and Threads plus third party sites;</li> <li>• Free/cheap news vs expensive news – impact on politics of Musk's ownership of X;</li> <li>• Fragmentation of audience – new ways of targeting niche audiences;</li> <li>• Role of publicly funded media: PSB – BBC licence fee under constant threat from self-interest of rival providers (Sky, GB News, Times Radio, Global);</li> <li>• Companies' crackdown on audience use of password-sharing and governments discuss banning VPNs to control access to content;</li> <li>• Approaches to the broader media environment by, for example, Evgeny Morozov, Sonia Livingstone, David Hesmondhalgh, Sherry Turkle, Jaron Lanier.</li> </ul>		

## Marking criteria for Section B Question 4

Table B

<b>AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately.</b>			<b>AO2: Analyse media products, and research, plan and evaluate their own work, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying knowledge and understanding of how meaning is created through theoretical and creative approaches taken by media producers</li> <li>Selecting relevant textual evidence in support of their views.</li> </ul>	
<b>18 marks</b>			<b>12 marks</b>	
<b>Media Concepts</b>  <b>6 marks</b>	<b>Contexts and Critical Debates</b>  <b>6 marks</b>	<b>Use of Terminology</b>  <b>6 marks</b>	<b>Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory</b>  <b>6 marks</b>	<b>Use of Examples</b>  <b>6 marks</b>
Sophisticated understanding of and insightful reference to several relevant key concepts  5–6 marks	Insightful understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question  5–6 marks	A wide range of media terminology is used precisely and accurately, and with sophistication, to make subtle points  5–6 marks	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  5–6 marks	Insightful and wholly appropriate selection of examples from a wide range of texts  5–6 marks
Clear understanding of and appropriate reference to some key concepts  3–4 marks	Clear understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question  3–4 marks	Media terminology is used appropriately, to make clear points  3–4 marks	Clear analysis of texts from one case study (or more) is used to respond appropriately  3–4 marks	Clear and appropriate selection of examples from a range of texts  3–4 marks

<b>AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately.</b>			<b>AO2: Analyse media products, and research, plan and evaluate their own work, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying knowledge and understanding of how meaning is created through theoretical and creative approaches taken by media producers</li> <li>Selecting relevant textual evidence in support of their views.</li> </ul>	
<b>18 marks</b>			<b>12 marks</b>	
<b>Media Concepts</b>  <b>6 marks</b>	<b>Contexts and Critical Debates</b>  <b>6 marks</b>	<b>Use of Terminology</b>  <b>6 marks</b>	<b>Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory</b>  <b>6 marks</b>	<b>Use of Examples</b>  <b>6 marks</b>
Basic understanding of and minimal reference to any key concepts  1–2 marks	Minimal understanding of the wider contexts or critical debates raised in the question  1–2 marks	Basic use of media terminology, with frequent errors which impede communication  1–2 marks	Basic analysis, from case studies which may not be appropriate to the question Minimal references to even basic media theory  1–2 marks	Basic and minimal selection of examples, may lack relevance in parts  1–2 marks
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