

Media Studies

2014 Chief Assessor’s Report

# Media Studies

# 2014 Chief Assessor’s Report

## Overview

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

The number of schools offering Stage 2 Media Studies increased this year, as did the number of students undertaking the subject.

Teachers new to the subject in 2014 who attended the clarifying forum quickly established support networks that assisted in their delivery of the course. Teachers who were appointed as markers and moderators commented on the benefits of these roles in terms of professional development. These roles help teachers to understand the requirements of each assessment type and to interpret and consistently apply performance standards when assessing student work. They also provide the opportunity to network with other teachers and subject experts.

Media Studies continues to offer flexibility to teachers regarding the range of topics studied and assessment tools that can be used. Documentaries, short film, and photojournalism are the main methods of presentation. The focus of Media Studies is on exploring the dynamic role of media in Australian and global contexts. The more successful and engaging programs focused on contemporary rather than traditional aspects of the media and also encouraged greater participation from students.

The overall quality of work produced by students this year was again evidence of the development of sophisticated media literacy and production skills. This year the percentage of students achieving results in the A and B bands remained stable compared with 2013, although there was an increase in the number of students who gained a Merit Certificate. This reinforces the notion that this is a subject that recognises and rewards those who meet the upper bands of the performance standards. However, there is some concern with those students achieving results in the D and E bands and this is discussed in the section on Assessment Type 3.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

For the folio, students undertake two or three media exploration assessments, and one media interaction study.

**Media Exploration**

The standard of responses in the folio indicated that this task was generally well addressed. A range of topics were explored; however, short film and documentary topics were common. Teachers are encouraged to explore other topics, or even develop new, possibly more relevant, topics, but it is important that the student is provided the opportunity to negotiate their choice of topic with the teacher.

The Media Studies subject outline states:

Students, in *negotiation* with their teacher, choose three … topics for study … When planning a program of study, teachers may develop additional topics, using the key media concepts as a framework to guide the development of each topic … (p. 25, emphasis added).

A consideration for teachers at the design stage of their learning and assessment plan in this subject must be the inclusion of the key media concepts:

* media representations
* media conventions
* media organisations
* media audiences.

These concepts create the theoretical framework that underpins this subject. A strong understanding of these concepts, along with an understanding of the performance standards, allows students to achieve at the higher levels.

The performance standards are generally well understood by teachers; however, it is advised that teachers deconstruct the performance standards with students, and that they consider these performance standards at the task design stage. An example of this deconstruction for Assessment Type 3 is available in the support materials on the Media Studies minisite. Where students are more aware of and have an understanding of the performance standards, they are able to achieve at a higher level.

High achievement against the research and analysis performance standards requires emphasis on authentic primary sources, including original student interviews and research. In addition to the use of primary sources, the better responses used three or more relevant sources as the basis for research and demonstrated effective and accurate use of relevant media terminology. Teachers can support students in Media Exploration tasks by deconstructing, mentoring, and scaffolding relevant and authentic source identification and use.

Students achieved well against specific feature RA2 (Research into and analysis of the ways in which groups and individuals are represented in media) when they were able to discuss notions of media representations and the influence of media across gender, race, ethnicity, and age in context. Teachers are encouraged to consider the performance standards comprehensively at the task design stage and to consider the course holistically. Students were generally more successful when they were provided with more than one opportunity to show their understandings against a performance standard.

Where task design was well considered, the performance standards were built into the task, and topic choices were relevant on a national or local level, students were able to achieve very well against the performance standards and make relevant, considered conclusions about their learning and the media’s role in society.

**Media Interaction Study**

There is still some misinterpretation regarding the requirements of the media interaction task. Teachers are reminded that the media interaction must contain the student’s personal interaction with a media form/activity/product. This is not another media exploration. There should be a point of difference between the two tasks and teachers are encouraged to mentor the process of personal interaction and reflection. The misunderstanding of the media interaction task meant that some students could not achieve well against specific features KU1 and RA3.

There was once again confusion regarding word-limits for folio tasks. Teachers are reminded that ‘The combined word length of the media exploration assessments should be a maximum of 1500 words if written’, and ‘the media interaction … should be a maximum of 800 words if primarily written’. Although some minor changes to limits for non-written responses have been put in place for 2015, these word-limits remain unchanged.

Assessment Type 2: Product

Students undertake two media products, each of which is supported by a producer’s statement.

There were some outstanding, creative, and well-polished samples of productions that allowed students to achieve very well against the performance standards in 2014. Unfortunately, some low-quality, unrefined productions were also seen presented. Teachers should consider the fundamental skills required to create meaningful and authentic media products. Technology alone does not make a video production that is a ‘comprehensive reproduction of the structural and conventional features of media texts’ that is clearly and consistently conveying meaning. There were excellent short films captured using relatively simple technology. These samples displayed comprehensive design and planning, and highly proficient use of appropriate production techniques and technologies and media conventions, with a focus on shot types, framing, composition, and narrative. In other samples, there was scant evidence of design or planning and little consideration of audiences.

The format of some productions was also problematic — there was a lack of attention to the specific conventions of media products, highlighting a lack of understanding for some students. Teachers are reminded that students may include up to 30% of copyrighted material in their productions. The intended use of this weighting is for music, soundtracks, titling, and imagery that is difficult to produce. In the print area, posters that gained high grades tended to be constructed using imagery entirely of the student’s own creation. In the case of video production, students generated all production elements, such as capturing their own images or video and making their own sound and music recordings. This does require a level of specialisation from teachers, and schools should take this into consideration when planning to offer Stage 2 Media Studies.

The most successful students used the required producer’s statement as a contextualising document that effectively provided evidence of their learning and achievements in creating their product. These students, within the 500-word limit, discussed the role they played if working in a small group and the authenticity and success of their product against the conventions of that media type.

Conversely, the less successful samples either omitted the producer’s statement or simply used it as a step-by-step journal of their production, limiting their achievement against the performance standards.

Teachers should ensure that students complete the producer’s statement in the format described in the subject outline and should emphasise the importance of addressing its context.

In 2014 the moderation process for school assessment again confirmed that, overall, there was consistency, reliability, and validity in the grade levels that teachers had awarded.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

Almost 90% of students who submitted their media investigation received a result in the C band and higher, with 16% in the A band.

Again, the majority of these independent investigations of current media issues were text based. However, a variety of visual elements such as graphs, tables, charts, or images were incorporated in many of the investigations. These elements in most cases related directly to the research, but in a few instances these elements seemed to be added to make the presentation simply look more appealing and this approach should be avoided. An appendix was used by many students to provide evidence of correspondence, questionnaires, and use of other sources. While the use of appendices may be perceived as a useful strategy, such documentation should be kept at the school and only forwarded upon request.

Analysis of the media coverage of Malaysian Airlines Flights 370 and 17 were popular topics. However, to achieve an ‘insightful and informed understanding of facts, opinions, and bias in media texts or products’, the student response had to discuss more than conspiracy theories. Other investigations researched included YouTube-preneurs, the rise of the selfie generation, reality television, the online dating phenomenon, and the continuing impact of social media.

However, some issues and focus questions did not lend themselves to a media investigation and this is where the role of the teacher is important. ‘The focus of the investigation is the cultural, political, or economic impact of media on contemporary society’, using a current media issue. It is not about any current issue that the media might report. Put in context, to analyse the media treatment of Malaysian Airlines Flights 370 and 17 in terms of conspiracy theories cannot lead the student into high achievement in KU1, KU2, KU3, RA1 and RA2.

The most successful investigations researched current and controversial issues and as a result the sources they used were varied (i.e. including both primary and secondary sources) and contemporary. Such student work displayed ‘comprehensive and sustained knowledge and understanding of media structures, issues, concepts, and interactions’ (meeting specific feature KU1), as well as ‘comprehensive research into and analysis of the ways in which groups and individuals are represented in media’ (RA1). The currency of the issue of their investigation was clearly established and referenced by these students in their introductory paragraphs.

Most teachers clearly understood the nature of this task; however, it must be reiterated that, as the subject outline states, students have ‘the opportunity to undertake one independent investigation’ (p. 34), and therefore, this assessment type should not be designed for a whole class to research the same issue. Students should be encouraged to ‘negotiate a suitable issue and topic’.

Investigations that were not about a current media issue were more prevalent this year.

With respect to the investigation, students need to be able to demonstrate their learning based on the following specific features of the assessment design criteria:

* KU1: Knowledge and understanding of media structures, issues, concepts, and interactions
* KU2: Knowledge and understanding of how audiences influence, and are influenced by, forms and content of media texts
* KU3: Understanding of facts, opinions, and bias in media texts or products
* RA1: Research into and analysis of different points of view, bias, values, or intent across a range of media texts
* RA2: Research into and analysis of the ways in which groups and individuals are represented in media
* C2: Fluency of expression and use of appropriate media terminology.

Where an investigation is out of scope, the opportunity to demonstrate learning against the specific features cited above is very restricted. In this case, both the teacher and SACE marker would be looking for:

* evidence of understanding of facts, opinions, and bias in media texts or products (this is likely to be in the body of discussion of findings from research) (KU3)
* evidence of research into, and analysis of, different points of view, bias, values, or intent across a range of media texts (this may be in the number and relevance of references cited, as well as the use of primary and secondary sources) (RA1)
* fluency of expression and some use of appropriate media terminology (these may be present) (C2).

Clearly then, the teacher’s role as mentioned previously must be to monitor and advise their students in formulating the topic for their investigation. Students should also be made aware of the performance standards, as this will guide them in ensuring that their work will be directed towards meeting the standards, and also guide them as to what is needed to achieve at higher levels.

## Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

Teachers should take care when preparing material for both moderation and external marking. Samples submitted for moderation that are well packaged, with student work clearly labelled, make it easy for moderators to identify the materials for each student and assist the moderation process. For school assessment, student identification on each assessment task within each assessment type is required.

The approved learning and assessment plan and a complete set of tasks sheets for the school assessment tasks should be included in the moderation package. The use of the learning and assessment plan (LAP) addendum, if applicable, is also important, as it enables moderators to easily locate changes to the assessment design and the corresponding student material.

Where samples are presented in electronic format, such as a DVD or USB drive, two clearly labelled copies should be included wherever possible.

Most media investigations were submitted in an appropriate format (for written work, on single-sided sheets stapled in the top corner). Investigations that are bound may look appealing, but they are cumbersome. Teachers are reminded to retain appendices and work of a supportive nature within the school. Most investigations complied with the de-identification necessary for the external assessment of the investigation.

Teachers should refer to the subject operational information, and regularly visit the SACE website. All forms, including the current cover sheet for the investigation, can be located on the Media Studies minisite.

## General Comments

It is encouraging to see a better integration of the four key media concepts into curriculum design, and a more discernible effort by teachers to impart knowledge of contemporary media theories.

Media Studies

Chief Assessor