

Stage 2 Media Studies – 2013

External Assessment Cover Sheet

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

SACE Registration Number:

Topic: *“Politicians Use of Social Media”*

To what extent do politicians utilise social media to appeal to a younger demographic?

Open-ended question providing an appropriate focus to explore the political impact of media on contemporary society.

This **investigation** is assessed using the following specific features:

Knowledge and Understanding	Research and Analysis	Communication
KU1	RA1	C2
KU2	RA2	
KU3		

How are politicians utilising social media to appeal to a younger demographic and what are the consequences of this?

Topic

Topic nominated clearly allows for exploration of media structures, issues, concepts and interactions.

Social media sites have made communication and self-promotion more accessible and easier than ever before. Politicians all over the world have begun utilising this technology to a great extent to communicate with their electorate and appeal to a younger, more tech savvy demographic. In the recent 2013 federal election the manipulation of social media was particularly evident. The youth of Australia are becoming increasingly more aware and interested in politics and through social media are able to directly participate in political discussion. The effects of social media are not all positive, politicians are opening themselves up to greater scrutiny and negativity while traditional Medias must change to compete in an internet based media world.

Media form defined.

Seeing politicians using social media has a huge effect on how young people perceive and respond to them, over 60% of people surveyed said that politicians appeal to them more when they use social media, (*Politicians Use of Social Media, 2013*). Often it can show that the politician is accessible and aware. Giving "behind the scenes" photos or personal updates also humanises them, allowing young people to view them as people not just as politicians. One teenager surveyed suggested that politicians who use social media are more likeable because they "manage their own accounts personally and post about their lives and opinions rather than posting things about their job constantly", (*Politicians Use of Social Media, 2013*). One issue politicians have is appearing 'authentic' on social media, for example Kevin Rudd recently posted a picture of himself with a shaving cut on his Instagram page. Although this was criticised in the media, that single photo received almost 10,000 genuine likes and over 1500 comments, it is one of his most popular photos on instagram. This shows that young people are interested in more just the policies of a politician, they also want to see a relatable, interesting and funny person, and social media allows politicians to present this side of themselves to the public.

Perceptive understanding of how audiences are influenced by form and content of media text.

Through the utilisation of social media politicians are able to reach a huge audience with their message, there are hundreds of millions of people using social media sites every day, Facebook alone has over 800 million users, (*IndusNet, 2013*). More than 80% of people aged 13-21 use some form of social media actively whether it is Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Tumblr, and it is estimated that 1 in 5 people follow at least one politician on social media, (*Survey, Politicians Use of Social Media, 2013*). This gives people the opportunity to directly communicate with politicians. Often when a politician posts an update on a social media site, for example Facebook or instagram, the public are able to comment and converse with each other and the politician. Additionally the public are able to contact politicians, post comments or ask questions directly to their member of parliament, which is then able to be addressed directly. This has encouraged a far more open and honest communication between politicians and the public.

Definition of audience.

Strength of the media form.

Limitation of the media form.

Our belief that communication via social media is a more honest and less filtered view of politicians may not be accurate as not all politicians manage their own social media accounts. Many politicians employ digital communications staff, who go unseen and work behind the scenes, responding to the public and posting on the politicians behalf. This can make it difficult for the public to know what is truly authentic. However it seems that the public are not oblivious to the fact that politicians do not always run their own social networking sites, in a survey only 26% of participants believed that politicians do manage their own pages. Although voters may not like the idea that they are not communicating directly with the politician, those hired to run the sites are experienced and trained in the benefits and ways of social media and the sites are updated and monitored regularly. However there are some politician's that do chose to personally update their social media pages, "I

Management of media form discussed.

write all my own Facebook posts, because otherwise – what’s the point?” (Christopher Pyne 2013). It is likely that these pages may not be updated as often and politicians are more likely to make mistakes/say something that is later used against them when they manage their own pages.

The use of social media can result in negative consequences for everyone, even politicians. One of the most common problems with using social media is that freedom of speech can lead to bullying or ‘trolling’. Almost every politician has received negative comments on their social media platforms, *‘there are people who take advantage of increased presence on the internet to abuse and direct not nice statements at one another and at myself’, (Christopher Pyne, 2013).* Although everyone has the right to voice their political opinions freely, often comments made online can become more serious and personal. Monitoring this form of abuse is difficult, some social media sites have the option to post comments anonymously and it can be difficult to know which comments to take seriously and which to ignore. Through the use of social media politicians are opening themselves up to criticism and attacks from individuals who misuse the freedom the internet allows. Despite this, there are many people who utilise the communication with politicians well. Members of the public are able to directly reach out and interact with politicians and as almost all of the communication on social media is public, anyone can see conversations between individuals and join in. The public sharing of information and opinions can be beneficial for politicians to see what issues are important to young people. Social media sites give young people the opportunity to express their opinions, both personal and political and to communicate with other likeminded people on important issues. Giving politicians the opportunity to communicate and target specific groups of people, associations or political party followers. This is increasingly beneficial to politicians and young people alike as they are able to freely communicate and express their opinions, to an audience that cares and listens.

Influence of media form and text.

Management of the form.

Strength of the media form.

Use of language to promote the message - content can be implicit or explicit.

To appeal to a younger demographic through social media often politicians use colloquial and informal language in their online communication. Research has found that it is far more effective to use short, simple language on social media as often people quickly skim these sites and avoid reading lengthy posts, *(Chen & Vromen, 2011).* The English language is becoming increasingly manipulated to apply to an online world. With new lingo and abbreviations becoming increasingly popular. Other effective social media tools essential to politician’s success on social media is the use of “likes”, “hashtags”, “retweets” and “followers”, *“the use of links, hashtags and images can be used to appeal to a younger demographic, along with the use of more informal language”, (Nick Xenophon, 2013).* The aim of social media is to get people engaged, this is effectively achieved through the promotion of “likes”, which motivate people to view and interact with the post/politician. Similarly politicians are greatly liked by young people when they interact with the public on social media, by following or liking individual’s posts, *(Si M, 2012).* By showing an understanding of how social media operates and the appropriate language, jargon used, politicians also show that they have an interest in issues relevant to young people.

Exploration of the nature of the media text and its implications for engagement.

The 2013 Australian federal election represented a major breakthrough for the political use of social media in appealing to young people. By far the most successful use of social media during the election was Kevin Rudd, during the 4 week election campaign he uploaded 144 photos to Instagram, varying from policy promotion to photos of food. Rudd has over 1.3 million Twitter followers, 81,000 Instagram followers and 128,000 Facebook likes. In comparison the now Prime Minister Tony Abbot had just 1,900 Instagram followers, 254,300 Twitter followers and 260,000 likes on Facebook. Many political experts believe that the 2013 election was not about the two major parties, but rather the two leaders themselves, this was evident on traditional media such as newspaper, radio and television and their coverage of the election. Additionally the smaller parties, who were not able to gain access or time on these traditional media platforms turned to social media to conduct their election campaigns. This allowed parties that the public may have known

Interaction between media structure and audience can be varied.

nothing about to have fair representation. Although popularity on social media may not result in political success, as shown in this year's election, it definitely contributes. As users of social media come to represent more of the voting public, it is likely that we will see an increase in the role social media plays in politics and in the success of politicians.

Strength of form.

It isn't just politicians that are beginning to realise the effectiveness of social media in reaching young people. As traditional media platforms such as television, radio and newspaper struggle to compete with internet news, television and entertainment they are beginning to incorporate social media into their network. Often you can see news or panel shows such as ABC's 'Q & A' show running twitter feeds and sourcing questions from viewers online or online applications such as ABC's 'Voter compass' incorporating and promoting social media and politics. This is another way that social media is opening up the communication between young people, politicians and the public. The future of social media is unknown, however we do know that new social media sites are constantly being developed, each one attempting to be the next big one. Politicians just like young people are eager to see what the future of social media holds and what affect it will have on their work, "...politicians need to adapt to the ever-changing world we face in. Social media is one of the newest tools that we should be utilising more of and I am happy to be using social media to better engage with the community", (Christopher Pyne, 2013). We can expect politicians to increase their exposure on social media as they come to realise what an effective tool social media can be. The relationship between political discussion and social media is likely to become stringer as even now we can see political debates and policy announcements being made through social media.

Examples of influence of social media across groups and individuals.

One the other side of this argument, it is important to acknowledge that many voters do not use social media. Generally older people aged 45-70, have no interest or awareness of politicians use of social media. These people look for different qualities in politicians than young people look for, and they are less effected by the personality but rather the policies and promises. Nick Xenophon, Christopher Pyne and Jay Weatherill all acknowledged that the largest part of their communication with their electorate is through personal interaction, phone conversations and email, with only approximately 15-20% of their communication through social media, "The majority of contact our office has with constituents is via email & phone," (Nick Xenophon, 2013). The influence social media has on politics is only set to increase, whether this is a positive or negative effect is yet to be determined.

Limitation of form.

Social media sites are having major effects on the way politicians appeal and communicate with the Australian youth. Sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are allowing politicians to reach and communicate a larger audience, gain popularity and appeal to young people and also represent minorities that are not supported by traditional media, however politicians are more likely to receive harassment and cyber bullying online. It is difficult to understand what effect social media is having on political success, as social media grows and the young people that use it come to represent more of the voting public many believe that social media will have a much greater impact on political success. The use of social media in politics is only just beginning and politicians are only just beginning to use it effectively. In the future social media will become a far more prominent feature in Australia's political landscape which will inspire and promote young people to become more active and engaged in politics. It is important to remember that social media is another tool used by politicians and the media to influence and manipulate the public's actions, feelings and beliefs.

Valid and succinct conclusion.

2023 Words

Fluent expression and appropriate media terminology used throughout.

Bibliography:

Primary Sources:

Halpin-Bassham C. *Politicians Use of Social Media.*" Survey. www.surveymonkey.com, 11/8/2013.

Face to Face Interview with Christopher Pyne, 8/8/2013

Interview via email with Jay Weatherill, 23/8/2013

Interview via email Nick Xenophon, 5/9/2013

Evidence of current research initiated by student.

Secondary Sources:

Chen & Vromen. *Social Media and Youth Participation, Australian Electorate Commission, 2011,* http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/research/caber/files/1b.pdf

Sourced: 18/8/2013

IndusNet technologies, *Facebook Facts*, 11/2/2013, <http://visual.ly/fascinating-facts-about-facebook>

Sourced: 13/8/2013

Lance Bennet W & Entman R. *Mediated Politics- Communication in the Future of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, England, 2001

Si M. *Uses of Social Media and Political Participation of Young Voters*, Universitas Pancasila Jakarta, 2012, <http://amic.org.sg/conference/AMIC2013/Full%20Papers/G1/martriana%20ps.pdf>

Sourced: 21/8/2013

Sources provide evidence of currency of issue. Secondary sources posted with past year.

Wax-Thibodeaux E. *PSA's in the Hashtag Generation*, 2013,

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/rethinking-psas-for-a-hashtag-generation/2013/09/13/51f48d50-1988-11e3-82ef-a059e54c49d0_story.html

Sourced: 11/9/2013

Additional Comments

This investigation was graded A+.

Appendix is not
assessed but provided
as evidence of primary
research.

Appendix

Transcript from Interview with Christopher Pyne, conducted in person on the 8/8/2013

1. **What types of social media do you utilise in your work?**

I am active in Facebook, but also have a Flickr, YouTube and a website. I regularly post to Facebook, and on occasion post videos and photos of my parliamentary activities on to YouTube.

2. **Do you target as specific demographic with your use of social media? If so who?**

A majority of my 'likes' on Facebook are, according to Facebook, from the demographic of the ages 35-44. However, my engagement with social media is to engage with as many people as possible.

3. **Have you seen any positive or negative outcomes from your use of social media? E.g. Trolling, abuse or more young people interested in the work you are doing, more publicity, etc. /what do you believe are the benefits of politicians using social media?**

Social media is a terrific way of engaging with a wide selection of the population, and a more interactive way of engaging with my electorate. As in the course of many "new Medias", there are people who take advantage of increased presence on the internet to abuse and direct not nice statements at one another, but on the whole the use of social media allows politicians to engage more young people who want to know more about the issues that they care about.

4. **Do you personally manage your social media platforms?**

I write all my own Facebook posts, because otherwise – what's the point?

5. **Do you simplify or tailor information to be published on social media for a specific demographic?**

I write on social media about the issues of the day and about the issues that I believe are most relevant for Australians – which is holding the government to account.

6. **What issues do you believe are important for young people?**

The most pressing issue I believe that is important for young people is having a strong and diverse economy so that when they finish their schooling and want to start the next part of their lives – there is a good selection of options that is available to them. Whether they choose to continue their education either at TAFE or at university, whether they choose to travel or enter the work force, there should be many choices and options open to all of them. A strong and robust economy allows young people to have this choice. Young people are also concerned that when they finish their schooling, if they want to choose to go to TAFE or university that they are able to go with the best facilities and the best teachers in the world. I think that education is important as it the basis of which we learn the important skills for the future.

7. **Do you believe that politicians can have success without utilising social media?**

As with businesses and other organisations, politicians need to adapt to the ever-changing world we face in. Social media is one of the newest tools that we should be utilising more of and I am happy to be using social media to better engage with the community.

8. **Are there any subjects or areas of your work that you choose not to publicise on social media?**

I enjoy using social media to communicate with the online community and by posting thoughts on the most current news of the day.

9. **Roughly much of your communication with constituents is done through social media?**

One of the intricacies of using social media is the inability to know who you're communicating with, however a good number of my Facebook 'likes' are constituents in my electorate and regularly contact me about local issues.

10. What age group do you find responds to you through social media? / In the future how do you plan to appeal to a younger demographic?

It's always difficult to tell what age group people belong to when they contact me through social media – but I have found that I have a good cross section of the community on Facebook. I continue to be an advocate for good social media use appealing to all constituents in my electorate and beyond.

11. Do you believe that young people are interested in politics? If not how could this be improved?

Young people are the future of our country and should be engaged as much as possible as any demographic to ensure we have a strong and robust economy and we can provide for the next generations to come.

Transcript from Interview with Nick Xenophon, conducted via email on the 5/9/2013

1. What types of social media do you utilise in your work?

Facebook & Twitter

2. Do you target as specific demographic with your use of social media? If so who?

While Nick utilises social media as an additional platform to further his message, the use of social media is an effective way of appealing to a younger demographic.

3. How do you specifically appeal to this demographic (question 2)?

The use of links, hashtags and images can be used to appeal to a younger demographic, along with the use of more informal language.

4. Have you seen any positive or negative outcomes from your use of social media? E.g. Trolling, abuse or more young people interested in the work you are doing, more publicity, etc.

Nick has received both positive and negative outcomes from his use of social media. As you may know, Nick is planning to introduce legislation to subject Facebook and Twitter trolls to tougher laws after news of the recent case in the UK involving Caroline Criado-Perez, who was subjected to as many as 50 rape threats an hour via Twitter after spearheading a successful campaign to have a woman included on a British bank note. Nick believes there is clearly a need for Facebook and Twitter in particular to be made accountable for the protection of their users against abuse such as threats, harassment and defamation. He has also said Facebook and Twitter are making it difficult for Australian law enforcement authorities to deal with these threats and for individuals to take legitimate action for grossly defamatory comments. Nick believes that Facebook and Twitter are making it difficult for Australian law enforcement authorities to deal with these threats and for individuals to take legitimate action for grossly defamatory comments. He has also called on both major parties to back his legislative moves for a Social Media Ombudsman to be created in Australia.

4. Do you personally manage your social media platforms?

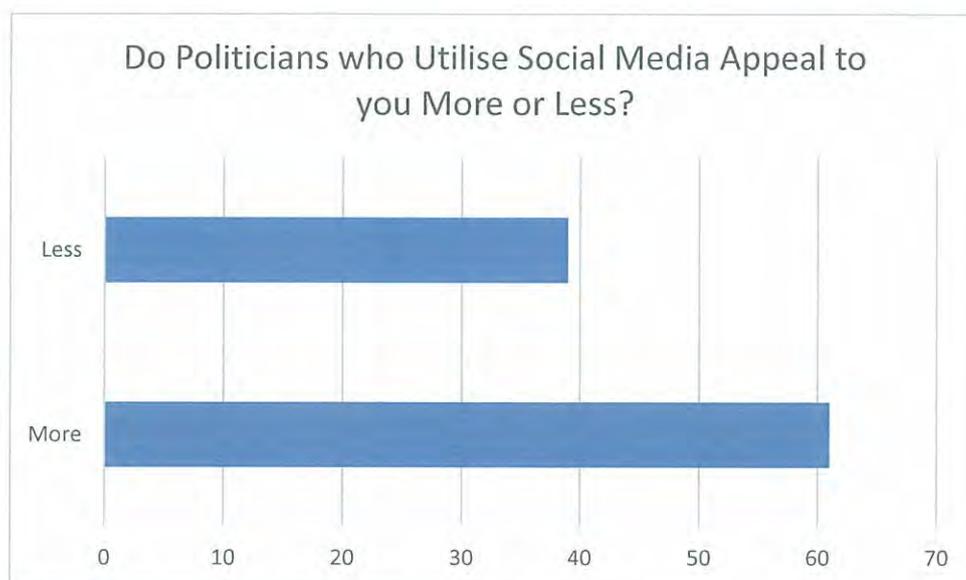
When time permits, Nick contributes to both Facebook and Twitter.

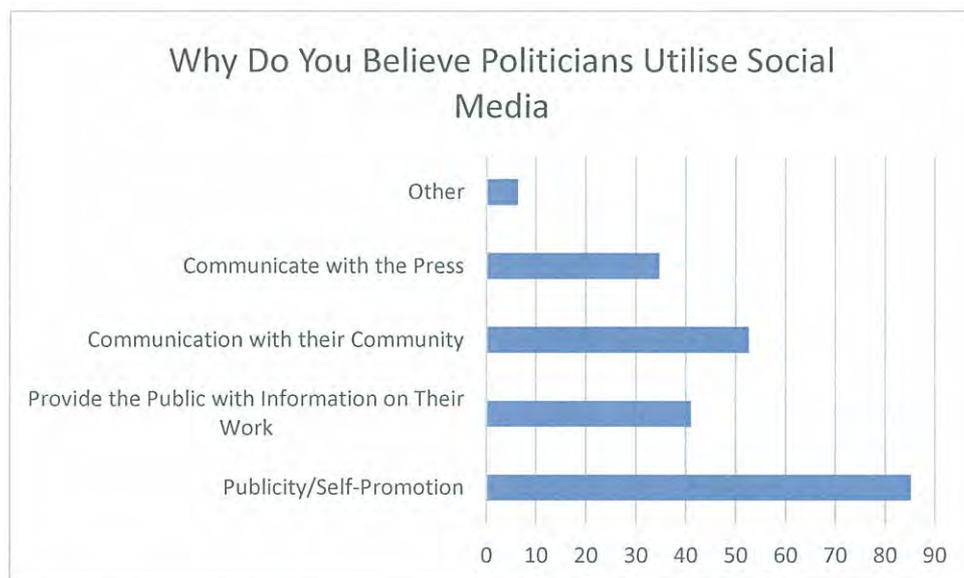
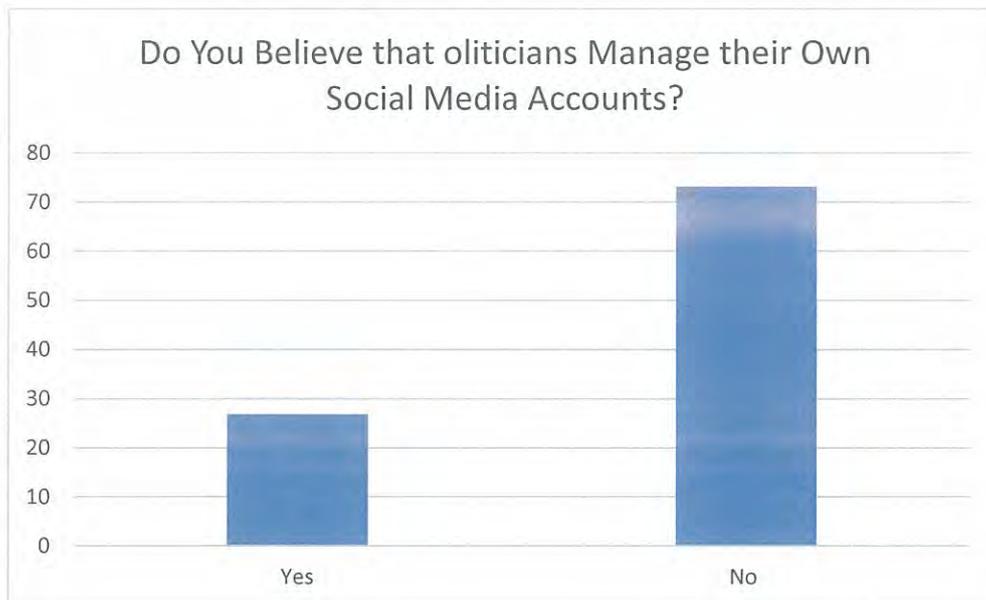
5. If you do not manage your social media platforms yourself what guidelines do you give them and do they have any specific qualifications.

N/A

7. **Do you simplify or tailor information to be published on social media for a specific demographic?**
Yes such as making information brief and concise (Eg. for Twitter).
8. **What issues do you believe are important for young people?** You can view Nick's key issues on his website at nickxenophon.com.au which he believes are important for all Australians.
9. **Do you believe that politicians can have success without utilising social media?**
Yes by utilising traditional media forms. However, it is increasingly important for politicians to be accessible via social media.
10. **Are there any subjects or areas of your work that you choose not to publicise on social media?**
Yes a number of contact our office receives from constituents is on a confidential basis.
11. **Roughly much of your communication with constituents is done through social media?** The majority of contact our office has with constituents is via email & phone.
12. **What do you believe are the benefits of politicians using social media?**
Increased transparency and accessibility to the public.
13. **What age group do you find responds to you through social media?**
Largely <50 years old.
14. **In the future how do you plan to appeal to a younger demographic?**
Increasing Nick's presence on existing and new forms of social media.
15. **Do you believe that young people are interested in politics? If not how could this be improved?**
Nick would like to see more young people interested and involved in politics and believes this could be improved by making policy, campaigns and communication more relevant to young people.

Sample of Results from Survey Conducted of 171 Participants aged 13-30, 11/8/2013





What Could Politicians do to appeal to you more as people rather than their politics?

“Manage their accounts personally and post about their lives and opinions rather than posting things about their work constantly.”

“Concentrate less on votes and more on doing good work for Australia.”

“Be honest, be part of the community.”

“Spend more time in our actual communities, seeing what is happening first hand so they can put themselves in our shoes. This would allow them to see what improvement they can help with and work on to benefit us more effectively.”

“Personally appeal to the things that I may want.”

“Concentrate less on votes and more on doing positive things for this country.”

Performance Standards for Stage 2 Media Studies

	Knowledge and Understanding	Research and Analysis	Producing	Communication
A	<p>Comprehensive and sustained knowledge and understanding of media structures, issues, concepts, and interactions.</p> <p>Perceptive knowledge and informed understanding of how audiences influence, and are influenced by, forms and content of media texts.</p> <p>Insightful and informed understanding of facts, opinions, and bias in media texts or products.</p>	<p>Thorough and well-informed research into and analysis of different points of view, bias, values, or intent across a range of media texts and in the media investigation.</p> <p>Comprehensive research into and analysis of the ways in which groups and individuals are represented in media.</p> <p>Perceptive analysis of interactions with media.</p>	<p>Comprehensive design and planning of media products for selected audiences.</p> <p>Highly proficient use of appropriate production techniques and technologies, and media conventions.</p>	<p>Comprehensive reproduction of the structural and conventional features of media texts, to clearly and consistently convey meaning.</p> <p>Fluent expression, using consistently clear and appropriate media terminology.</p>
B	<p>Well-considered and mostly sustained knowledge and understanding of media structures, issues, concepts, and interactions.</p> <p>Well-considered knowledge and informed understanding of how audiences influence, and are influenced by, forms and content of media texts.</p> <p>Well-considered and informed understanding of facts, opinions, and bias in media texts or products.</p>	<p>Well-informed research into and analysis of different points of view, bias, values, or intent across a range of media texts and in the media investigation.</p> <p>Well-considered research into and informed analysis of the ways in which groups and individuals are represented in media.</p> <p>Well-considered analysis of interactions with media.</p>	<p>Thorough design and planning of media products for selected audiences.</p> <p>Proficient use of appropriate production techniques and technologies, and media conventions.</p>	<p>Sound reproduction of the structural and conventional features of media texts, to clearly convey meaning.</p> <p>Mostly fluent expression, using clear and appropriate media terminology.</p>
C	<p>Considered knowledge and understanding of media structures, issues, concepts, and interactions.</p> <p>Considered knowledge and informed understanding of how audiences influence, and are influenced by, forms and content of media texts.</p> <p>Considered and informed understanding of facts, opinions, and bias in media texts or products.</p>	<p>Considered and informed research into and analysis of different points of view, bias, values, or intent across a range of media texts and in the media investigation.</p> <p>Considered and informed research into and analysis of the ways in which groups and individuals are represented in media.</p> <p>Considered analysis of interactions with media.</p>	<p>Considered design and planning of media products for selected audiences.</p> <p>Competent use of appropriate production techniques and technologies, and media conventions.</p>	<p>Competent reproduction of the structural and conventional features of media texts, to convey meaning.</p> <p>Generally fluent expression, using appropriate media terminology.</p>
D	<p>Partial knowledge and basic awareness of media structures, issues, concepts, and interactions.</p> <p>Basic awareness and some understanding of how audiences influence, and are influenced by, forms and content of media texts.</p> <p>Recognition and some understanding of facts, opinions, and bias in media texts or products.</p>	<p>Basic consideration and recognition of different points of view, bias, values, or intent in one or more media texts and in the investigation.</p> <p>Identification of some of the ways in which groups or individuals are represented in media.</p> <p>Description of one or more interactions with media.</p>	<p>Partial design and some planning of media products for a selected audience.</p> <p>Basic use of some simple and appropriate production techniques and technologies, and some basic media conventions.</p>	<p>Some reproduction of the structural and conventional features of one or more media texts, to convey basic meaning.</p> <p>Occasionally clear expression and use of basic media terminology.</p>
E	<p>Limited awareness of media structures, issues, concepts, or interactions.</p> <p>Limited awareness of how audiences influence, and are influenced by, forms and content of media texts.</p> <p>Limited recognition of facts, opinions, or bias in a media text or product.</p>	<p>Attempted description of a point of view, bias, value, or intent in a media text, and/or the investigation.</p> <p>Attempted recognition of one way in which a group or individual is represented in media.</p> <p>Attempted description of an interaction with media.</p>	<p>Attempted design or planning of media products.</p> <p>Attempted use of a production technique or technology, and one or more basic media conventions, which may be appropriate.</p>	<p>Attempted reproduction of the structural and conventional features of one media text.</p> <p>Limited expression or use of basic media terminology.</p>