

CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

# GCE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Media Studies (2021)

November 2020

**ofqual**

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# Introduction

## About this document

This document is part of a suite of documents which sets out the regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering reformed A levels and AS qualifications in 2021.

We have developed all our requirements for GCE qualifications with the intention that AS and A level qualifications should fulfil the purposes set out in the table below:

A levels	AS qualifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ define and assess achievement of the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be needed by students planning to progress to undergraduate study at a UK higher education establishment, particularly (although not only) in the same subject area;</li><li>■ set out a robust and internationally comparable post-16 academic course of study to develop that knowledge, skills and understanding;</li><li>■ permit UK universities to accurately identify the level of attainment of students;</li><li>■ provide a basis for school and college accountability measures at age 18; and</li><li>■ provide a benchmark of academic ability for employers.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ provide evidence of students' achievements in a robust and internationally comparable post-16 course of study that is a sub-set of A level content;</li><li>■ enable students to broaden the range of subjects they study.</li></ul>

## Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out the GCE Subject Level Conditions for Media Studies. These conditions will come into effect at 09:30 on 5 November 2020 for the following qualifications:

- all GCE A levels in Media Studies; and
- all standalone GCE AS qualifications in Media Studies,

for Learners completing the qualification in 2021, except where the GQCov Framework applies.

It also sets out our requirements in relation to:

- interpretation of the content document - an awarding organisation must comply with these requirements under Condition GCE(Media Studies)1.1(c);
- assessment objectives - awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCE(Media Studies)1.2; and
- assessment - awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCE(Media Studies)2.3.

Appendix 1 reproduces the [subject content requirements for Media Studies](#), as published by the Department for Education. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCE(Media Studies)1.1.

With respect to the qualifications listed above, awarding organisations must also comply with:

- our [General Conditions of Recognition](#), which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications;
- our [GCE Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements](#); and
- all [relevant Regulatory Documents](#).

With respect to all other GCE qualifications in Media Studies, taken by Learners completing the qualification in 2022 and after, an awarding organisation must continue to comply with the [GCE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Media Studies](#).

# Subject Level Conditions

## GCE Subject Level Conditions for Media Studies

### *Condition GCE(Media Studies) 1: Compliance with content requirements*

#### **GCE(Media Studies)1.1**

In respect of each GCE Qualification in Media Studies which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must -

- (a) comply with the requirements relating to that qualification set out in the document published by the Secretary of State entitled '[Media studies GCE AS and A level subject content](#)', document reference DFE-00031-2016,
- (b) have regard to any recommendations or guidelines relating to that qualification set out in that document, and
- (c) interpret that document in accordance with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

#### **GCE(Media Studies)1.2**

In respect of each GCE Qualification in Media Studies which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, relating to the objectives to be met by any assessment for that qualification which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

## **Condition GCE(Media Studies) 2: Assessment**

### **GCE(Media Studies)2.1**

Condition GCE4.1 does not apply to any GCE Qualification in Media Studies which an awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available.

### **GCE(Media Studies)2.2**

In respect of the total marks available for a GCE Qualification in Media Studies which it makes available, an awarding organisation must ensure that -

- (a) 70 per cent of those marks are made available through Assessments by Examination, and
- (b) 30 per cent of those marks are made available through assessments set by the awarding organisation that are not Assessments by Examination.

### **GCE(Media Studies)2.3**

An awarding organisation must ensure that in respect of each assessment for a GCE Qualification in Media Studies which it makes available it complies with any requirements, and has regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

## Subject content requirements

### Requirements in relation to subject content for GCE Qualifications in Media Studies

The subject content for GCE Qualifications in Media Studies is set out in the Department for Education's [Media Studies GCE subject content](#), document reference DFE-00031-2016 (the 'Content Document').

Condition GCE(Media Studies)1.1(c) requires awarding organisations to interpret the Content Document in line with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, published by Ofqual.

We set out our requirements for the purposes of Condition GCE(Media Studies)1.1(c) below.

#### *Media products*

An awarding organisation must interpret the Content Document as if the requirements in relation to the creation of media products by Learners can be met through the submission by the Learner of a mock-up or prototype rather than a finished product.

## Assessment objectives

### Assessment objectives - GCE Qualifications in Media Studies

Condition GCE(Media Studies)1.2 allows us to specify requirements relating to the objectives to be met by any assessment for GCE Qualifications in Media Studies.

The assessment objectives set out below constitute requirements for the purposes of Condition GCE(Media Studies)1.2. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements in relation to all GCE Qualifications in Media Studies they make available.

	Objective	Weighting (A level)	Weighting (AS)
<b>AO1</b>	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ the theoretical framework of media</li> <li>■ contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.</li> </ul>	25-35%	25-35%
<b>AO2 (AS)</b>	Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts and through the use of academic theories</li> <li>■ make judgements and draw conclusions.</li> </ul>	<i>n/a</i>	35-45%
<b>AO2 (A level)</b>	Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts and through the use of academic theories</li> <li>■ evaluate academic theories</li> <li>■ make judgements and draw conclusions.</li> </ul>	35-45%	<i>n/a</i>
<b>AO3</b>	Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.	30%	30%



## Assessment requirements

### Assessment requirements - GCE Qualifications in Media Studies

Condition GCE(Media Studies)2.3 allows us to specify requirements in relation to assessments for GCE Qualifications in Media Studies.

We set out below our requirements for the purposes of Condition GCE(Media Studies)2.3. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements in relation to all GCE Qualifications in Media Studies they make available.

#### ***Non-examination Assessment***

Condition GCE(Media Studies)2.2(b) states that an awarding organisation must ensure that, of the total marks available for a GCE Qualification in Media Studies, 30 per cent of those marks are made available through assessments that are not Assessments by Examination.

An awarding organisation must ensure that all of that 30 per cent of marks are made available in respect of assessment objective AO3 (i.e. assessing AO3 in its entirety).

#### ***Non-examination Assessment (A level)***

The requirements in this section apply to GCE A level qualifications in Media Studies which an awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available.

In respect of the assessments which are not Assessments by Examination, an awarding organisation must ensure that each Learner is required to complete a single task which -

- (a) requires that Learner to complete an individual cross-media production, or a mock-up or prototype of such a production with supporting evidence as necessary, in response to a brief set by the awarding organisation, and
- (b) must be taken under conditions specified by the awarding organisation, including, in particular, conditions which ensure that the evidence generated by each Learner can be Authenticated.

Where a mock-up or prototype is provided, the supporting evidence provided may include -

- (a) original and non-original photographs, images, drawings or sketches with annotations to illustrate intentions,
- (b) storyboards,
- (c) a television screenplay,
- (d) a shooting script, or
- (e) a radio script and directions.

An awarding organisation may set more than one brief, although the evidence generated by each Learner, as described above, must only respond to a single brief.

## ***Non-examination Assessment (AS)***

The requirements in this section apply to GCE AS qualifications in Media Studies which an awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available.

In respect of the assessments which are not Assessments by Examination, an awarding organisation must ensure that each Learner is required to complete a single task which -

- (a) requires that Learner to complete an individual media production comprising a single product of the media (audio/visual, print or online), or a mock-up or prototype of such a production with supporting evidence as necessary, in response to a brief set by the awarding organisation, and
- (b) must be taken under conditions specified by the awarding organisation, including, in particular, conditions which ensure that the evidence generated by each Learner can be Authenticated.

Where a mock-up or prototype is provided, the supporting evidence provided may include -

- (a) original and non-original photographs, images, drawings or sketches with annotations to illustrate intentions,
- (b) storyboards,
- (c) a television screenplay,
- (d) a shooting script, or
- (e) a radio script and directions.

An awarding organisation may set more than one brief, although the evidence generated by each Learner, as described above, must only respond to a single brief.

## ***Marking of assessments***

Evidence generated by a Learner in an assessment for a GCE Qualification in Media Studies which is not an Assessment by Examination may be marked -

- (a) by the awarding organisation or a person connected to the awarding organisation,
- (b) by a Centre, or
- (c) through a combination of (a) and (b).

In any event, the awarding organisation must demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction in its assessment strategy that -

- (a) it has taken all reasonable steps to identify the risk of any Adverse Effect which may result from its approach to marking the assessments (and to Moderation where appropriate), and
- (b) where such a risk is identified, it has taken all reasonable steps to prevent that Adverse Effect or, where it cannot be prevented, to mitigate that Adverse Effect.

## Appendix 1 – Subject content (published by Department for Education)



Department  
for Education

# **Media studies**

**GCE AS and A level subject content**

**February 2016**

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# The content for AS and A level media studies

## Introduction

1. AS and A level subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject. It provides the framework within which the awarding organisation creates the detail of the specification.
2. There is no requirement for students embarking on an AS or A level in media studies to have previously taken a GCSE media studies course. Students should, however, build upon the knowledge, understanding and skills gained through other relevant study at key stage 4, particularly literacy and analytical skills.

## Aims and objectives

3. AS and A level specifications in media studies must enable students to:
  - demonstrate skills of enquiry, critical thinking, decision-making and analysis
  - demonstrate a critical approach to media issues
  - demonstrate appreciation and critical understanding of the media and their role both historically and currently in society, culture, politics and the economy
  - develop an understanding of the dynamic and changing relationships between media forms, products, media industries and audiences
  - demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the global nature of the media
  - apply theoretical knowledge and specialist subject specific terminology to analyse and compare media products and the contexts in which they are produced and consumed in order to make informed arguments, reach substantiated judgements and draw conclusions about media issues
  - engage in critical debate about academic theories used in media studies
  - appreciate how theoretical understanding supports practice and practice supports theoretical understanding
  - demonstrate sophisticated practical skills by providing opportunities for creative media production

## Subject content

4. AS and A level specifications in media studies must recognise the fundamental relationship between theory and practice, requiring students to apply and develop their

understanding of the media through both analysing and producing media products<sup>1</sup> in relation to the theoretical framework set out in paragraph 5.

5. AS and A level specifications in media studies must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework which informs all study of the media as set out below. The four areas of this theoretical framework, which are set out in detail in paragraphs 13-28, are:

- media language - how the media through their forms<sup>2</sup>, codes, conventions and techniques communicate meanings
- representation – how the media portray events, issues, individuals and social groups
- media industries – how the media industries' processes of production, distribution and circulation affect media forms and platforms
- audiences - how media forms target, reach and address audiences, how audiences interpret and respond to them and how members of audiences become producers themselves

6. AS and A level specifications in media studies must require students to study age appropriate examples of the media from all of the following media forms, using relevant aspects of the theoretical framework set out in paragraph 5:

- television
- film<sup>3</sup>
- radio
- newspapers
- magazines
- advertising and marketing
- online, social and participatory media
- video games
- music video

7. A level specifications must extend these studies in breadth by requiring students to study at least one media product produced for a non-English speaking audience and at least one produced outside the commercial mainstream. A level specifications must also

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'media product' refers to media texts such as television programmes, newspapers, radio programmes etc., as well as to online, social and participatory media platforms.

<sup>2</sup> Forms of the media: see paragraph 6 for the media forms to be studied at AS and A level.

<sup>3</sup> Film is an inextricable part of the wider media landscape, which is intimately connected with other media, such as television, video games and online media. However, to avoid overlap with GCE AS and A level film studies, film should not be a primary object of study in this context. Students may study individual feature films, but this must only occur in the context of cross-media study, which explores the convergence of media platforms and technologies, or in the context of the study of media industries (see page 8).

extend studies in depth by requiring students to engage with complex media theories including structuralism, postmodernism and theories around ethnicity and postcolonialism.

8. AS and A level specifications in media studies must require students to study at least one audio/visual<sup>4</sup>, one print and one online media form in depth through contrasting media products and using all four areas of the theoretical framework. The media forms to be studied in depth at both AS and A level, together with the associated media products, will be specified by the awarding organisation.

9. AS and A level specifications in media studies must require students to study contrasting media products which together will:

- possess cultural, social and historical significance<sup>5</sup>
- reflect and illuminate the theoretical framework underlying the study of media outlined in paragraphs 5 and 13-28 together with the theoretical perspectives associated with them
- illustrate a full range of media products in terms of perceived quality, form and structure
- provide rich and challenging opportunities for interpretation and in-depth critical analysis, enabling students to develop a detailed understanding of how the media communicate meanings and how audiences respond
- cover different historical periods and different global settings
- be intended for different audiences
- demonstrate emerging, future developments of the media
- cover examples of media students would not normally engage with

10. In addition, at A level, specifications must require students to study:

- at least one media product produced before 1970
- at least one media product produced for a non-English speaking audience
- at least one media product produced outside the commercial mainstream
- at least one media product targeting, or produced by, a minority group

11. AS and A level specifications in media studies must require close analysis and comparison of media products in relation to relevant key social, cultural, economic, political and historical contexts.

12. AS and A level specifications must require students to apply knowledge and understanding of the media studies theoretical framework, set out in paragraph 5, to an

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<sup>4</sup> Audio/visual: refers both to audio-visual and audio media.

<sup>5</sup> This significance will primarily be established with reference to the theoretical framework outlined in paragraphs 5 and 13-28 and may be reflected in critical acclaim and/or audience popularity.



individual media production<sup>6</sup> in response to a brief set by the awarding organisation. At AS, knowledge and understanding will be applied to a single product of the media (audio/visual, print or online). At A level, knowledge and understanding will be applied to a cross-media production<sup>7</sup> reflecting the digitally convergent nature of contemporary media.

## Knowledge and understanding

13. AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following aspects of:

### Media language

- how the different modes<sup>8</sup> and language<sup>9</sup> associated with different media forms communicate multiple meanings
- how the combination of elements of media language influence meaning
- how developing technologies affect media language
- the codes and conventions of media forms and products, including the processes through which media language develops as genre
- the dynamic and historically relative nature of genre
- the processes through which meanings are established through intertextuality<sup>10</sup>
- how audiences respond to and interpret the above aspects of media language

14. In addition, A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- how genre conventions are socially and historically relative, dynamic and can be used in a hybrid way
- the significance of challenging and/or subverting genre conventions
- the significance of the varieties of ways in which intertextuality can be used in the media
- the way media language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies

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<sup>6</sup> To avoid overlap with GCE AS and A level film studies, this production cannot be a film opening, film extract, complete short film or film trailer.

<sup>7</sup> Cross-media production: a production of related products which reflects the way digital platforms are exploited by producing, for example, a television programme and a related magazine and website. To avoid overlap with GCE AS and A level film studies, this production cannot include a film opening, film extract, complete short film or film trailer.

<sup>8</sup> Modes: images, sound, speech and writing.

<sup>9</sup> Language: media language associated with audio-visual, audio, print and online media.

<sup>10</sup> Intertextuality: the way aspects of a particular media product relate to another and thus accrue additional significance.

15. AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following theoretical aspects of media language:

- semiotics including Barthes
- narratology including Todorov
- genre theory including Neale

16. In addition, A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories associated with media language including:

- structuralism including Lévi-Strauss
- postmodernism including Baudrillard

17. AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following aspects of:

### **Media representation**

- the way events, issues, individuals (including self-representation) and social groups (including social identity) are represented through processes of selection and combination
- the way the media through re-presentation construct versions of reality
- the processes which lead media producers to make choices about how to represent events, issues, individuals and social groups
- the effect of social and cultural context on representations
- how and why stereotypes can be used positively and negatively
- how and why particular social groups, in a national and global context, may be under-represented or misrepresented
- how media representations convey values, attitudes and beliefs about the world and how these may be systematically reinforced across a wide range of media representations
- how audiences respond to and interpret media representations

18. In addition, A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- the way in which representations make claims about realism
- the impact of industry contexts on the choices media producers make about how to represent events, issues, individuals and social groups
- the effect of historical context on representations

- how representations may invoke discourses and ideologies and position<sup>11</sup>audiences
- how audience responses to and interpretations of media representations reflect social, cultural and historical circumstances

19. AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following theories associated with representation:

- theories of representation including Hall
- theories of identity including Gauntlett

20. In addition, A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories associated with representation including:

- feminist theories including bell hooks and Van Zoonen
- theories of gender performativity including Butler
- theories around ethnicity and postcolonial theory including Gilroy

21. AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following aspects of:

## **Media industries**

- processes of production, distribution and circulation by organisations, groups and individuals in a global context
- the specialised and institutionalised nature of media production, distribution and circulation
- the relationship of recent technological change and media production, distribution and circulation
- the significance of patterns of ownership and control, including conglomerate ownership, vertical integration and diversification
- the significance of economic factors, including commercial and not-for-profit public funding, to media industries and their products
- how media organisations maintain, including through marketing, varieties of audiences nationally and globally
- the regulatory framework of contemporary media in the UK
- the impact of 'new' digital technologies on media regulation, including the role of individual producers

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<sup>11</sup> Position: how audiences are encouraged to adopt a particular 'position' or point of view in relation to what is being represented.

22. In addition, A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- how processes of production, distribution and circulation shape media products
- the impact of digitally convergent media platforms on media production, distribution and circulation, including individual producers
- the role of regulation in global production, distribution and circulation
- the effect of individual producers on media industries

23. AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following theories associated with media industries:

- power and media industries including Curran and Seaton

24. In addition, A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories associated with media industries including:

- regulation including Livingstone and Lunt
- cultural industries including Hesmondhalgh

25. AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following aspects of:

## **Media audiences**

- how audiences are grouped and categorised by media industries, including by age, gender and social class, as well as by lifestyle and taste
- how media producers target, attract, reach, address and potentially construct audiences
- how media industries target audiences through the content and appeal of media products and through the ways in which they are marketed, distributed and circulated
- the interrelationship between media technologies and patterns of consumption and response
- how audiences interpret the media, including how they may interpret the same media in different ways
- how audiences interact with the media and can be actively involved in media production

26. In addition, A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- how specialised audiences can be reached, both on a national and global scale, through different media technologies and platforms

- how media organisations reflect the different needs of mass and specialised audiences, including through targeting
- how audiences use media in different ways, reflecting demographic factors as well as aspects of identity and cultural capital
- the role and significance of specialised audiences, including niche and fan, to the media
- the way in which different audience interpretations reflect social, cultural and historical circumstances

27. AS and A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories associated with media audiences including:

- media effects including Bandura
- cultivation theory including Gerbner
- reception theory including Hall

28. In addition, A level specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following theories associated with media audiences:

- fandom including Jenkins
- 'end of audience' theories including Shirky

## Skills

29. In analysing media, AS specifications must require students to be able to:

- analyse and compare how media products construct and communicate meanings through the interaction of media language and audience response
- use key theories of media studies and specialist subject-specific terminology appropriately
- debate key questions relating to the social, cultural, political and economic role of the media through discursive writing

30. In independently<sup>12</sup> creating media, AS specifications must also require students to be able to:

- apply knowledge and understanding of media language, representation, media industries and audiences to a media production based on one media form from the list in paragraph 6 (not including film)

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<sup>12</sup> Unassessed students and others may act in, or appear in, the media product. In addition, unassessed students and others may operate lighting, sound, recording and other equipment under the direction of the assessed candidate if required.

- use media language in a single media form to express and communicate meaning to an intended audience

31. In analysing media, A level specifications must require students to be able to:

- analyse critically and compare how media products, including products outside the commercial mainstream, construct and communicate meanings through the interaction of media language and audience response
- use and reflect critically upon a range of complex theories of media studies and use specialist subject specific terminology appropriately in a developed way
- debate critically key questions relating to the social, cultural, political and economic role of the media through sustained discursive writing

32. In independently<sup>13</sup> creating media, A level specifications must also require students to be able to:

- apply knowledge and understanding of media language, representation, media industries and audiences to a cross-media production based on media forms from the list in paragraph 6 (not including film)
- apply knowledge and understanding of the digitally convergent nature of contemporary media noted in paragraph 22
- use media language across media forms to express and communicate meaning to an intended audience

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<sup>13</sup> Unassessed students and others may act in, or appear in, the media product. In addition, unassessed students and others may operate lighting, sound, recording and other equipment under the direction of the assessed candidate if required.



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Earlsdon Park  
53-55 Butts Road  
Coventry  
CV1 3BH

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