CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

MEDIA STUDIES **9607/41**

Paper 4 Critical Perspectives **May/June 2025**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the May/June 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

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Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will 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 descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors 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 descriptors.

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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 descriptors in mind.

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English & Media subject specific general 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 descriptors:

- We use level descriptors as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptors 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).

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Annotations guidance for centres

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

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

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

Annotations

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

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Assessment Objectives

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

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

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

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

Using a banded mark scheme

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

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

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

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

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Section A: Media debates

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	**EITHER** **Media regulation** **'Without media regulation there would be chaos'. To what extent do you agree with this statement?** <u>Indicative content</u> 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 contextual issues surrounding media regulation and be able to link them to their chosen case studies. Candidates should refer to one or more media forms in their answer. Candidates may address: • The purposes of regulation – taste and decency; protection of children; protection of plurality of voices; restrictions on monopolies; protection of truth; protection of reputation etc. • Formal/ informal regulation – shadow-banning of some perspectives • Argument that the Wild West Web has led to current scenario • Section 230 defining web hosts as non publishers • UK Online safety Bill – Beeban Kidron critiques of it • International regulation e.g. EU digital services act • spectrum form free speech libertarian arguments spectrum to authoritarianism • Case studies based on different regulatory bodies, such as Ofcom, BBFC, PEGI, IPSO, ASA • Case studies based on problematic/controversial cases	**15**	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: • Media concepts (AO1) [3 marks] • Contexts and debates (AO1) [3 marks] • Use of terminology (AO1) [3 marks] • Analysis of how meaning is created (AO2) [3 marks] • Use of examples (AO2) [3 marks] Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained. It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion. 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 and implicit as well development. This indicative content is intended to indicate aspects of questions that may feature in candidates' answers.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2	**OR** **Postmodern media** **Explain the relationship between the postmodern media text and other media texts.** <u>Indicative content</u> 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. Candidates should refer to one or more media forms in their answer. Candidates may address: • Theories of reading/interpretation • Postmodern thinkers including Baudrillard, Kristeva and Lyotard • Intertextuality • Collapse of the grand narrative • Characteristics of Postmodernism including • Playfulness • Homage • Self-referentiality • Irony • Fragmentation of time/ space/ identity • privileging style over substance	**15**	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: • Media concepts (AO1) [3 marks] • Contexts and debates (AO1) [3 marks] • Use of terminology (AO1) [3 marks] • Analysis of how meaning is created (AO2) [3 marks] • Use of examples (AO2) [3 marks] Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained. It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion. 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 and implicit as well development. This indicative content is intended to indicate aspects of questions that may feature in candidates' answers.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	**OR** **Power and the media** **'It's not just *what* is said, but *how* it is said that matters.' Analyse the power of rhetoric in the media** <u>Indicative content</u> 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 power and the media and be able to link them to their chosen case studies. Candidates should refer to one or more media forms in their answer. Candidates may address: • The style, form and rhetoric of media messages • Mode of address/other techniques of persuasion • Political economy – broligarchy/control of platforms • Mark Fisher – capitalist realism – media control of parameters of debate • Critiques of media owners' interests being evident in editorial output • Gramsci and Hegemony • Theories of audience reception – Hall/Morley • Theories of media influence • The language of news – Chomsky • The rhetoric of the image – Barthes • Theories of Dominant Ideologies and resistance to them • Notions of the 'public sphere'; Twitter and Musk • Dominant/dominated ideologies	**15**	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: • Media concepts (AO1) [3 marks] • Contexts and debates (AO1) [3 marks] • Use of terminology (AO1) [3 marks] • Analysis of how meaning is created (AO2) [3 marks] • Use of examples (AO2) [3 marks] Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained. It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion. 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 and implicit as well development. This indicative content is intended to indicate aspects of questions that may feature in candidates' answers.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	• Ownership – cultural industry/imperialism • Curran and Seaton's work on influence of the press – Power Without Responsibility • Concentration of ownership limits pluralistic voices • Democratisation offered by web – cyber utopians vs dystopian views how online amplifies inequalities • Gerbner mean world syndrome		

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Marking criteria for Section A Question 1, Question 2 and Question 3				
AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately. **9 marks**			**AO2: Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, to explain how meaning is created, supported with relevant textual evidence.** **6 marks**	
Media Concepts **3 marks**	**Contexts & Critical Debates** **3 marks**	**Use of Terminology** **3 marks**	**Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory** **3 marks**	**Use of Examples** **3 marks**
Sophisticated understanding of and insightful reference to several relevant key concepts 3 marks	Insightful understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question 3 marks	A wide range of media terminology is used precisely and accurately, and with sophistication, to make subtle points 3 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 3 marks	Insightful and fully appropriate selection of examples from a wide range of texts 3 marks
Clear understanding of and appropriate reference to some key concepts 2 marks	Clear understanding of the wider contexts and critical debates raised in the question 2 marks	Media terminology is used appropriately, to make clear points 2 marks	Clear analysis of texts from one or more case study is used to respond appropriately Occasional references to relevant theories, not always accurately used or understood 2 marks	Clear and appropriate selection of examples from a range of texts 2 marks

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AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately. **9 marks**			**AO2: Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, to explain how meaning is created, supported with relevant textual evidence.** **6 marks**	
Media Concepts **3 marks**	**Contexts & Critical Debates** **3 marks**	**Use of Terminology** **3 marks**	**Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory** **3 marks**	**Use of Examples** **3 marks**
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

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Section B: Media ecology

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4	**Explain the most significant contemporary trends in the evolution of the media**. Indicative content Material listed below demonstrates how candidates might approach the question. It is a description of possible content only. It is not prescriptive, nor is it exclusive; examiners must be careful to reward original but well-focused answers. 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. The focus here is on the development of media forms, styles, and modes of audience engagement. The notion of significance indicates the need for candidates to assess the importance of particular developments and which are likely to indicate possible future trends in the media. Candidates should assess the current media landscape, with a focus on a few apposite examples, and use this to make an informed judgement about the ways in which change has occurred and determinants on this – e.g. the market, streaming, public service broadcasting, the style and form of media content, mobile technology, social media, the nature of celebrity, the crisis of truth and reality, the influence of AI. As long as the evidence is appropriate, any conclusion is acceptable	**30**	• Assessment will take place across five criteria: • Media concepts (AO1) [6 marks] • Contexts and debates (AO1) [6 marks] • Use of terminology (AO1) [6 marks] • Analysis of how meaning is created (AO2) [6 marks] • Use of examples (AO2) [6 marks] Candidates' work should be judged on each of these criteria individually and marks awarded according to the level attained. It should be noted that it is possible for a candidate to achieve a different level for each assessment criterion. 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 and implicit as well development. This indicative content is intended to indicate aspects of questions that may feature in candidates' answers.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4	Massive investment in AI Short form video Immediacy and reach Impact of free/ cheap mis/dis information on political sphere Consequences of advertising/ profit funded models of media Contexts – siloing of audiences, loss of cultural glue, domination by US media and challenges to it AI and copyright battles – UK government proposals to permit free use of material – Jaron Lanier IP theft Enshittifcation of web – Cory Doctorrow Morozov's work on solutionism/ internet centrism Buckingham concerns around access, privacy and accountability Section 230 protects Google etc Silicon Valley Media owners at centre of power – pressure for less regulation		

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Marking criteria for Section B Question 4				
AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately. **18 marks**			**AO2: Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, to explain how meaning is created, supported with relevant textual evidence.** **12 marks**	
Media Concepts **6 marks**	**Contexts & Critical Debates** **6 marks**	**Use of Terminology** **6 marks**	**Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory** **6 marks**	**Use of Examples** **6 marks**
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 fully 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 or more case study is used to respond appropriately Occasional references to relevant theories, not always accurately used or understood 3–4 marks	Clear and appropriate selection of examples from a range of texts 3–4 marks

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AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates, using terminology appropriately. **18 marks**			**AO2: Analyse media products, and evaluate their own work, by applying knowledge and understanding of theoretical and creative approaches, to explain how meaning is created, supported with relevant textual evidence.** **12 marks**	
Media Concepts **6 marks**	**Contexts & Critical Debates** **6 marks**	**Use of Terminology** **6 marks**	**Analysis of how meaning is created, including use of theory** **6 marks**	**Use of Examples** **6 marks**
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

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