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# Media matters

A review of media studies  
in schools and colleges

2005



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# Introduction

## Media: the state of play in secondary schools

'I absolutely, in fact, increasingly, believe in the crucial importance of media studies; they should be at the very heart of any educational system which claims to equip its citizens to deal with the complexities of life in the 21st century.' (Lord Puttnam)

'Media studies as a school subject is likely to equip young people with just the critical perceptions they need to survive in today's society. Indeed, the biggest influence on them is likely to be what they see on television, download from the internet or read in the tabloids.' (Michael Russell, Times Educational Supplement, 14 January 2005)

The place of media studies in the curriculum is established and the subject is likely to become increasingly influential in the future. Media and moving-image texts are a statutory part of the English curriculum in the programme of study for reading, and media studies examinations at GCSE and AS/A2 level continue to grow in popularity. Aspects of media studies appear in a number of subjects, including art and design and performing arts courses. These factors, along with developments at key stage 3, where there are strategy objectives related to media, mean that this is a particularly appropriate time to consider the teaching of media studies.

This review, commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and undertaken by the English and Media Centre, offers a broad overview of the current state of media education in secondary schools and colleges in England, both within the statutory national curriculum and as a separate discipline in qualifications. It outlines the core principles and debates that have informed the development and practices of the subject at secondary level and identifies the nature and extent of training and support available to those teaching it.

The overall picture is positive: media studies is a popular and steadily growing discipline that is engaging, enjoyable and challenging for both students and teachers and is generating increasingly informed and sophisticated study in terms of both analytic and creative skills. At key stage 3 the media requirements outlined in the national curriculum have acquired structure and focus through the Framework for teaching English; at examination level entries continue to increase. Annually, nearly 40,000 students now take media studies at GCSE, and over 52,000 students at A level.

The key concepts on which the subject is founded are proving flexible enough to accommodate the rapid pace of change in media technologies. They provide both a focus for critical study and a way of increasing access to creative production work and new styles of teaching and learning.

Although it is less than 20 years since the mainstream introduction of media studies as an examination subject, a body of expertise is developing in the form of networks of experienced – if disparate – media education organisations, increasing numbers of centres of excellence, and a growth in published resources and online support material. However, this review suggests that the take-up of these opportunities is uneven.

Despite the growth of the subject, during its comparatively short history its pedagogy has received relatively little attention from the academic research community or national professional associations. While there is a body of theoretical and sociological research covering

the content and global implications of issues included in the media studies curriculum, there is much less documentation and dissemination of knowledge about media teaching and learning at classroom level.

Opportunities to share best practice and to fully exploit the possibilities of media education across a wider range of relevant curriculum areas require further exploration. This report is intended as a starting point to consider these and other key issues affecting media studies that will inform future thinking about the subject.

Research informing the review includes:

- questionnaire surveys of media and film studies teachers and students and PGCE tutors running English initial teacher training (ITT) courses
- telephone and face-to-face interviews with a range of organisations and individuals with an interest in media and film studies
- written submissions from experts in a range of contexts relevant to media studies
- case studies and focus groups
- a one-day media studies conference to explore issues in teaching and learning in the media studies curriculum
- feedback from key stage 3 English consultants
- desk research.

For a full list of research undertaken, see appendix 1.

# Overview of contents

The following pages summarise the main points in each chapter.

## The context of media education

This chapter offers those unfamiliar with media study as a discipline an overview of its development as an examination subject and an introduction to learning and assessment in media studies.

- Media has been formally taught in schools since the late 1970s. Teaching has developed around a framework of key concepts that explore the nature of media languages, audiences, organisations and representations, and which are acknowledged as the core principles of media education.
- Media and moving-image study has long been informally associated with the English curriculum. Since the 1990s it has been incorporated as a mandatory aspect of the national curriculum for English at key stages 3 and 4 and, more recently, within the Framework for teaching English, in years 7 to 9.
- Aspects of media study are relevant to a range of other curriculum areas. More teachers are using media across a wider range of disciplines, partly as a result of the increased accessibility of new technologies.
- Media studies is now examined as a specialised subject at GCSE and A level and, to a lesser extent, through a range of pre-vocational courses at levels 1 to 3 in the national qualifications framework (NQF). These specifications share a range of core practices, including textual analysis, comparative and contextual study, research skills, and practical production work. Their pedagogy and assessment vary according to the nature of the specification and the awarding body.
- The ability to write or produce media texts is an integral aspect of media study as a means of developing both analytic and practical skills, and covers a wide range of text forms and learning experiences.
- The framework objectives for English suggest a model of progression in media study at key stage 3, although students' experiences of media texts, concepts and specialist terminology may vary according to the experience and interests of the teacher. Progression between GCSE and A level is marked by a shift from predominantly practical analytic approaches towards more academic theoretical perspectives.

## Media study in English at key stages 3 and 4

This chapter considers the place of media study in the key stage 3 and 4 English curriculum.

### **Key stage 3**

- The overwhelming majority of secondary English teachers view media work as a valid element of the English curriculum.
- Media work is integrated into the curriculum in a variety of ways and across a variety of media forms. Analysis of print media is most common, though teachers are beginning to include more analysis of moving-image texts.
- The explicit use of key media concepts varies considerably, as does the role of practical production work.

### **Key stage 4**

- The GCSE English criteria require the assessment of a range of reading, including non-fiction and media texts. Most awarding bodies assess the media component in the terminal exam, and focus on print media.
- Where media is assessed through coursework, a focus on moving-image media is most common.
- Some English departments are exploring the potential benefits of co-teaching GCSE English and GCSE media studies as an alternative to the traditional dual-certification model of English and English literature.

### **Media studies at GCSE**

This chapter deals with the structure of media studies at GCSE level, examination results, and teachers' perceptions of the subject.

- The number of candidates entered for media studies at GCSE has increased by over 31 per cent since its introduction in 1986.
- Across the specifications, assessment is evenly weighted between terminal examination and coursework. The latter includes a combination of written and practical assignments, including at least one piece of sustained production work.
- The different awarding bodies share requirements to assess skills of historical, comparative and cross-media analysis, but vary in assessment formats and the balance of theoretical study and production work.
- Teachers surveyed for the review expressed strong satisfaction with the content and flexibility of their specifications and the emphasis on practical production.

### **Media studies at A level**

This chapter deals with the structure of media studies at GCE A level, the results achieved by students, and teachers' and students' perceptions of the subject.

- Since 2002, media studies at A level continues to grow; numbers of students have increased by 13 per cent at AS and 27 per cent at A2. Student responses to the survey indicated a high degree of engagement and satisfaction with their courses.
- A shared conceptual framework underpins the three available specifications, but variations exist between them in terms of the balance between theoretical study and practical production, the role of independent critical research, and the formats of terminal assessment. This offers flexibility and choice of resources and pedagogy, and hence different experiences for students.
- Over three-quarters of the teachers surveyed for the review were satisfied with the content and range of topics in their specification, and nearly 80 per cent felt that the assessment methods of their specification reflected the abilities of their students.
- The teachers surveyed expressed least satisfaction in the level of guidance and interpretation offered by the specifications, and the amount of support or training offered by the awarding bodies.

## Film studies at A level

This chapter deals with the structure of the film studies A level specification, the results achieved by students, and teachers' and students' perceptions of the subject.

- Though film studies shares the conceptual framework and many of the practices of media studies, it draws on its own distinctive body of theory. Its analytic process and learning objectives retain links with traditions of literary study.
- The single specification offered by the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) incorporates textual analysis, contextual study, independent research, and creative and production skills across the study of Hollywood, and British, Irish and world cinema. Practical work is used as a creative means of applying theoretical insights and critical thinking.
- Teachers surveyed for the review expressed satisfaction with both the specification itself and the support and training offered by the awarding body. Students also revealed high levels of engagement with the content and range of the course.

## Vocational media studies

This chapter considers the place of vocational courses in the secondary and post-16 curriculum.

- While there is a wide range of vocational media specifications available, numbers following vocational courses in schools are relatively low.
- Until recently there has been no level 1 (foundation) qualification. While some schools have introduced GNVQ level 2 (intermediate) at key stage 4, the award has proved difficult to adapt to the needs of 14- to 16-year-old students and will be phased out by 2007.
- Newly launched suites of OCR and BTEC Nationals now include level 1 certificates for which there will be media pathways. These may provide more appropriate foundation-level experiences for 14- to 16-year-olds that can be built on at level 2.

## Media studies beyond the curriculum

This chapter considers the media learning that takes place in the informal sector outside of schools and colleges. These activities are provided by the youth service, specialist charitable and commercial media arts organisations, and organisations linked to schools.

- Informal media education activities such as summer university schemes, cine clubs and after-school media projects seem to be a growing area.
- Such provision emphasises creative production skills, and most often focuses on projects covering film and video making, digital arts, web and games design, and music technology.
- Much of the funding for these programmes is linked to regeneration and social inclusion initiatives. As a result, urban centres tend to offer a greater variety of provision in this area, and projects are often time-limited without the capacity for growth or sustainability.

## Initial teacher training

This chapter looks at the place of media in ITT in both higher education institutions and school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT).

- There are limited opportunities for graduates who want to become teachers specialising in media. There are currently only two teacher-training courses with media as their main focus.
- The provision of media training in PGCEs in English varies greatly, but the majority of PGCE students will experience the equivalent of a day's input. This is unlikely to include training in relevant production skills.

- PGCE students are far more likely to teach media within English during their school experience than to work specifically with a media studies group.
- Links between ITT and continuing professional development (CPD) in media are currently limited.

## Support for media studies teachers

This section considers the support needs of media studies teachers and details the work of the various organisations that provide this support. It describes the variety and range of support on offer and discusses the accessibility and adequacy of the available CPD.

- Media studies teachers surveyed identified their needs as the development of new teaching resources, keeping up-to-date with new developments in the media, and developing their own production skills.
- Although many English advisers incorporate media studies into their wider brief, 45 per cent of teachers who responded to the survey reported no media support from their local education authority (LEA).
- A wide range of support and training opportunities is available for media, both from awarding bodies and from funded national media education organisations such as the British Film Institute (BFI) and Film Education.
- The increasing availability of information through the internet and through dedicated media studies websites and forums has had a significant impact on teaching and learning in media studies.
- Of teachers surveyed, 73 per cent felt that establishing a professional association for media studies teachers would be helpful to their work and to the development of the subject.

## The department and the teachers

This chapter considers the ways in which media teaching and learning is organised in schools and colleges, and details teachers' perspectives on the subject.

- Relatively few teachers who responded to the survey have a first degree in media, but just under 40 per cent have gained a postgraduate degree in media or film studies or have a postgraduate degree including media studies modules.
- The teachers surveyed felt broadly confident about their ability to teach the subject; approximately two-thirds agreed they felt competent to deliver areas such as subject knowledge and media theory, and 60 per cent saw themselves as competent to help students with their production work.
- The survey revealed that facilities within media departments vary. Many are well equipped, but a significant minority do not have access to editing equipment for film and video work, or multimedia computers. Some media departments (42 per cent) did not have dedicated media studies classrooms.
- The teachers surveyed identified their priorities as provision of appropriate production resources and reduced class sizes for effective production work.

## Ways ahead for media studies

This chapter examines possible future directions for the subject and factors that may influence this. It includes a series of recommendations for future action and research.

- Since media studies is based on core concepts, practices and analytic frameworks rather than prescribed content, this means that it can adapt to recent changes in media practice and technology.
- The economic significance of media within the creative and cultural industries is generating increased interest in developing more appropriate vocational approaches to media studies at secondary level.
- The media studies curriculum will need to engage with and respond to broader debates and policy developments arising from the growth and accessibility of digital technologies.
- As new media technologies become more fully integrated in schools, the expertise and pedagogy of media studies will have much to offer in developing their effective and critical use across the curriculum, in ensuring that they are accessible to all students and in providing high-quality teaching and support.

# The context of media education

This chapter explores how media education has developed and the relationship between analytical and practical learning activities.

## The development of media education in schools

Media has been formally taught in secondary schools for over 20 years, with O level and Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) media and film studies courses in existence since the late 1970s. At this time media study was also taking place within English, general studies teaching, social studies and sociology.

In parallel with this, the advent of City & Guilds courses and Technician Education diplomas created a number of vocational training opportunities. These predominantly practical courses offered little media theory, and were the forerunners of the more specialist approaches of current City & Guilds certificates in radio and television techniques.

The early 1980s saw the publication and widespread use of a number of influential resources based on image analysis and semiotics<sup>1</sup>, and the consolidation of media studies as a formal academic subject in the secondary curriculum. A number of classroom-focused guides for teachers developed overtly conceptual approaches. These were welcomed by teachers seeking to unpick the values, influences and effects of the mass media<sup>2</sup>; this model was strongly represented in references to media study in early versions of the national curriculum orders for English.

During this period significant developments occurred.

- The structure of media teaching and learning around a series of key concepts was established and developed; this theoretical framework has now become acknowledged as a core principle of media education (see appendix 2).
- The introduction of the GCSE system in the later 1980s opened up opportunities for a more systematic approach to media teaching at secondary level and post-16 level.
- A range of new syllabuses were developed for A level, with different examining boards representing different approaches to the subject.

Since the 1990s, media education has been more influenced by recent academic interest in the nature of audience reception and response. The growth in digital technologies has led to changes in access to, and production processes in, the media, and changed the forms of the media themselves. Starting from a validation of students' existing media experiences, current media teaching seeks to develop young people's understanding of, and participation in, media culture, encouraging reflection, analysis of pleasure, investigation of the social and economic contexts of media texts, and production. Media studies also foregrounds the creative potential of media technologies, rather than seeing them exclusively as either tools for the application of theoretical understanding or as vocational skills.

The following developments since the 1990s are noteworthy.

- The study of media and moving-image texts has been made a mandatory part of the national curriculum for English for all students at key stages 3 and 4, and has been included in the Framework for teaching English, years 7 to 9.
- Media literacy has been acknowledged as relevant to a range of subjects, including history, citizenship, art and design and information and communication technology (ICT). More teachers are teaching about the media across a wider range of disciplines, partly as a result of the increased accessibility of new technologies.
- Specialist media studies courses, both in higher education and at GCSE and A level, have continued to expand. In 2003 UCAS reported that the numbers of students taking university media courses rose by 15.8 per cent; the same year saw a 20.8 per cent increase in students taking A level media studies examinations.
- A level film and media studies courses have become further differentiated, drawing on different disciplinary perspectives and academic skills.
- Further education colleges offer a wide range of media courses, both vocational and academic. There is frequently a marked split between A level and vocational media courses, with separate staffing, accommodation and resourcing arrangements.
- There are now 37 (designated and applicant) specialist media arts schools, many resourced with state-of-the-art technology, offering a range of different cross-curricular approaches to media education. Their remit to share and extend best practice has begun to impact on the ways in which the subject is framed at examination level, as part of the English curriculum, and in ITT.

## Learning and assessment

This section considers the relationship between analytical study and practical production work in media studies, and the diverse perspectives that have informed its development.

All specifications at examination level encourage a range of practices, including close textual analysis, comparative and contextual study, research and information retrieval skills, practical learning activities such as simulation or storyboarding, and practical production work. The media studies curriculum assumes a dialogic relationship between theory and practice, similar to the interaction between reading and writing in models of conventional literacy. A number of action research projects<sup>3</sup> recommend a dynamic model in which theory and production work are in a constant state of interaction. Practice should be informed by analysis, and vice versa.

At examination level, the ways in which these practices are assessed, and the weighting given to such assessment, varies widely between the different awarding bodies and between the academic and vocational specifications. At GCSE and A level the balance is weighted towards the analytical, theoretical elements of the course. At GCSE, practical work accounts for 16–25 per cent of the overall marks, while at A level it constitutes 20 per cent for two of the three specifications. OCR offers a double weighting of 40 per cent across its two production modules; however, a substantial proportion of this is related to the accompanying critical evaluations that are designed to demonstrate students' understanding of theory.

At key stage 3 the media objectives from the Framework for teaching English are part of the reading strand. While some schools, most often those with specialist media arts status, meet objectives such as 'recognise how print, sounds and still or moving images combine to create meaning' through production work, the media objectives are more likely to be met through analytical tasks such as analysing a magazine article.

## **Task setting**

### *What analytical work is taking place?*

Media studies specifications require a variety of analytic tasks that demonstrate the application of the key media concepts. These range from close textual analysis of small extracts from print or moving-image texts, through contextual study of the conventions, narrative structure, distribution and reception of specific genres, to a broader study of media industries, institutions and audiences, focusing on issues of ownership, ideology and regulation.

While awarding bodies specify the broad content of particular areas of study, there are no 'set texts', named bodies of theory or prescribed approaches to teaching. It is therefore the responsibility of teachers to select appropriate content.

The range of skills students are required to develop encompasses close and comparative reading; the ability to research, contextualise and evaluate texts, genres and processes; information retrieval, and independent study. The formulation of manageable assignments that develop these skills is key to student success.

At key stages 3 and 4 within national curriculum English, tasks set tend to foreground those objectives that are most closely related to English study and often focus on print rather than moving-image study. Less emphasis is placed on aspects of media analysis such as institutions and audience.

### *What production work is taking place?*

Media practical work covers everything from video and audio through to print and web work. It is generally used as a means of exploring and demonstrating the conceptual understanding students have gained from analysis and contextual study. Examiners report that the most common media used are video and print, with video work increasingly being produced in digital formats. Print work is usually in the form of basic desktop publishing or image manipulation. Radio work is limited to a few particularly enthusiastic centres, and web work is still in its infancy in media production.

The most common tasks are small-scale simulations of professional practice and include titles sequences, adverts, music videos, and CD, video and games covers and magazines or newspapers.

## **Assessment**

### *Analytical study*

The written component of the coursework assignments required at GCSE level can take a variety of forms other than a conventional essay. A single assignment could include a short piece of moving-image analysis requiring the use of basic specialist terminology, a simple research task, a storyboard and an evaluative overview.

At A level the analytical skills are tested through an independent research module and at A2 there is a topic-based, essay-style examination and unseen textual analysis. The weighting given to the unseen paper(s) differs according to the specification, as does the make-up of the required tasks. These differences are detailed in 'Media studies at A level'.

In key stage 4 English, media is paired with non-fiction in the structure of terminal GCSE examinations. Where media coursework can be carried out, it is used to assess the writing criteria for English. While this allows for concept-based analysis and debate, teachers comment that their practice tends to focus on the criteria for writing rather than the media content.

### ***Production work***

The effective assessment of production work in media raises several issues:

- crediting the individual contribution of a student to work carried out as part of a group
- establishing the diverse criteria required in assessing and comparing video, audio, print and web work
- ensuring comparability when assessing work produced with basic technology, and that produced with sophisticated equipment.

To accommodate these factors, the specifications credit research and planning, the process of production, the product itself and the accompanying evaluative commentary, weighting each of these differently.

The assessment of production work is also supported by a production commentary, log or self-evaluation diary. Originally developed to provide evidence of student achievement in the event of technical disasters or failed group dynamics, the evaluative account now has greater status, requiring students to explain their learning and provide a theoretical rationale for the activity. At GCSE and, particularly, at A level it requires a sophisticated technical vocabulary, the ability to incorporate textual references and draw out theoretical perspectives, and a critical distance on the collaborative project. In pre-vocational courses the self-assessment element has a different emphasis, providing a functional record of experiences and decisions, comparable to the documentation of working practices required in the ‘real world’ of media production.

### ***Progression***

At key stage 3 the framework objectives offer a sense of a developmental progression with year 7 objectives focusing on the functions and meanings of media languages for audiences; year 8 objectives providing opportunities for teaching about media industries, technologies and their social impact; and year 9 objectives draw attention to issues of representation and audience.

While students should have frequent experience of the analysis of media texts from key stage 3 onwards, their experience of a wide range of texts and genres and familiarity with media key concepts and specialist terminology may vary according to the experience and interests of the teacher. The Framework for teaching English, and the national strategy training of key stage 3 literacy consultants, is beginning to address these issues.

Progression is built into the course, within individual GCSE and A level specifications. Progression between GCSE and A level is made by a shift from the predominantly practical analytic approaches encouraged at GCSE and the more academic, sociological and theoretical perspectives required for A level.

Progression in production work is more variable. As noted earlier, practical work is less common at key stage 3, so it is not uncommon for students to have their first experience of production work once they have begun GCSE or A level.

# Media study in English at key stages 3 and 4

The key stage 3 section draws on recent research and publications<sup>4</sup>; the *Audit of media in English*<sup>5</sup>; interviews with key stage 3 focus groups, LEA advisers and HMI; feedback from 300 literacy consultants who participated in national strategy training events delivered by the English and Media Centre in October 2004, and the experiences of key stage 3 English teachers and heads of department attending English and Media Centre CPD courses during the period 2001–4. The key stage 4 section is informed by evidence from heads of English, GCSE examiners and LEA English advisers.

## Media study at key stage 3

### *Media in the national curriculum and Framework for teaching English*

The English orders of the national curriculum require all students at key stages 3 and 4 to study a range of media texts. The national curriculum expresses these requirements in terms that correspond to the key concepts underpinning media studies to show how:

- meaning is conveyed in texts that include print, images and sometimes sound
- choice of form, layout and presentation contribute to effect
- the nature and purpose of media products influence content and meaning
- audiences and readers choose and respond to media.

The Framework for teaching English at key stage 3 provides a model of how the national curriculum requirements can be covered in the form of learning objectives across the different years. The orders determine the media learning required in English at key stages 3 and 4.

**Figure 1: References to teaching media in the Framework for teaching English**

|                              |                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Year 7</b><br>Reading 10: | Identify how media texts are tailored to suit their audience, and recognise that audience responses sometimes vary.       |
| Reading 11:                  | Recognise how print, sounds and still or moving images combine to create meaning.                                         |
| <b>Year 8</b><br>Reading 8:  | Investigate how meanings are changed when information is presented in different forms or transposed into different media. |
| Reading 9:                   | Recognise how texts are shaped by the technology they use, eg the use of sound and image in a computer animation.         |
| <b>Year 9</b><br>Reading 8:  | Analyse how media texts influence and are influenced by readers, eg interactive programmes, selection of news items.      |
| Reading 10:                  | Comment on interpretations of the same text or idea in different media, using terms appropriate for critical analysis.    |

### ***Key stage 3 media teaching in action***

The 1998 audit of media in the English curriculum reported that 91 per cent of secondary English teachers surveyed viewed media work as a valid element of the English curriculum, with 43 per cent calculating they were spending between 10–25 per cent of their teaching time on media work; 62 per cent of key stage 3 teachers wanted to devote more time to media teaching, and 75 per cent wanted more CPD in media teaching. Since then the place of media in the key stage 3 curriculum has been increased through the national curriculum and Framework for teaching English.

In October 2004 key stage 3 literacy consultants across the UK participated in a training programme focusing on approaches to teaching the media objectives in the Framework for teaching English.

### ***Where is media taught in English at key stage 3?***

Literacy consultants at key stage 3, focus group schools and previous research undertaken by Andrew Hart at the University of Southampton indicate that media work is integrated into English teaching at key stage 3 in the following ways:

- departmentally resourced, self-contained schemes of work about the media, usually one for each year of the key stage – the most common model
- occasional schemes of media work developed and taught according to the expertise of individual teachers
- media activities related to the study of literary or non-fiction texts – also frequently cited as a way in which media objectives are met
- a single extended media unit frequently related to an in-depth study of a full-length feature film or genre
- an enrichment project, often undertaken in collaboration with another department such as art and design or ICT – this happens most often in year 9 in the period following the national curriculum tests
- dedicated media studies lessons throughout the key stage (often but not always restricted to specialist media arts schools).

A case study of the practice at key stage 3 of one media arts school is included on page 18.

### ***Which of the media get taught in English at key stage 3?***

The 1998 audit found that activities based on making or analysing print media were those most commonly undertaken within English; by far the most frequent media-related activity (92 per cent) cited was production of a leaflet, advertisement or poster.

**Figure 2: Types of media and activities taught in English at key stage 3**

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Print</b>       | Newspapers, magazines and print advertising remain at the heart of classroom practice, particularly in year 7.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Advertising</b> | Many teachers comment that TV commercials are ideal texts for the close study of the moving image; they also allow for comparison with print advertising material, the internet and other forms of persuasive rhetoric, allowing the work to dovetail closely with English objectives in the Framework for teaching English.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Film</b>        | Although the most common use of film is as a support for studying a novel, the focus on adaptation in the Framework for teaching English is encouraging teachers to explore this process more critically. Where adaptation is not the focus, the range of films studied in key stage 3 classrooms is diverse, ranging from blockbusters to classics that fulfil the national curriculum's requirement to study texts of 'high quality'. Schemes of work often focus on specific genres, with an emphasis on the affective aspects of film language, generic conventions, characterisation and narrative structure. At key stage 3 less attention is paid in English to the social and institutional context of the film, and to its production processes. |
| <b>Television</b>  | Soap opera remains a staple of the English classroom, for its focus on issues and themes and the opportunities it provides to teach narrative structure, characterisation and extended writing. Some more experienced teachers have been able to introduce concepts of institution and production, and to increase students' understanding of the industrial and editorial constraints that have characterised this genre. Television documentary is used most often as stimulus for debate or as support for argumentative writing, although support for the structured viewing and analysis of popular non-fiction media texts, such as reality TV programmes, is increasingly being requested.                                                         |

***How English teachers use the key media concepts***

Although the national curriculum now expresses the media requirements in terms broadly comparable with the key media concepts, there is considerable variation in how explicitly these concepts are taught within the English curriculum. While most teachers are confident in teaching about language, audience and purpose, and the construction of meaning, these concepts are often applied in a way that is more relevant to English than to media education. For example, the concept of audience is often seen in terms of an individual reader rather than a mass audience.

***Production work at key stage 3***

The value of exploring concepts through the production of media texts is recognised but often limited due to lack of time, resources and technical expertise. The experience of media arts schools suggests that where these difficulties can be overcome, media production work can be embedded in the English curriculum, leading to a range of effective and engaging creative work. A case study of one media arts school's media provision for key stage 3 English follows.

**Case study A: Media in key stage 3 English at Charles Edward Brooke School, Southwark, a media arts school**

**Year 7**

The opening chapters of *Great Expectations* by Dickens are analysed alongside the opening sequence of David Lean's film version during the course of the 'Introductions' unit.

Students produce their own photo-stories following paper exercises using English and Media Centre material and discussion of narrative.

Students produce front pages of Greek and Trojan newspapers in the 'Story telling' unit.

Students analyse and produce book covers in the 'Fire, bed and bone' unit and in the context of shared reading.

'Introductions' links with the first ICT unit in which students make a PowerPoint presentation about themselves, using digital cameras and sound recording. Students consider image and audience.

Through their reading groups students build up a body of informed opinion about their reading. By the summer term, after a discussion of children's TV programmes, they work in small groups, each producing a segment of a magazine programme – *The good books show*. These are storyboarded and videotaped. Segments include 'Top ten books', interviews with authors, quizzes and dramatised scenes. The video is shown to other classes to stimulate reading.

After-school club: animation.

**Year 8**

Moving image is further explored in the film version of *Lord of the Flies* as part of the 'Journeys' unit, which focuses on creative writing.

Students also examine the difference between newspapers and TV news.

The 'Film' unit is a stand-alone media option.

The 'Advertising' unit is based on English and Media Centre's 'Froops' material.

Students make comparisons between different film versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Students produce holiday brochures following discussion of representations and persuasive language.

Narrative poetry: 30-second newflash activity is used for narrative synopsis, which involves extended TV news on the death of the Lady of Shalott.

After-school club: lower-school news team.

**Year 9**

Students analyse different film versions of *Macbeth* and discuss *mise en scène*.

Students host a radio phone-in show and produce magazine articles on homelessness in 'Stone cold' unit.

Students produce campaign literature for opinion writing.

A cross-curricular Bollywood production is planned for summer term.

After-school club: software authoring (video games).

## Media studies in the GCSE English specifications

Unless otherwise indicated, specifications referred to are those developed since the implementation of the revised national curriculum in 2000. These specifications were introduced in 2002 for first examination in 2004.

### Assessment structures

The GCSE criteria for English require awarding bodies to assess a range of reading including non-fiction and media texts. The assessment objectives for reading require students to demonstrate their ability to:

- read with insight and engagement, making appropriate references to texts and developing and sustaining interpretations of them
- distinguish between fact and opinion and evaluate how information is presented
- follow an argument, identifying implication and recognising inconsistencies
- select material appropriate to their purpose, collate material from different sources and make cross-references
- understand and evaluate how writers use linguistic, structural and presentational devices to achieve their effects, and comment on ways language varies and changes.

The approach taken in the specifications to the media component is particular to the requirements of GCSE English and is not intended to be a preparation for GCSE media studies.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) specification A, AQA specification B, OCR, WJEC and Edexcel scheme A all assess the media component of GCSE English in the terminal examinations. AQA specification A also assesses the writing triplet ‘analyse, review and comment’ through a media coursework assignment. Edexcel’s scheme B covers the media reading requirement through coursework. Details of where and how media is tested in each GCSE English specification are outlined below.

**Figure 3: Summary of how media studies is tested**

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AQA A</b>            | Terminal examination paper one, section A: reading and response to unseen non-fiction and media texts (15 per cent). Tests ability to read two or more passages in a range of formats, including literary non-fiction and/or print and ICT-based information and reference texts. Coursework: media assignment assessed for writing to analyse, review and comment (5 per cent). |
| <b>AQA B</b>            | Terminal examination paper one, section A: reading and response to pre-released media texts and unseen non-fiction texts (15 per cent). Media questions assess understanding of presentation, register, audience, tone, language and the effect of any images.                                                                                                                   |
| <b>OCR</b>              | Terminal examination: unit one, section A: reading unseen non-fiction, media and information texts. Tests ability to distinguish between fact and opinion, select and collate material, cross-refer between texts, to follow an argument, identify implications and inconsistencies and/or evaluate how information is presented.                                                |
| <b>Edexcel scheme A</b> | Terminal examination paper two: reading unprepared media texts (10 per cent). Involves selecting appropriate material for purpose and evaluating presentation of material.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Edexcel scheme B</b> | Coursework: response to media (5 per cent). Tests ability to analyse and comment on features of media texts such as print-based media, sound media, moving images and electronic digital media.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>WJEC</b>             | Terminal examination paper two: reading of non-fiction and media texts (15 per cent). The reading of media texts will be assessed through advertisements, reports and articles from newspapers, magazines and brochures, and will include visual material.                                                                                                                       |

### **Print media in GCSE English**

Questions assessing candidates' understanding of print media are based on an English rather than a media studies model (see example below). Questions focus on content, language, and presentation, and candidates are not required to contextualise their analysis of the text (production, circulation or readership) as they might be expected to in GCSE media studies.

#### **Example A: An example of the media component of GCSE English in an OCR paper**

Candidates are asked to read the magazine article *The truth is out there!* and do the following tasks.

##### **Foundation tier**

The writer of the article does not believe the 'alien theories' about Area 51. Explain:

- how some of the information the writer gives shows that he does not believe the 'alien theories'
- how some of the words and phrases the writer uses show that he does not believe the 'alien theories'
- how the way the article is presented supports the writer's views.

##### **Higher tier**

What do you think is the writer's purpose in writing the article, and how successful do you think he is in achieving it? In your answer you should comment on the content, language and presentation of the article.

### **Moving-image media in GCSE English**

Revisions to the national curriculum strengthened the place of moving-image study in the secondary English curriculum. However, the criteria for GCSE English does not specify moving image in the range of reading to be covered. Logistic and economic factors mean the specifications that assess the media component through the terminal examination do so through printed media. However, the awarding bodies that assess media through coursework offer candidates the opportunity to study moving image.

Edexcel's GCSE English scheme B assesses reading media through coursework and AQA's specification A uses a media coursework assignment to assess the writing triplet 'analyse, review, comment' (worth 5 per cent of the final grade). The Edexcel specification suggests assignments that focus on a range of media including 'paper-based media, sound media, moving images and electronic digital media'. Although AQA A candidates are assessed on their writing, rather than their reading of the text, examiners report that a majority of candidates now write about film or television texts, rather than print media.

### **Links between GCSE English and GCSE media studies**

Some of the links between GCSE English (with its media component) and GCSE media studies are outlined here.

- Where English and media studies departments work closely together, the conceptual basis of media studies can provide a useful framework for developing all aspects of English studies, and vice versa.
- Both subjects require analytic and literacy skills. This link is most clearly seen in the specifications that include unseen media texts in the terminal examination.
- GCSE English and GCSE media studies both explore concepts of narrative, genre and audience. These areas of overlap have been exploited very successfully in English departments teaching media studies alongside language and literature GCSEs.
- Examiners and heads of departments report a growing interest in the use of moving-image texts as a stimulus for GCSE English speaking and listening work, and as motivation for boys' writing.

### ***Teaching GCSE media studies within the English curriculum***

LEA advisers and English examiners report that a significant minority of English departments are recognising the feasibility of co-teaching English and media studies at GCSE as an alternative to the traditional dual-certification model of English and English literature.

In 2003/4 the Devon Curriculum Services' Digital Media Education Centre ran a one-day course in nine venues across the country, attended by 154 departments. The day explored the rationale for co-teaching English and media studies within the 180 minutes frequently allotted to key stage 4 English (English and English literature), a course model and the practical outcomes.

Of the 37 secondary English departments in Devon LEA, three began co-teaching English and media studies in 2003 and a further 11 have either piloted a course with one set or are implementing co-teaching for some groups.

### ***Case study B: Co-teaching English and English literature at Churchdown School, Gloucester***

Churchdown School operates in a selective 11+ context, losing students from the upper-ability ranges to grammar schools, and others to the private sector. Its overall 5 A\*–C rate is around 45 per cent. Until 2000, the English department offered the usual English/English literature combination, consistently achieving around 60 per cent A\*–C passes in both subjects. However, the department was concerned that students, particularly boys, were not enjoying the subject.

'We found that lots of our boys were visual learners. So rather than ask them to take on a course, which was primarily taught through an auditory learning style, we looked for a course which brought in more visual stimuli – media texts offered us that. We found that this really motivated them and tapped into an ability that I don't think any of us really knew they had.'

'Our media studies results have been excellent, but as we have taught it alongside English, it has really raised results in that subject too.' (Head of English, Churchdown School)

In the first year of the co-teaching programme, 88 per cent of students sitting media studies (two-thirds of the cohort) achieved A\*–C grades. Of these, 79 per cent gained an A\*–C grade in English, an increase of 19 per cent on previous years. Though sat by fewer candidates, 77 per cent of students entered for English literature gained A\*–C grades. Improved performance in English is also reported by other schools that began co-teaching media studies and English before the introduction of the new specifications in 2002.

Although the improvements should be approached with caution, the case of Churchdown School suggests that further research could profitably consider the effect on both subjects of co-teaching English and media studies.

### ***Support for teaching media in English at key stages 3 and 4***

Published resources provide the main form of support for English teachers. However, it is possible that this balance will be altered by the national strategy focus on the training of the key stage 3 English consultants in media in October 2004.

The following resources are available for teaching media in English at key stage 3:

- media sections in English course books produced to support the key stage 3 strategy, usually with a focus on print texts
- advisory resources, such as the three units of media, produced by QCA
- media course books. Here the material is often more grounded in media concepts and practices, while still delivering literacy skills mapped against the Framework for teaching English

- self-contained packages of media work, often produced by specialist media education providers. These tend to focus on contemporary moving-image texts, and often include copyright-cleared video and print extracts in their original format, sometimes mediated by captions, slowed down sequences, or contextualised interviews. While covering a wide range of English objectives, the primary focus of such resources is explicitly on media learning. Examples that have been used successfully by English teachers are the BFI's key stage 3 video pack, *Screening shorts*, and its series *Moving image media in English*.

Specialised media studies resources have also been found useful in teaching media in GCSE English (see 'Support for media studies teachers').

### ***Media across the curriculum***

While media education is formally represented in national curriculum programmes of study for English, it is also relevant to a range of other curriculum areas, particularly art and design, ICT, history and geography, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. The perspectives offered by these diverse disciplines – for example, the use of media sources as historical evidence, creative and aesthetic approaches to the use of multimedia in design, and the ways in which global issues and values are represented by the media – are important aspects of media literacy and become increasingly significant in the more specialised aspects of media study at key stage 4 and beyond. There is some evidence of small-scale, cross-curricular collaborations extending students' experiences of media education that both enrich, and are enriched by, media study within the English curriculum. In the longer term, more sustained whole-school approaches, such as those being developed within media arts schools, offer coherence and structured progression to students' media learning and achievement.

# Media studies at GCSE

Unless otherwise indicated, specifications referred to are those developed since the implementation of the revised national curriculum in 2000. These specifications were introduced in 2002 for first examination in 2004.

## Developments in GCSE media studies

### *The growth of media studies*

Media studies courses have been taught at secondary level since the mid-1970s. Over this period, the number of candidates has grown substantially, with an increase of nearly 10,000 (31.9 per cent) since the introduction of GCSE media studies in 1986. GCSE media studies is now taught in approximately 1,055 centres, with 39,820 candidates being entered for examination in 2004.

### *Who offers GCSE media studies?*

Three awarding bodies, AQA, WJEC, and OCR offer media studies at GCSE. AQA and WJEC, the awarding bodies with the most centres and candidates, have been offering media studies at GCSE since the examination was introduced in 1986. Both the AQA (formerly NEAB) and WJEC specifications retain considerable continuity with their legacy syllabuses. The most common choice of specification is AQA, with 700 centres and 26,721 candidates entered in 2004. The WJEC specification is used in 241 centres and has 8,166 candidates. The OCR specification, developed in 1997, has 148 centres and 4,930 candidates.

### *Inspecting GCSE media studies*

In schools media studies pre-16 is not subject to separate inspection by Ofsted. The only HMI report on media studies in recent years was on post-16 examination in further education. The chief inspector's annual report, based on Ofsted reports and the work of HMI, does not include any particular references to media studies or media education generally.

## GCSE media studies in 2004

While the number of candidates being entered for GCSE media studies continues to increase annually, numbers in 2004 were still lower than those for longer-standing disciplines within the expressive arts (211,724 candidates in art and 100,059 in drama).

Fewer boys (47.9 per cent) than girls take media studies, but the gender differential is smaller than for art or drama, where girls form 58.1 per cent and 64 per cent of the cohort respectively (see figure 1). Of respondents to the survey, 88 per cent teach mixed-gender groups; over half of these are evenly balanced in terms of male/female composition, and 27 per cent report classes with more boys than girls.

**Figure 1: Numbers of candidates for 2004 by gender**

| GCSE subjects | Candidates | Male candidates | % of total cohort | Female candidates | % of total cohort |
|---------------|------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Media studies | 39,820     | 19,063          | 47.9              | 20,757            | 52.1              |
| Art           | 211,724    | 88,845          | 41.9              | 122,879           | 58.1              |
| Drama         | 100,059    | 36,052          | 36                | 64,007            | 64                |

**Results in GCSE media studies**

Of the 39,820 candidates entered for GCSE media studies across all awarding bodies in 2004, 60.3 per cent gained A\*–C grades; 15.3 per cent achieved A grades, and 3.1 per cent an A\*. Results by awarding body are shown in figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Comparative examination statistics for the three awarding bodies in 2004**

| Media studies awarding bodies             | AQA    | OCR   | WJEC  |
|-------------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Number of entries                         | 26,721 | 4,844 | 6,326 |
| Percentage of candidates gaining A*       | 3.2    | 1.69  | 3.5   |
| Percentage of candidates gaining A grades | 15.4   | 14.6  | 15.8  |
| Percentage gaining A–C grades             | 59.3   | 62    | 62.6  |
| Percentage gaining D grade                | 19.5   | 15    | 18.8  |

Although boys made up almost 50 per cent of the media studies cohort, they did not gain 50 per cent of the A\*–C grades awarded. Figure 3 indicates that this problem is not unique to media studies.

**Figure 3: Comparative analysis of gender and achievement at GCSE in 2004**

| GCSE subjects      | All %A* | Boys %A* | Girls %A* | All %A | Boys %A | Girls %A | All %A–C | Boys %A–C | Girls %A–C |
|--------------------|---------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Media studies      | 3.1     | 1.7      | 4.3       | 15.3   | 10.5    | 19.7     | 60.3     | 51.8      | 68         |
| Art                | 6.6     | 3.7      | 8.6       | 21.9   | 13.8    | 27.9     | 68.0     | 57.8      | 77         |
| Drama              | 4.5     | 3.0      | 5.4       | 20.5   | 14.8    | 23.7     | 69.3     | 60.7      | 74.1       |
| English literature | 4.3     | 3.1      | 5.4       | 17.5   | 13.5    | 21.2     | 65.1     | 58.2      | 71.5       |
| History            | 9.0     | 7.5      | 10.5      | 26.6   | 23.8    | 29.3     | 65.0     | 62.6      | 67.5       |
| Physics            | 19.4    | 19.9     | 18.7      | 46.5   | 46.9    | 45.9     | 89.9     | 90.2      | 89.5       |
| Sociology          | 2.0     | 1.5      | 2.2       | 11.8   | 8.8     | 13.4     | 48.1     | 43.1      | 50.9       |

## The content and structure of media studies at GCSE

### *What does a GCSE course look like?*

At GCSE level, assessment is evenly split between coursework (including practical production work) and terminal examination. Candidates are required to:

- study a range of at least three different media, including a variety of texts drawn from a wide range of possible forms (newspapers, magazines, comics, television, film, radio, the internet, advertising and popular music)
- develop a range of analytical and practical skills
- demonstrate explicitly an understanding of the key media concepts of language, representation, audience and institution in coursework and terminal examination
- plan, produce and evaluate one or more media texts using appropriate media technology.

Candidates' analytical and practical skills should include:

- image analysis and semiotic skills, for example the ability to read, interpret and contextualise print and moving-image texts
- critical writing that demonstrates analytic and interpretive skills
- research skills (print and online sources)
- comparative and historical approaches to media forms, genres and/or institutions
- practical abilities such as storyboarding and scripting, picture or moving-image editing, camera skills, graphic design and production using ICT
- the understanding and use of specialist critical terminology.

The case study below details one school's approach to the AQA GCSE specification. It demonstrates the sort of work being carried out on courses for all three awarding bodies at this level.

### **Case study A: GCSE media studies at Haydon School**

Media studies courses at Haydon School are taught within the faculty of visual and performing arts and media, although there is close cooperation with the English department, which originally introduced the subject to the school. Media teachers are closely involved with development of the media components of English, but there is currently no media post within the English department.

Media studies is a popular and successful option at GCSE level with 75 students, taught in three groups, for the AQA GCSE course in both years 10 and 11. The school operates an open-door policy at GCSE level and students with special needs are not only welcomed but specifically encouraged to take up media studies. Typically, students may also take GCSE music, sociology, business studies and economics. Between 2000–3, A–C grades averaged over 75 per cent.

In year 10, the course includes the following.

#### **Introduction to key concepts**

This is through analysis of film posters, covering form, representation, audiences and institutions. Students write about them and then produce their own.

#### **Sitcom and soap opera**

This unit involves the first work on moving image, so students learn to use technical terms and practise storyboarding skills. It also develops concepts of representation and stereotyping. Classes analyse a soap opera scene in terms of technical conventions; then a scene from a sitcom, including its use of stereotypes. They storyboard the opening sequence of a new soap opera or sitcom and then, in groups, film a scene from it, developing very basic camera skills. Usually students just use one or two shots without any editing.

### **Newspapers**

The start of the unit involves students selecting a paper, investigating its ownership, political orientation and production process, and presenting their findings to class. Next they study audiences, layout and structure; students then have a much clearer understanding of why a particular paper looks the way it does. Students finally make and evaluate their own newspaper front page. The focus on institutional and political issues is included, to prepare students for the demands of the AQA A level.

### **Radio**

This is an entirely practical unit. After initial discussion of types of radio, students make a 5- to 10-minute community radio programme aimed at a specific audience. This programme must exclude music other than jingles. Students use Cool Edit Pro/Adobe Audition, licensed on the whole-school network.

### **Audiences**

A 'clear-up' unit that explores audiences further, but also ideas about regulation and institution, focused mainly around film and film certification. Students trace the history of a film from the time it gets certificated to its final screening on terrestrial TV. This investigation also involves writing about ideas like audience theory, viewing figures and promotion on video and DVD. The practical element here usually involves students re-promoting the film for TV through an ad campaign.

### **Documentary**

This is a practical unit undertaken at the end of year 10. Documentary forms are analysed based on at least two documentaries – one chosen by students and one by teachers. Students then plan and make their own seven-minute documentary about some aspect of school life. They script and storyboard the documentary and produce it over 12 lessons. This involves more advanced camera skills and simple editing.

In year 11 the course includes the final practical production, preparation for the controlled test and a unit that prepares them for a mock exam, usually based on the previous year's topic.

## **Differences between the specifications**

In media studies, assessment objectives are defined by the individual awarding bodies in consultation with QCA, which has overall responsibility for ensuring their comparability. Thus, while the three specifications cover the same skills, concepts and practices, different emphases are given to:

- the balance of theoretical study and production work
- attention to historical and comparative contexts
- assessment formats, particularly in the terminal examinations.

This allows centres to choose the specification that best meets the needs of their students.

### ***Balance of theoretical study and production work***

All three specifications require a balance of analytical/theoretical study and practical work, and all recognise the importance of self-evaluation in production work. However, the relationship between theory and production work, and the way in which the latter is framed and supported, varies across awarding bodies.

### ***Comparative, historical and cross-media elements***

The national curriculum requires that students develop comparative skills and the ability to evaluate both content and context. Each awarding body fulfils this requirement differently.

- AQA incorporates the study of ‘non-contemporary media’ into its controlled test.
- WJEC integrates it into its textual analysis coursework assignment.
- OCR includes non-contemporary texts in its terminal examination on cross-media topics with a further comparative analysis required by one of the coursework assignments.

In addition, OCR explicitly encourages the study of ‘classic, mainstream and alternative texts, as well as international, national and local texts’ throughout the specification.

### ***Assessment: the coursework folder***

The coursework folder for all three awarding bodies is made up of three assignments.

The three assignments for the **AQA specification** must together demonstrate coverage of the assessment objectives and key media concepts. Each assignment must contain elements of practical work with a written evaluation to demonstrate analytic understanding of the exercise. Students must also submit a separate practical production piece, with an individual analytical commentary in which they consider their own practical work in the context of similar media products. Practical production work accounts for 25 per cent of the final grade.

One assignment for the **OCR specification** focuses on concepts of media language, and another on representation. The third offers a choice of set briefs for production work in a range of media forms and targeting a specific audience. The specification offers suggestions for possible coursework tasks, but leaves the choice of medium and form to the individual centre. Students are encouraged to respond to all coursework tasks creatively and through production work, including evaluation – the practical production elements account for 16.6 per cent of the final grade.

Two of the three assignments for the **WJEC specification** are predominantly practical. The first focuses on pre-production, with an emphasis on media practices and practical planning skills, and may be evaluated orally on tape. The second practical assignment is production-based (it may extend pre-production work already submitted) and should demonstrate students’ understanding of the concepts of narrative, genre and representation. The third assignment is a written textual analysis involving an element of historical comparison. Practical skills account for 22 per cent of the final grade.

### ***Assessment: the terminal examination***

The examination for the **AQA specification** is based on a single pre-set topic, which changes each year<sup>6</sup>. The examination is three hours in total, although schools are given the option of splitting this into two one-hour, 30-minute sessions. The question paper is released to students up to four weeks before the exam. Although teachers may not teach specifically to the paper, and no notes are allowed in the actual examination, students are able to prepare as much as they wish.

The question paper contains four parts, of which two or three parts are broadly analytical/historical. The remainder of the paper is based on an individual simulated production of a media campaign and usually includes pre-production activities such as scripting, planning, storyboarding, scheduling or promotion.

Higher-tier students for the AQA examination for 2003, on comedy films, were required to read a fictional memo about a forthcoming local comedy film festival and, in response, attempt the following tasks.

**Example A: AQA terminal examination for higher-tier students**

Discuss key features of three different genres of comedy film and their appeal to audiences.

Propose ideas for a welcome exhibit in the festival venue and justify decisions.

Select two key films representing different eras and explain why these should be screened.

Produce a fully realised design for either a poster, TV advertisement, storyboard, radio advertisement script or website homepage (production pro-formas as are provided) as part of a promotional campaign for the festival.

Each section is worth 25 marks.

The foundation tier offers similar but more limited and focused tasks. Students are also given the option of writing in note form rather than continuous prose.

**Example B: AQA examination for foundation-tier students**

Write about the three most important features of comedy films and offer suggestions for visual images to illustrate these in the foyer exhibit.

Write about one popular comedy film star or film genre for a special section of the festival – with rationale.

Write about two comedy films that should feature as the top comedy films of all time – with detailed reasons.

Promotional task, as above.

Each section is worth 25 marks.

Centres choose the topics or genres for the **OCR examination** a year in advance. In both papers, foundation- and higher-tier tasks cover the same ground. The different demands being made of students are indicated in the instruction to ‘describe’ (foundation) rather than ‘compare’ (higher) in paper one, and ‘consider, describe and show’ rather than ‘discuss, analyse and compare’ in paper two. Paper one is a textual analysis of a previously unseen print or a moving-image extract on the set topic or genre studied throughout the course<sup>7</sup>. Students are required to draw on a wide range of examples, referring to at least three in depth. Paper two is on a cross-media topic<sup>8</sup>. Students answer two compulsory questions that address the requirement for comparative and historical study, which are used to assess student’s understanding of specific concepts.

**Example C: OCR examination for foundation- and higher-tier students**

In paper one students are asked to:

- identify generic features
- comment on the use of technical and visual conventions
- use examples from the extract to demonstrate its narrative and audience function
- write in depth about two further examples of the genre they have studied.

Paper two, section A, deals with media producers and audiences and requires students to use at least two examples from different media to demonstrate the main features of presentation and audience address.

Paper two, section B, on messages and values, asks students to account for changes over time, focusing on at least one example from both contemporary and historical texts. They are required to comment on representations of individuals, people or places; similarities and differences over time; and varying messages and values.

The WJEC examination consists of a single unseen paper based around print and moving-image source material, with structured compulsory questions on both. The two topics are published a year in advance<sup>9</sup> and the paper has a focus on practical activity. These features are illustrated in the 2004 paper described below.

**Example D: WJEC examination**

Students were offered two news extracts (from BBC's *6 o'clock news*, and BBC's *Newsround*) and two contrasting advertisements from weekend colour supplements.

The higher-tier tasks required the analysis of two features of the *Newsround* extract; the creation of a new youth news programme, including title, logo design, and top stories; analysis of how typical the presenter from one of the extracts is; and an explanation, with examples, of hard and soft news. Students also had to analyse the marketing strategies used in one advertisement; create a print advertisement for a new product, with rationale; analyse two strategies used to target young people; and explain two reasons for the importance of advertising to the press.

Foundation-tier tasks covered the same ground but focused on descriptive responses to selected examples, rather than analysis. The questions build towards the creative/practical task, thus emphasising the more practical aspects of the topic.

## Teachers' perspectives

Teachers' comments on the GCSE specifications are summarised here.

### **Content and flexibility**

Teachers' responses to the content and flexibility of their specifications are positive, with 80 per cent claiming high or very high levels of satisfaction. When asked in the survey to identify specific topics they would like to spend more or less time teaching:

- 35 per cent of respondents prioritise both production skills and current media issues and debates as areas they would like to spend more time on. Of the respondents, 36 per cent would like to incorporate more teaching on classic films
- 43 per cent would prefer to teach less history of the media. Print media also appears to be less popular with teachers (34 per cent), while almost 50 per cent would prefer to teach less theory.

### **Production**

Of teachers surveyed, 81 per cent are satisfied with the emphasis on practical production and evaluation. Almost all respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with both the production portfolio and with the coursework element of the courses, although many teachers commented on the need for greater flexibility in the word limits for the students' self-evaluation of production work.

# Media studies at A level

Unless otherwise stated, specifications referred to are those developed since the implementation of the revised national curriculum in 2000. These specifications were introduced for first examination at AS in 2001 and at A2 in 2002.

## Developments in A level media studies

### *The growth of A level media studies*

In 1988 OCR introduced a GCE media studies syllabus and in 1990 664 candidates were entered for first examination. By 2000 there were four syllabuses from three awarding bodies with 18,310 candidates sitting the examination. Since the implementation of the revised national curriculum in 2000 and the introduction of AS and A2, numbers have continued to increase (see figure 1). In 2004 A2 media studies was offered by 1,211 centres, with 22,961 candidates sitting the examination, an increase of 26.5 per cent since the first examination of the revised national curriculum specifications in 2002. AS level was offered by 1,271 centres, with 30,876 candidates entered in 2004. This represents an increase of 12.8 per cent since 2002.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1: Numbers of candidates sitting AS and A2 media studies in 2002–4**

|                                        | 2002   |        | 2003   |        | 2004   |        |
|----------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                        | AS     | A2     | AS     | A2     | AS     | A2     |
| <b>Total entries for media studies</b> | 27,380 | 18,150 | 29,990 | 21,114 | 30,876 | 22,961 |

### *Who offers A level media studies?*

Three awarding bodies (OCR, AQA, WJEC) offer media studies specifications at A level. OCR, the awarding body that first introduced GCE media studies, has the most candidates with 14,174 candidates entered for AS and 10,821 for A2 in 2004. AQA has slightly fewer candidates (12,598 entries for AS and 9,016 for A2), but from more centres. The WJEC specification has 3,973 AS and 2,909 A2 candidates. A fourth A level specification titled 'moving image arts' is currently being developed and piloted by the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and supported by the BFI.

## Media studies at A level in 2004

The results for media studies are grouped with both film and TV studies. It is not therefore possible to analyse the gender breakdown of entries and results for media studies alone.

Although the number of candidates sitting AS and A2 media studies continues to increase, entries were still lower in 2004 than for the more established and traditional subjects. In 2004 nearly 53,000 students sat A2 mathematics examinations, more than twice the number entered for media studies, while nearly 39,000 students sat A2 art and design. In 2004 the proportion of AS media studies students progressing to A2 was 73 per cent compared with 66 per cent for art and design, 80 per cent for drama and 87 per cent for history.

Fewer boys (45.1 per cent) than girls take media studies (and related subjects), but the gender differential is smaller than for expressive arts/drama (26.8 per cent), art and design subjects (31.9 per cent) or English (30.3 per cent) (see figure 2).

**Figure 2: Number of candidates for 2004 by gender**

| A2                    | 2004 candidates | 2004 male candidates | % of total cohort | 2004 female candidates | % of total cohort |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Media/TV/film         | 26,894          | 12,141               | 45.1              | 14,753                 | 54.9              |
| Expressive arts/drama | 17,831          | 4,786                | 26.8              | 13,045                 | 72.2              |
| Art and design        | 38,989          | 12,428               | 31.9              | 26,561                 | 68.1              |
| English               | 81,649          | 24,728               | 30.3              | 56,921                 | 69.7              |
| History               | 43,790          | 21,794               | 49.8              | 21,996                 | 50.2              |
| Physics               | 28,698          | 22,293               | 77.7              | 6,405                  | 22.3              |
| Mathematics           | 52,788          | 32,379               | 61.3              | 20,409                 | 38.7              |

**Results in A level media studies**

Of the 22,733 candidates entered for A2 media/film/TV studies across all awarding bodies in 2004, 73 per cent gained A–C grades and 13.7 per cent achieved grade A. Results for media studies as single subject by awarding body are shown in figure 3.

**Figure 3: Comparative AS and A2 examination statistics (provisional) by awarding body for 2004**

| Awarding body | Level | Candidates | % A grades | % A–C grades |
|---------------|-------|------------|------------|--------------|
| OCR           | AS    | 14,174     | 13.87      | 66.81        |
|               | A2    | 10,821     | 13.17      | 72.43        |
| WJEC          | AS    | 3,973      | 16.7       | 71.9         |
|               | A2    | 2,909      | 16.4       | 76.1         |
| AQA           | AS    | 12,598     | 13.2       | 61.4         |
|               | A2    | 9,016      | 12.2       | 68.1         |

In 2004 boys achieved fewer A and A–C grades in media studies than did girls. Figure 4 indicates this was a pattern repeated across arts, humanities and science subjects.

**Figure 4: Results at A2 by gender in 2004**

| A2                             | All %A | Boys %A | Girls %A | All %A–C | Boys %A–C | Girls %A–C | All %A–E | Boys %A–E | Girls %A–E |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Media/TV/film                  | 13.7   | 11      | 15.9     | 73       | 68        | 77.2       | 98.2     | 97.7      | 98.7       |
| Expressive arts/drama          | 14.9   | 12.2    | 15.9     | 75.6     | 69.1      | 78         | 98.8     | 98        | 99         |
| Art and design                 | 27.9   | 22.8    | 30.3     | 74.2     | 67.6      | 77.3       | 96.9     | 95.4      | 97.6       |
| English (all related subjects) | 20.6   | 20.9    | 20.4     | 71.4     | 69.9      | 72         | 98.4     | 98.1      | 98.6       |
| History                        | 23.9   | 22.4    | 25.5     | 74.7     | 72.7      | 76.7       | 97.9     | 97.6      | 98.2       |
| Physics                        | 28.4   | 27      | 33.4     | 67.9     | 65.8      | 74.9       | 94       | 93.3      | 96.5       |
| Mathematics                    | 37.9   | 36.5    | 40.1     | 75.7     | 73.6      | 79.1       | 95.2     | 94.6      | 96.3       |

## The specifications

### *Structure and content*

The specifications from the three awarding bodies share a number of similarities (see figure 5). However, the different histories and ways in which the subject is conceptualised mean there are also a number of differences. Key areas are:

- the interpretation of the conceptual framework
- the balance of theory and practice
- the role of critical research
- the assessment structure.

### *The conceptual framework*

The specifications draw on a shared conceptual framework that is reflected in the assessment objectives. Each specification places different emphases on the concepts and approaches to study.

- OCR, particularly, emphasises issues of audience and institution.
- WJEC foregrounds the role of the media industries.
- Both OCR and WJEC require students to develop an understanding of ownership and institution in specific modules that cover new technologies as well as print media.
- AQA integrates the concepts of ownership and institution into the study of texts and contexts throughout the course.

See figure 5 for full details of the three specifications.

### *The balance between analysis/theory and production/practice*

All three specifications include a practical module in AS, accompanied by a written evaluation or commentary, the weighting of which is equal to that of the production itself.

The **OCR specification** offers students opportunities for progression in production in both AS and A2, weighting production work as 40 per cent of the final grade. At AS students choose their production topic from a list of set briefs; the accompanying commentary focuses on editorial decisions and appropriate use of media language. At A2 students have free choice of production and are expected to evaluate their production in the light of both existing texts and theoretical approaches.

The **WJEC specification** prioritises the processes involved in making meaning through a portfolio comprising two pre-production and one production exercise, across two different media forms, one of which should involve digital technology. This process-based approach feeds into A2. Production work is worth 20 per cent of the final grade.

Production in the **AQA specification** is specifically linked to one of the two textual topics studied during AS and is worth 20 per cent of the final grade. Evidence of the student's research and analysis is required in both the construction of an appropriate production brief, the production outcome and in a sustained evaluation. This explicit connection between theory and practice must be considered in the brief and evaluation, using the conceptual framework, theory and key terminology as a focus. This specification offers a more analytical and theoretical approach to media studies.

### ***The role of critical research***

Each specification requires A2 students to undertake independent research around a specific aspect of the media, allowing them to work to their own enthusiasms and strengths as far as possible.

**OCR's critical research study** is drawn from a range of eight set topics that are broadly defined and supported by guidance suggestions. The work is student-led, with teacher supervision but no formal teaching. The study is not text-based (although individual texts will, of course, be referenced and drawn upon) and a central focus is on research methodology, both as a discrete study skill with particular relevance to higher education and as an aspect of industrial practice. Assessment of this study is through a terminal written paper. Students conduct and evaluate their research and condense it into four pages of notes. They then write up the research under examination conditions in response to two unseen questions on methodology and findings.

**WJEC's 'investigating media texts' research module** is based on the close study of between one and three contemporary media texts; it requires students to demonstrate understanding of a range of key concepts (narrative, genre, form, representation). Audience research may be conducted here, but it is not mandatory. Methodology is central to the module and students are expected to reference and evaluate their findings appropriately. The research is presented as a 3,000-word coursework essay.

**AQA's A2 independent study** is text-based and requires a 3,000-word coursework essay on a contemporary media text or issue. Here students apply their conceptual understanding and media literacy skills to new material and situations. As a synoptic unit it relates to topics studied in previous modules, but its key features are its textual focus and its contemporaneity. The specification places the focus on comparative and contextualising analytic research, with the construction of a focused title or hypothesis as a key skill.

### ***Terminal examinations and assessment***

All specifications share a similar balance between coursework and terminal examination, and have the same requirements for synoptic examinations. Variations in the ways the specifications are assessed are outlined below.

At AS level, **OCR** tests students' abilities in textual and contextual analysis, and institutional knowledge and research skills in the terminal examinations. A pre-prepared comparative textual study paper is used to complement the unseen textual analysis at AS, and at A2 the synoptic application of theory to contemporary debates and issues are examined through a traditional essay-based paper.

The **WJEC** specification assesses all concepts in terminal examinations as well as through coursework and production. It emphasises unseen textual analysis skills in two of its four written examinations. The AS unseen paper has a media language focus; the second AS paper has short-answer questions and provides stimulus material for discussion of representation and audience issues. At A2 the unseen paper is also synoptic, requiring comparative study of audio-visual and/or print material on a topic (in 2004, documentary) for which students will have already prepared. The second A2 paper draws on in-depth case study knowledge of two British media industries.

**AQA** terminal examinations follow the same structure at AS and A2. The first (AS) and last (A2) modules are unseen textual analysis. These papers evaluate the candidates' ability to interrogate texts from any genre, in any medium, using the key concept framework. The other papers at both AS and A2 have an essay format. Students are assessed on their analysis of two out of four pre-determined topics. At A2 students are expected to contextualise their analysis of the texts in an understanding of how texts are shaped by their social, historical and political contexts.

**Figure 5: Three boards' specifications for media studies 2004/5**

|                  | <b>AQA</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>WJEC</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>OCR</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AS module</b> | <p>1. Reading the media: Med 1 (15 per cent).<br/>Key concepts: language, representation and audiences.<br/>Assessment by written exam: one hour plus 15 minutes' reading time – analysis of unseen media text.</p>                                                                                                                         | <p>1. Modern media forms: ME1 (15 per cent).<br/>Analytical skills in textual analysis: focus on narrative and genre.<br/>Assessment by written exam: one hour 30 minutes. Two compulsory questions on unseen texts, either print or moving image.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>1. Foundation production: unit 2730 (20 per cent).<br/>Choice of six prescribed production briefs: two moving image, two print, one each for radio and new media/ICT. Group or individual work plus production log, covering production process, technical decisions and evaluation, using appropriate terminology.</p>                |
| <b>AS module</b> | <p>2. Textual topics in contemporary media: Med 2 (15 per cent)<br/>Contextual study of two areas from: film and broadcast fiction; documentary; advertising and marketing; British press.<br/>Written paper: one hour 30 minutes – two questions, one on each topic.</p>                                                                   | <p>2. Media representations and reception: ME2 (15 per cent).<br/>Issues of gender, ethnicity, nation and age, stressing differences between information and actuality, entertainment and persuasion; stereotyping, ideologies and audiences.<br/>Written paper: one hour 30 minutes – stimulus question plus short-answer questions.</p>                                                                                                 | <p>2. Media representations and reception: ME2 (15 per cent).<br/>Issues of gender, ethnicity, nation and age, stressing differences between information and actuality, entertainment and persuasion; stereotyping, ideologies and audiences.<br/>Written paper: one hour 30 minutes – stimulus question plus short-answer questions.</p> |
| <b>AS module</b> | <p>3. Practical production: Med 3 (20 per cent).<br/>Individual or group media production related to a topic studied in module 2. Individual brief (750 words) covering content, form and audience; finished product, demonstrating effective use of technology; and evaluation, showing relationship to modules 1 and 2 (1,000 words).</p> | <p>3. Making media texts: ME3 (20 per cent).<br/>Coursework portfolio of three pieces of work: two pre-production/planning, one production plus evaluation – in two different media forms.<br/>Technical competence required, plus access to digital technology in one or more specified medium.<br/>A teacher-directed unit, with tasks set on a whole-class basis, but individual portfolios required. Must reflect media concepts.</p> | <p>3. Case study: audiences and institutions: unit 2732 (15 per cent).<br/>Choice from two topics: new technologies and media ownership.<br/>Three questions chosen from topics covering media institutions, production practices, media technologies and audiences.<br/>Written paper: one hour.</p>                                     |

**Figure 5 (continued): Three boards' specifications for media studies 2004/5**

|                  | <b>AQA</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>WJEC</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>OCR</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A2 module</b> | <p>4. Texts and contexts in the media: Med 4 (15 per cent). Contextual study of two from: production/ manufacture of news; representations; genre; media audiences. Written paper: one hour 30 minutes – two questions, one on each topic.</p> | <p>4. Investigating media texts: ME4 (20 per cent). Synoptic module: individual 2,000- to 3,000-word research essay on between two and three recent media texts. Focus on one or more of key concepts: genre, narrative, form and representation. Minimum three texts. Could also involve audience research.</p> | <p>4: Advanced production: unit 2733 (20 per cent). Individual or group production from one of six set briefs. Candidates are also assessed on their own critical evaluation, to include knowledge of institutions and audiences, media issues and debates, and representation. Must represent progression from unit 1 but work in different medium. Criteria: planning (30 marks), construction (60 marks), evaluation (30 marks).</p>                                                |
| <b>A2 module</b> | <p>5. Independent study: Med 5 (20 per cent). Individual research study of text or issue of choice produced or released within two years of starting course. Presented as 3,000-word coursework essay.</p>                                     | <p>5. Changing media industries: ME5 (15 per cent). In-depth study of two primarily British industries from set list, focusing on global issues, regulation and new technologies. Written paper: one hour 30 minutes – two questions.</p>                                                                        | <p>5. Critical research study: unit 2734 (15 per cent). Individual research on one media topic; teacher to supervise only. Women and film; popular music and youth culture; sport and the media; politics and the media; concept to consumption; community radio; children and television and crime in the media. Two-hour paper, use of notes (research sources, statistics, quotations and summaries) permitted. Assessed for methodology and content.</p>                           |
| <b>A2 module</b> | <p>6. Comparative critical analysis: Med 6 (15 per cent). Synoptic module: one hour 30 minute exam, including 30 minutes' reading/viewing time. Comparative analysis of two unseen texts.</p>                                                  | <p>6. Text and context – synoptic: ME6 (15 per cent). Study of one audio-visual genre. Terminal exam of two hours 30 minutes based on unseen examples of topics. Topic for 2004/5 is documentary. Two compulsory questions, one unseen analysis and one comparative study.</p>                                   | <p>6. Media issues and debates: unit 2735 (15 per cent). Two-hour synoptic paper – three questions, one from three topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ broadcasting: British TV soap opera; radio and TV news; British broadcasting since 1990</li> <li>■ cinema: British cinema since 1990; concept of genre in film; censorship and film</li> <li>■ print: magazines and gender; local newspapers; freedom, regulation and control in the British press.</li> </ul> |

The following case study details the work being done in media studies at A level at Long Road Sixth Form Centre, Cambridge, one of the largest and most experienced media studies centres in the country. While Long Road is not necessarily a typical centre, it nevertheless demonstrates what can be achieved with generous resourcing and well trained, specialist staff.

### **Case study A: A level media studies at Long Road Sixth Form Centre**

In 2003/4, there were over 600 media students: 231 students were entered for AS, of whom 201 (87 per cent) achieved A–C grades and 49 (21 per cent) attained A grades. Of the 183 candidates for A2, 166 (89.7 per cent) received A–C grades, with 42 A grades (25 per cent). The remaining students were entered for film studies at AS or A2, comprising 12 AS groups and 10 A2 groups.

The head of department is chief examiner for OCR, and has been involved in the development of A level media studies since its earliest incarnation in the early 1990s. His team of seven full-time media teachers represent a wide range of teaching and industrial experience; most are, or have been, media studies examiners and several have contributed to textbooks, in-service training (INSET) events and published teaching resources.

Long Road is extremely well resourced with a dedicated suite of 10 iMac computers reserved for AS students only, and two suites of eight for more advanced work at A2. As a result, the theoretical course content is delivered largely through hands-on practical activities, with a strong focus on group work and independent research.

#### **Term 1**

An extensive induction unit covering both key media concepts and basic introductions to image manipulation, video techniques and basic editing, as applied to production work on children's TV action-adventure films, in preparation for terminal 'Textual analysis' module.

#### **Term 2**

Production work on the opening of a thriller.

Video games analysis, in preparation for terminal 'Textual analysis' module.

#### **Term 3**

New media technologies.

Post-examinations students continuing to A2 are offered an introduction to advanced multimedia and photo editing software, in preparation for the 'Advanced production' module.

#### **Term 4**

An 'advanced production' module based on the cross-media production of music-video and CD covers and media issues and debates, in preparation for examination in January – TV news, local papers British cinema since 1990.

#### **Term 5**

Revision of media issues and debates.

Preparation for 'Critical research' terminal examination.

#### **Term 6**

Prior to the examination period, revision and completion of 'Critical research' and opportunity to repeat practical production, if necessary.

The department has developed an extensive website with interactive course materials. It has also pioneered the use of iCritique, a web application created for the screening of student production work.

## Teachers' perspectives

Teachers' responses to the survey and focus group questions are grouped into debates about the A level media studies specifications and concerns about the subject.

An average of 77.3 per cent of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the specified content and range of topics in their specification.

A significant number (79.7 per cent) of respondents are satisfied with the way in which the assessment methods used in their specification reflected the abilities of their students. The majority say their students' results are either equivalent to or better than their results in other subjects.

An average of 77.3 per cent are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of theory on the course. Over half (52.3 per cent) are satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of practical work on the course.

Less than half the number of respondents is satisfied or very satisfied with the level of guidance offered by the specifications (48 per cent) and the amount of support or training provided by the awarding body (47.7 per cent). In expressing preferences, respondents ranked the most rewarding topics as classic films (37 per cent), non-mainstream media (32 per cent) and popular culture (27 per cent).

The topics teachers would like to spend less time teaching include the way in which contemporary media industries work (45 per cent) and new media technologies (22 per cent). This may reflect the difficulty teachers face in keeping up with new developments in these rapidly changing areas.

### **Issues**

The following points were raised as issues for teachers, regardless of specification:

- the modular structure of the AS/A2 course that may lead to a fragmented experience for students
- the need for improved resources and training, particularly for production work
- how best to keep up-to-date with the continually changing body of knowledge and evolving technologies
- the need for further support and guidance in interpreting the mark schemes and clarifying the weighting of different aspects of the coursework, such as technical skills, the production itself and the evaluation
- greater clarity about the relationship of A level courses to those in higher education and to employment in the media industries.

### **Comments on the specifications: grouped by awarding body**

OCR teachers are satisfied with:

- the opportunities to debate with examiners and share good practice through the awarding body's online support and virtual teacher community.

OCR teachers raise issues regarding:

- perceived variations in difficulty in the set production briefs
- the need for greater opportunities to reward students for originality, resourcefulness and creativity in production work
- the weighting given to the written evaluation
- the way the specification appears to privilege gender when referring to identity.

AQA teachers are satisfied with:

- the flexible structure of the production and research units, and with their relationship to taught topics.

AQA teachers raise issues regarding:

- the open-ended demands of the 'Textual analysis' module, the synoptic papers, and the independent study
- the need for greater support from the awarding body, particularly training and exemplar material.

WJEC teachers are satisfied with:

- the support from the awarding body
- the portfolio assessment of production work and its focus on process.

WJEC express concern regarding:

- the teaching and assessment of the module on British media industries.

## **Students' perceptions**

The survey gathered the responses of 280 students. Responses to both the survey and focus group discussions reveal a committed and enthusiastic student body that enjoys and is excited by media and film study, is largely happy with their course, and in some cases is significantly influenced in terms of career or higher education choices.

Responses to the open-ended qualitative questions in the survey reveal that students value, and have positive experiences of:

- production work
- the way media studies helps them gain a better understanding of film and other media texts
- deconstruction and analysis
- the ways that the subject builds upon and validates their own experience.

Students report difficulties with or less positive experiences of:

- the organisation and structure of the course, particularly coursework deadlines and assessment structures
- academic theory, print-based media and institutional study
- access to facilities and equipment they need to complete production work
- lecture-based teaching of theory.

# Film studies at A level

Film studies has been taught in schools since the late 1960s and has a long-established profile in higher education. Prior to GCSE it was examined at O level; it continues to be offered at both GCSE and A level. The evidence in this section is based on surveys of teachers and students of film studies.

## Developments in A level film studies

Figure 1 summarises the growth in the number of candidates sitting AS and A2 film studies since the implementation of the revised national curriculum in 2000.

**Figure 1: The increase in numbers of students taking film studies in 2001–4**

| Year | Numbers taking AS | Numbers taking A2 | % increase            |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 2001 | 3,851             | n/a               | n/a                   |
| 2002 | 5,500             | 2,175             | 42.82 (AS)            |
| 2003 | 6,947             | 3,186             | 26.3 (AS); 46.48 (A2) |
| 2004 | 7,996             | 4,161             | 15.1 (AS); 23.4 (A2)  |

### Who offers film studies?

Film studies is currently offered at A level by only one awarding body (WJEC), which in 2004 examined 12,157 AS and A2 candidates from 469 centres.

### Who teaches film studies?

Of the film studies teachers who completed the survey, 94 per cent teach more than three hours of film studies a week; more than 80 per cent of this cohort also teach another media-related course alongside film studies. Film studies teachers who have been on at least one full-day film studies CPD course total 85 per cent.

## Results in film studies

The proportion of candidates achieving A–C grades at both AS and A2 is broadly comparable with other subjects. The number of A grades awarded in film studies at AS and A2 is lower than the WJEC average of 25.2 per cent, with A grades being achieved at A2 by 23.3 per cent of students in art and design, 26.3 per cent of literature students and 34.3 per cent of history students.

**Figure 2: Achievements of candidates taking GCE film studies in 2003 and 2004**

|    | Numbers |       | % A grades |      | % A–C grades |      |
|----|---------|-------|------------|------|--------------|------|
|    | 2003    | 2004  | 2003       | 2004 | 2003         | 2004 |
| AS | 6,947   | 7,996 | 16.7       | 16.6 | 77.4         | 81.9 |
| A2 | 3,186   | 4,161 | 15.1       | 16.6 | 82.7         | 83.0 |

## Film studies: key characteristics

Although they are often seen as similar, film studies differs from media studies in its focus on a single medium, its body of theory and its academic status.

Film studies retains links with more established academic subjects such as English literature. Its commitment to the close analysis of, and personal response to, audio-visual texts draws on the learning objectives and procedures associated with literary study.

Production work is conceived as a means of understanding and demonstrating concepts and ideas creatively, and does not require the acquisition of technological skills and competences.

The status of film studies has been foregrounded by a number of well-publicised initiatives such as the formation of the UK Film Council and the publication of *Making movies matter*, a Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) discussion paper produced by the BFI's film education working group.

## The WJEC GCE Film Studies specification

The WJEC specification for film studies has been running in its present form since revisions to the national curriculum were implemented in 2000. The specification integrates a range of analytical, creative and theoretical outcomes that represent both current and historical approaches to the study of film. The content of the specification is outlined in figure 2.

It aims explicitly to develop the academic skills of critical thinking and evaluation, with a strong emphasis on communication and self-reflection. Progression between AS and A2 is clearly signalled.

WJEC GCE Film Studies is organised around a model of learning progression for film, video and television studies developed in *Making movies matter*. This model identifies five stages in the development of what it calls 'cine-literacy' across three areas of learning: film language, producers and audiences, and messages and values. The specification aims to develop students' skills and experiences at stage 4 of the model, and to move towards the stage 5 study students would experience in higher education. (See figure 3 for a detailed breakdown of the specification.)

Progression is inbuilt between AS and A2 modules, and the specification offers clear preparation for film study in higher education. In AS, the assessment portfolio (FS1) involves two close textual analyses focusing on genre and narrative, and on media language. A creative element, which requires students to produce and evaluate an extract from a screenplay or storyboard for an appropriate imaginary film, is also included.

At A2, FS4 involves more independent research across any form of film. This leads to the construction of a resource pack with extended commentary focusing on the influence of a particular actor, cinematographer or director in the light of 'Auteur theory'. Here the creative task allows a choice of alternative pieces of production work, demonstrating students' understanding of specific aspects of film theory through a written brief, rationale and self-evaluation. Students can develop the skills acquired through FS1 in a screenplay and synopsis, in a video extract or in film journalism.

**Figure 3: The structure of WJEC GCE Film Studies**

|           | Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Assessment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AS</b> | <p><b>FS1: Making meaning</b><br/>Analysis of film form and production of meaning. Covers textual analysis skills, narrative and genre analysis, audience and spectator study.</p>                                                                                                              | <p>Coursework: 40 per cent<br/>Portfolio of two pieces of close written analysis on films selected by the teacher.<br/>The synopsis and storyboard or screenplay for a new film, created and evaluated by the student individually.</p>                                                                                 |
|           | <p><b>FS2: Producers and audiences (British and Hollywood)</b><br/>The institutional practices of the US and UK film industries.<br/>The social practice of cinema going.</p>                                                                                                                   | <p>Terminal examination: 30 per cent<br/>Written response to two questions based on stimulus material provided, one on producers, one on audiences.</p>                                                                                                                                                                 |
|           | <p><b>FS3: Messages and values (British and Irish cinema)</b><br/>Study of representation across a number of prescribed British/Irish films, and comparisons with films of own choice from a specific thematic grouping, such as 'Passions and repressions' or 'The war and its aftermath'.</p> | <p>Terminal examination: 30 per cent<br/>Comparative essay based on two or more films, including one prescribed focus film.<br/>Essay on a single 'close study' film from set list. Questions assess both textual and contextual skills.</p>                                                                            |
| <b>A2</b> | <p><b>FS4: Making meaning 2</b><br/>Practical module based on skills of individual Auteur research, and practical application of learning (equally weighted).<br/>Provides opportunities for video production.</p>                                                                              | <p>Coursework: 40 per cent<br/>Auteur study: a catalogue of resources and commentary on a director's work.<br/>A collection of film journalism, some screenwriting, or a short film or extract from a film. This work must relate in some way to the Auteur study carried out for the first part of the coursework.</p> |
|           | <p><b>FS5: World cinema</b><br/>At least three film texts for close and comparative study of selected world cinema styles and movements.</p>                                                                                                                                                    | <p>Terminal examination: 30 per cent<br/>Two questions, one on a specific style or movement, the other on prescribed close study films from world cinema.<br/>Involves both thematic and textual analysis.</p>                                                                                                          |
|           | <p><b>FS6: Critical studies (synoptic module)</b><br/>Synthesises different areas of knowledge, including specialist study of a choice of options, debates about cinema and critical perspectives.</p>                                                                                          | <p>Terminal examination: 30 per cent<br/>Three synoptic questions covering specialist studies (with reference to at least three films), issues and debates, and critical approaches, drawing on films previously studied.</p>                                                                                           |

### **Case study A: Film studies at Richmond Tertiary College**

Film studies has been taught at Richmond Tertiary College since 2001. The course has expanded consistently since its first intake of 38 AS students. In 2003/4 98 students entered AS in five teaching groups, and 28 completed A2. In 2004 there are six AS groups and three A2 groups. Film studies results are among the best in the college and well above the national average. No student has yet failed and in 2003 all the A2 students achieved either an A or a B grade.

#### **The teaching team**

There are five film studies teachers in the team with one member of staff allocated two hours per week to supervise coursework, provide individual tutorials and show films. Support is offered by two media technicians who help with screening and practical coursework where needed. The teacher in charge of film provides all the teaching materials and each lesson is departmentally planned.

#### **Students**

Students take film studies alongside a wide range of other A level subjects, including English literature, sociology, art and design, architecture, philosophy, languages (French and Spanish), communications, media, history, mathematics, physics, theatre studies, dance, photography and business studies. A large proportion go on to university to study media studies, English, film making, philosophy, business or art foundation courses.

Students are enthusiastic about the course, particularly enjoying the creative work. Second-year students are positive about the challenges offered by the A2 course.

### **Teachers' perspectives**

Teachers' responses to the film studies survey reveal a general sense of satisfaction with the specification, but raise a number of issues for further consideration.

Film studies teachers are satisfied with:

- the support and training offered by the WJEC awarding body (77 per cent).  
This includes the *Notes for guidance*, an annual residential conference, a course textbook and a forthcoming film studies website
- student achievement: 100 per cent of the respondents to the survey feel that their students achieve at least as highly in film studies as in their other courses
- the frequent updating of core texts and the freedom to choose supporting texts
- the student-centred approach to coursework
- the clear progression between AS and A2 units and the way in which the A2 course prepares students for courses in higher education
- the use of personal experience and problem-solving skills in the coverage of institutional or audience issues
- the place of production work, including opportunities for practical and creative coursework.

Teachers raise issues regarding:

- the appropriateness of the specification's use of the cine-literacy model as a model of progression
- the limited opportunities to study contemporary mainstream and Hollywood cinema, or to focus on cinema as 'popular culture'
- the validity of some of the film theories central to the course, for example 'Auteur theory'
- the balance between breadth and depth of coverage within the specification
- the ability of the current mark schemes to cover the range of types and genres of production work being offered
- the role of terminal examinations in relation to the exploratory approaches encouraged by the specification
- the specification's continuing use of written responses to an audio-visual experience.

## **Students' perspectives**

In general, student responses to the survey reveal a very high level of satisfaction with the content and focus of A level film studies. Interest in non-mainstream and independent films is frequently mentioned, as is the opportunity to study the context and industrial aspects of cinema, and to develop creative and production skills in film making and film journalism.

# Vocational media studies

This section draws on discussions with experienced practitioners and assessors in the field.

## Current vocational media provision

There is a wide range of vocational (as opposed to occupational) media specifications available to students at 16+. However, schools and colleges most frequently offer A level and GCSE courses and, as a result, numbers following vocational courses are comparatively low.

### *The range of qualifications*

The grid below indicates the range of some of the more popular vocational qualifications available at levels 1, 2 and 3, and maps their relationship to academic media courses. However, Skillset, the national representative body for the audio-visual and multimedia industries, is currently in the process of reviewing provision with QCA. The full range of accredited qualifications can be found on [www.openquals.org.uk](http://www.openquals.org.uk).

|                | Academic                          | Applied academic       | General vocational       | National                                        | Other vocational                                |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Level 3</b> | AS/A2 film, media, communications | VCE, ASVCE (from 2005) | VCE (ends 2006)          | OCR National 3<br>BTEC National                 | City & Guilds 7500, 7700, 7790 series           |
| <b>Level 2</b> | GCSE media                        |                        | Intermediate (ends 2007) | OCR National 2<br>BTEC First                    | City & Guilds 7700/7790<br>NCFE Level 2         |
| <b>Level 1</b> | GCSE media                        |                        |                          | OCR National 1<br>BTEC Introductory Certificate | City & Guilds Sound/<br>Theatre<br>NCFE Level 1 |
| <b>Entry</b>   | WJEC Entry                        |                        |                          | BTEC Entry                                      |                                                 |

Only further education colleges with a media specialism are able to offer the full range of vocational courses. Provision in schools, particularly in 11–16 schools, is limited by equipment, staffing and timetable considerations.

### *Level 1 and 2 courses*

Until 2004 level 1 courses have not been offered in 11–16 schools, and there has been little take-up of established level 2 courses (such as the outgoing Intermediate GNVQ in Media: Communication and Production). However, around 1,000 candidates have registered in the first year (2004) of the newer BTEC First Diploma in Media. A very small minority of schools offer level 2 courses to post-16 students with D–G grades at GCSE.

### **Level 3 courses**

Level 3 courses such as BTEC National diplomas, City & Guilds Diploma in Media Techniques 7500 and VCE in Media: Communication and Production<sup>11</sup> are also more frequently offered by further education colleges than schools.

### **Number of candidates**

The following figures for 2004 give an indication of the number of candidates entered for the different vocational qualifications on offer.

GNVQ intermediate was awarded to 1,566 candidates across three awarding bodies, compared to 1,789 in 2003 and 1,644 in 2002.

There were 881 candidates entered for VCE advanced single award and 1,254 for the VCE advanced double award, a drop of 18.1 per cent since 2002. Numbers appear to be increasing for 2005. Edexcel, the largest provider, has 1,222 registered entries for the single award and 1,882 for the double award.

Entries for BTEC and City & Guilds qualifications are approximately 5,600. This figure includes some lesser awards as well as full diplomas, and some representation of adult learners in training organisations.

For 2005, about 1,000 candidates have registered for BTEC First (Level 1), and 3,500 for BTEC National (Level 2).

### **Case study A: Media studies at Halesowen Further Education College**

The college organises AS/A2 courses and vocational courses entirely separately.

Academic courses include:

- an extension course for GCSE media studies, with a maximum of 15 students per year
- OCR GCE Media Studies, which recruits around 80 AS media students and 60 A2 media students annually
- WJEC GCE Film Studies, with 35 AS students and around 20 A2 students annually. An evening course for film studies recruits about 10 students.

These subjects are taken in combination with a wide variety of other A levels, but predominantly English, sociology, art and design, graphics and drama/theatre studies.

Vocational courses include:

- BTEC First in Media, offered to around 20 students
- BTEC National diplomas, recruiting 60 students in three options, of which the largest is the moving-image course; the publishing and audio options recruit in smaller numbers
- NCFE extension courses are offered in video editing and digital photography.

These vocational students tend to be those with a range of GCSEs, who are particularly committed to media production, either from previous experience, from an art or graphics background or from their own home consumption of media. This cohort of students is no different in their academic ability from their GCE counterparts. Many of them also take an AS or A level media course alongside their national diploma.

## **Vocational media: from practice to theory**

At level 3 the course structure and module titles are similar for academic and vocational courses, and much of the same ground is covered, especially at AS level. The difference is in the relationship between theory and practice, and the ways in which this relationship is approached.

Practice/production is the main focus of the vocational course, with theoretical issues arising from contextualising and interrogating production work. Students are assessed on their ability to demonstrate skills in, knowledge of, and understanding about, production in context. The assessment portfolio includes documentation of research and planning, budgeting, evidence of specialised technical competence and related industrial issues such as health and safety and employment practices.

## **Issues in vocational media education provision**

### ***The lack of level 1 qualifications***

When GNVQ was introduced in 1994, there was no level 1 (foundation) qualification. Feedback from pilot schools had suggested that key stage 4 students would be unable to fulfil the requirement to work collectively on a sustained project. In the absence of a level 1 qualification some schools introduced the GNVQ level 2 (intermediate) at key stage 4, with variable success. Where the students recruited to the course have been capable of meeting the challenges of level 2 work, it has proved to be a good route into level 3. However, in some cases the level 2 course has not been appropriate to the students' needs.

### ***Staffing and specialisms***

To deliver the vocational specifications teachers require:

- a sound understanding of two production processes in different media
- skills in the appropriate technologies
- specialised knowledge about industrial practices.

It is very difficult for an individual teacher to cover all aspects of the specification. Ideally, vocational media is taught by a team each with different specialisms. Schools are less likely to be able to meet this requirement, however there is increasing evidence of collaboration between schools and colleges in delivering vocational media courses, including sharing facilities.

The more flexible staffing structure of further education colleges favours the team approach and is therefore more open to freelance practitioners who are able to teach vocational media on a part-time basis.

### ***Equipment***

Vocational courses are generally written and validated with an assumption that students will have access to equipment and facilities of a certain standard, for example 'industry standard' computer software. Although students may be able to produce high-quality outcomes using consumer standard equipment or software, it rarely allows access to industry procedures – a key element of vocational learning in media. Digital media production is now increasing opportunities for working at the required level, where this is compatible with school networks.

### ***Timetables and accommodation***

Vocational media work requires flexible access to specialist accommodation (for example, television and radio studios and edit suites) and equipment and lessons longer than the standard secondary school period of 50–70 minutes.

For students to fulfil the requirements of a vocational media course, they need to work with media industries at local, regional and national level. These industries may not be able to work to a fixed school timetable. Schools with high-quality facilities in appropriate accommodation have been able to overcome this problem by bringing the industry into the school by sharing or leasing out the facilities to local commercial media producers. Examiners and verifiers note that there is a strong correlation between successful vocational media education and close links with local media production institutions.

### ***Assessment***

Vocational media courses assess the candidate's demonstration of effective skills, knowledge and understanding of media production within an institutional context, as well as attitudes and behaviours. As assessment is not necessarily in written form, vocational media courses allow students whose abilities are better suited to production activities to show what they can achieve.

### ***The media industries' views of vocational education***

Although some media industry professionals are sceptical about the value of vocational media specifications, in some areas of media activity (for example, radio and print journalism and photography) there have been productive arrangements between vocational awarding bodies, educational institutions and media producers.

Skillset has formulated standards across the industry and has also called for proven competency in designated occupational activities as the basis for entry and career development in the media industries. It is in the process of developing an extensive network of information and training via schools and colleges, including the kite-marking of degree courses that are relevant to specific areas of the industry. It is also planning a network of screen academies that will represent the cutting edge of media practice. However, this work is still in the preliminary stages and currently only relates to the film industry.

While Skillset participated in the development of GNVQ in the mid-1990s, it also developed its own NVQs with the Open University and has rarely acknowledged the role of existing secondary educational provision in relation to moving-image production.

### ***Vocational media education from 2004***

The intermediate GNVQ will be phased out by 2007, leaving a gap in schools that have been offering it at key stage 4. OCR's new suite of national qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 was introduced in 2004 to join the BTEC courses already accredited for the NQF. Level 1 courses will cater for 14- to 16-year-olds with expectations of D–G GCSE results. Level 2 courses, designed for post-16 students, may offer provision for more able students, but again their requirements are unlikely to be easily accommodated by the standard school timetable. From 2005, VCE media will become a single applied A level, offered only as a three- or six-unit award by Edexcel. BTEC and City & Guilds will continue to offer their existing vocational courses.

# Media studies beyond the curriculum

This chapter considers extracurricular media-based courses and initiatives for pupils, provided by a wide range of organisations.

## The extent of informal media education provision

The figures available suggest informal media education provision is a growing sector. In 2002<sup>12</sup> over 17,000 children and young people across the UK were involved in some form of media-based, extracurricular activity provided by over 300 organisations nationally. It is likely this figure will have grown since then. Recent government initiatives such as the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and summer university schemes have increased access to extracurricular activities, including those with a media focus, particularly in urban areas. For example, the UK Film Council-sponsored First Light initiative has worked nationally with 8,000 young people from five to 18 years, to produce over 500 digital films. It has also researched the social and economic benefits of the scheme.<sup>13</sup> A report<sup>14</sup> commissioned by the London Development Agency in 2004 to examine the relationship between the informal learning sector and the creative and cultural industries points out that there are over 250 voluntary organisations in the Greater London area offering courses in media and the creative arts.

### *Equity and access*

Much of the funding for these programmes comes from the DCMS, in concert with regeneration and social inclusion initiatives. Such programmes most often target areas of deprivation and are sometimes organised with the aim of reducing crime or involvement with drugs. As a result, urban centres, especially in the south-east, tend to offer greater variety of provision and increased access to practitioners than other areas of the country.

Although many summer university and NOF projects target areas of deprivation, it has been noted that take-up of this provision is frequently by young people from middle-class backgrounds.

### *Experiencing media in the informal sector*

Programmes in the informal sector complement or enrich the experiences on offer in the formal curriculum, placing most emphasis on production, participation and creativity. Activities include film or video making, projects in digital arts, web design or image-based work and music technology. Unlike media education activities in the statutory sector, informal provision is likely to:

- be led by artists, film makers or youth workers who may have a range of approaches to working with young people
- operate in intensive (one- or two-week) blocks
- take place in small teaching groups
- focus on production rather than critical study, providing good access to equipment
- emphasise product rather than process.

### ***How well does it work?***

Although experiences in the informal sector are varied, they are often well managed and resourced, with expert tuition often including creative input from media professionals. (A fuller account of the types of experience on offer is provided in the report *Being seen, being heard*.<sup>15</sup>) Although it is not universally the case, students can experience a more ‘cutting edge’ curriculum than is usually available in schools. For example, the summer university programme in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets includes courses on Flash animation software, computer game design and running an internet radio station. These forms of activity are all likely to introduce concepts, practices and production experiences beyond the formal media curriculum.

### ***Accrediting informal learning experiences***

At its best, the informal sector can offer original, engaged and high-quality media education. Although many informal providers do work with qualifications offered by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network or the National Open College Network, schools have yet to find a way of accrediting students’ informal learning experiences. The potential value of monitoring and accrediting such provision, and of developing sustainable infrastructures for it, are areas for further development.

### ***Working together and in parallel***

There are clear benefits to schools working with the informal sector (for example, access to initiatives such as Creative Partnerships, access to local practitioners, venues to exhibit students’ media work). However, there are also advantages to the two sectors remaining in parallel, not least because the informal and formal sectors offer young people two very different approaches to media learning.

# Initial teacher training

This section draws on the survey of 29 PGCE English tutors<sup>16</sup> carried out in April and May 2004, and on the survey of media studies teachers in secondary schools.

## Two levels of need

There are two groups of trainee teachers who need media input as part of their ITT: those graduates training to become English teachers who will have to teach the media objectives in the national curriculum programmes of study through the Framework for teaching English, and the media requirements of the GCSE English specifications; and those training to become specialist media studies teachers.

With a few exceptions both sets of needs are currently being addressed through PGCEs in English and school placements. It is the specific needs of those trainees who go on to become specialist media studies teachers that form the focus of this chapter.

## Preparing to teach media studies in the ITT year: PGCE routes

The Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) website lists only two training courses for teaching media studies as a specialised subject: the Central School of Speech and Drama (CSSD) in London currently offers 22 places for graduates training in media with English (see case study below), while a school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) provider in Cornwall provides two training places for candidates wishing to train in media studies with English. Of the 96 teacher-training courses listed for English in higher education institutions and SCITT providers across the UK, 71 are designated as English only. In the remaining courses English is offered in combination with a variety of subjects, most commonly drama (12 courses). Two institutions offer courses in English with media and drama (St Martin's Lancaster and London Metropolitan University), while Leicester University runs an English with media course.

### ***Example A: PGCE in media education with English at the Central School of Speech and Drama***

CSSD is a UK government-funded higher education college that specialises in theatre and drama performance and education qualifications at undergraduate and postgraduate levels for around 700 students. It is in the final stages of its assessment for 'taught degree-awarding powers' and is bidding for designation as both a centre for excellence in teaching and learning and a Skillset screen academy.

The PGCE in media education with English has been part of CSSD's provision since 1996, as part of a portfolio of courses alongside BA drama and theatre education and PGCE drama. The course was the first of its kind and remains the only course for media education subject specialists in the country. In 2002 the course was inspected by Ofsted, which found that the quality of training had improved from good to very good.

### **The applicants**

Entry to the course is competitive with a healthy 4:1 applicant to place ratio. Formal Teacher Training Agency (TTA) requirements aside, most successful applicants usually hold a first degree at 2.1 or above in media arts, media production, media, film or cultural studies, English or journalism, or a combined honours degree in these subjects. Applicants include recent good honours graduates (50 per cent); good honours graduates with 3–4 years' media industry experience or a postgraduate qualification (40 per cent); returning learners, who have risen to managerial positions in media industries (10 per cent).

TTA-allocated numbers for PGCE drama and media education with English at CSSD are likely to remain at 70 in the foreseeable future. The intention is to over-recruit slightly; individual subject targets are set for 48 drama and 24 media education with English in 2004/5.

### **The PGCE in media education with English curriculum**

The PGCE is established as a partnership between CSSD and secondary schools and colleges in the state sector, developed through termly partnership group meetings.

Partnership schools and colleges are all in the home counties; half have been with the partnership since its constitution – a significant factor in maintaining the quality of provision. Approximately 70 per cent are within the London boroughs, and these include a range of different types of provision; media arts colleges foundation schools, single-sex schools and Beacon schools.

Trainees also attend sessions at the English and Media Centre, the BFI and the London Film Festival education screenings.

Trainees follow a taught course for 60 days at CSSD and spend the remaining 120 days in schools (approximately 40 on an initial short placement and 80 on a final placement).

The curriculum is constructed around the Qualifying to Teach (QtT) standards, the framework for trainee teachers in all subjects.

### **The taught programme**

The taught programme balances a 'conceptual framework' for the discipline, with 'knowledge and understanding' of media topics and 'skills' of delivery and production. It is divided into three areas of pedagogic development:

- 'Issues in contemporary education': a lecture series addressing generic aspects of teaching and learning (40 per cent of curriculum time)
- 'Media teaching and learning': subject-specific group tutorial sessions (55 per cent of curriculum time)
- ICT (5 per cent of curriculum time).

The course has a substantive relationship with English teaching. This was determined by the need to gain initial course approval and to improve the employability of the teachers. As media studies is not a discrete subject until key stage 4, all trainees gain experience of teaching media in English in key stage 3.

### **Assessment**

Mentors at placement schools assess trainees on their practical teaching capabilities; link tutors and the course team moderate these assessments, which are graded in relation to the five 'cells' of the QtT document.

Award of the PGCE is determined by passing six written assignments that address teaching and learning theory in relation to this practical experience. Standard level descriptors are used for both practical and written assignment assessment.

### **Employability of course graduates**

Trainees completing the course have an excellent rate of success in securing positions. A significant number of graduates go on each year to take posts that see them 'in charge' of media in English faculties.

### **Future visions**

CSSD is introducing more media units on its undergraduate and postgraduate courses and is developing a new MA in acting for screen. There are likely to be more applications from graduates of these courses. There is additional discussion around the notion of repositioning the PGCE in media education with English as a 14–19 qualification, in the light of the White Paper for 14–19 reform and the recent DfES/TTA circular. This might allow the course to work more closely with the post-16 sector and concentrate its provision solely on media studies.

The survey of PGCE English tutors invited them to outline the ways in which media is covered in their training programmes. Tutors felt positive about the role of media in English and in the training they provide, and expressed commitment to media literacy. However, while welcoming the national curriculum's conception of English as encompassing language, literature, drama, ICT and media, all said they have insufficient time to address all areas of the English curriculum in sufficient depth. Many respondents commented that it is not within the remit of their designated English course to prepare trainees to teach media studies as a specialist subject.

## **Delivering media work in PGCE English**

The majority of PGCE English tutors are English-trained to degree or postgraduate level, with teaching experience in English. About 25 per cent of respondents had had significant teaching experience of media studies prior to moving into higher education or had acquired a higher qualification in media or communications teaching. Like their counterparts in the survey of teachers, tutors report that while they feel confident in 'reading the media', they are much less experienced in teaching practical work.

### ***Variations in practice at PGCE level***

Provision of media training in PGCE English varies from a minimum of a two-hour lecture to a full week exploring different aspects of media education. The majority of PGCE students will experience the equivalent of a day's input. What the media component of PGCE English might look like in practice is indicated in the following responses.

*'Teaching texts: media (3 hours) and one session on GCSE media studies.'*

*'One whole day includes a close look at the still and moving image and the introduction to practical production ... We study schemes of work for media to look at the implications of planning and teaching.'*

*'Trainees spend one full day in the first term looking at media in the English order, including looking at the scope for media practical work in English across key stages 3 and 4.'*

*'We have a 'media week' in which we cover the four key concepts and look at cine-literacy.'*

*'We devote two full days in the autumn term – then trainees opt for a specialist course of six half-days.'*

### ***Media teaching practice in schools***

In addition to the input in the taught course, it is expected that students will also learn on school placement, through both observation and their own practice. Tutors report that a lot of good initial work is going into media teaching and learning in trainees' school-based experiences, but that it is not uniform or defined by minimum coverage. Most respondents say that it is more common for trainees to teach media within English than to work with a media studies group. While this is valuable experience for those who go on to teach English, those who go on to teach media studies as an examination subject require a more sustained experience of working with a specialised media studies group.

### **Links to continuing professional development**

The links between ITT and CPD are limited. The induction of newly qualified teachers is not a duty of any of the higher education PGCE providers surveyed. CPD is coordinated by LEAs in conjunction with local providers and examination awarding bodies.

There are indications that this issue is beginning to be addressed. The National Association for the Teaching of English is currently working on a TTA-funded induction for ITT that will include training modules on media studies. It is possible developments like this will go some way to meeting the needs of teachers keen to develop their teaching of media in English, and those teachers who, having completed a PGCE in English or SCITT, wish to teach media studies as an examination subject.

# Support for media studies teachers

This chapter highlights the challenges faced by media teachers and the types of support needed to teach effectively and stay up-to-date with media developments.

## Support needs

### *The needs of 'new' media teachers*

Given that only a small minority will take up a media studies post with specialised experience acquired through ITT, most teachers new to media studies – including those who may be highly competent and experienced teachers – face a number of challenges, most notably:

- how to acquire, understand and apply the conceptual framework
- the need to familiarise themselves with a substantial body of new subject knowledge that is both theoretically challenging and rapidly changing
- the need to develop confidence and skills in using and teaching a range of technical and production skills.

### *Ongoing support for more experienced media teachers*

These issues are not confined to new teachers. In focus group discussions and interviews experienced media teachers raise the following issues:

- the need for CPD for teachers who have mastered the basics of course delivery but want to develop their own practice
- keeping up-to-date with, and resourcing materials on, the latest developments in the media
- the needs of individual media teachers working in isolation without the support of colleagues or a departmental structure
- the need to prioritise the training of inexperienced media teachers.

### *Support for teaching media in English*

English teachers required to cover the media component of the national curriculum for English at key stages 3 and 4, the objectives in the Framework for teaching English at key stage 3 and the media examination/coursework of GCSE English have particular resource and support needs. This support is detailed in 'Media study in English at key stages 3 and 4'.

## Priorities revealed by the survey

The survey asked teachers to identify the three areas they regarded as a priority for support. The following priorities emerged:

- the development of new teaching resources (37 per cent)
- the need to keep up-to-date with new developments in the media (35 per cent)
- the need to develop their own production skills (29 per cent)
- developing knowledge of the media field (27 per cent)
- opportunities to share practice with other teachers (18 per cent).

## Local education authority support

Since responsibility for CPD has been devolved to schools, access is guided by local priorities, identified by school and departmental development plans, rather than individual teachers' needs. Most LEAs do not have a dedicated adviser for media. Although many English advisers have incorporated media studies into their wider brief, and attempt to offer CPD support, 45 per cent of teacher respondents to the survey report no media support from their LEA, and only two per cent describe LEA support in this area as good or very good.

## The work of the national awarding bodies for media studies

### *Courses and training meetings*

The national awarding bodies for media studies are responsive to the needs of media teachers; a network of training meetings supports all specifications for GCSE and AS/A2. These meetings focus on issues for the examination, and practical activities to support the teaching of specific units of work. For example, in 2004:

- AQA will be offering approximately 24 days of training meetings to support course delivery and assessment, coursework/portfolio standardisation and guidance on the delivery and assessment of the specifications for both new and experienced teachers.
- WJEC will provide six days each on GCSE and GCE training, and 11 further days to support the GCE film studies specification. A new website for film studies is in development.
- OCR will offer 22 training days on specific elements of their specifications, including standardisation and support for teaching the specification for the first time.

Online support, such as that provided by OCR's virtual teacher community, is clearly one solution to the isolation media studies teachers can experience and the difficulties they can face in accessing expertise.

### *Publications*

The awarding bodies all produce material to support their courses. Generally available free on their websites or, for a small fee, in published form, this material includes guidance on possible production and coursework activities, as well as some exemplar material.

One trend is the publication of textbooks by commercial publishers to deliver the specific requirements of each awarding body and often endorsed by them. These are predominantly written or edited by teachers and examiners currently involved in the specifications, and are tied to the assessment criteria.

## Funded national media education organisations

The BFI and Film Education support a wide range of CPD activities nationwide, often through regional film theatres and arts associations, as well as producing a range of published resources. Material tends to be less closely related to specific examination requirements, offering instead in-depth study of particular genres, formats or *oeuvres*.

Both organisations offer the following support: GCSE and AS/A2 teaching and learning in media studies and film studies, moving-image teaching in English, events for students, published resources, advanced courses for teachers, online support, and research, development and consultancy around media teaching and learning. Both are staffed by media experts and use freelance trainers, advanced skills teachers and professionals from industry to support their

services. In 2003/4 the BFI organised events for over 1,750 teachers, while 64 primary teachers and 215 secondary teachers attended Film Education training sessions.

### ***The British Film Institute***

The BFI education department was consulted in the establishment of GCSE and A level media and film studies. It has lobbied for quality control of training provision and has implemented a system of associate tutors. It continues to work on a structure for CPD for media teachers. BFI runs three distance-learning courses, all with masters-level accreditation.

The annual media studies teachers' conference in July offers up to 250 teachers a range of 'How to teach ...' sessions, industry-led workshops, academic approaches, and seminars for both beginners and advanced teachers.

Recent BFI publications include moving-image resources on animation and the use of short films in the classroom, and a series of publications aimed specifically at A level teachers.

Since 2000, the BFI's major focus has been on the development of cine-literacy and moving-image education<sup>17</sup>.

### ***Film Education***

Film Education, which receives the majority of its funding from the British film industry, is particularly proactive in its support for National Schools Film Week. This provides up to 120,000 young people with access to around 900 free screenings and resources each year.

Film Education is currently championing the use of digital video technology with intensive two-day training courses in digital video production (in collaboration with Denbighshire LEA). It also produces a number of free interactive CD-ROMs with inbuilt editing software to tie in with current film releases and new 'hands-on' editing resources to support student production work.

Film Education provides a wide variety of film study guides across different key stages to support contemporary films on general release, as well as more focused resources that encourage teachers to use film in different curriculum areas, such as modern languages, history and English literature.

### ***The UK Film Council***

The UK Film Council has largely devolved its educational remit to the BFI. It supports a wide range of training initiatives within the film industry, and through its funding of the First Light project has supported the development of young film makers.

### ***The National Museum of Film, Television and Photography, Bradford***

The museum arranges a wide range of training days for both students and teachers, focused around permanent and special exhibits, and CPD courses for teachers around media examination specifications. It hosts a repeat of the BFI's media studies conference, attracting around 60 delegates.

## Non-funded national media education organisations

This review considers a representation of some of the more successful self-financing organisations currently offering support in media and film studies.

### *The English and Media Centre*

The English and Media Centre provides training courses in all aspects of English and media teaching and a masters-level module (40 credits), 'Introduction to media education', accredited by the London University Institute of Education. In 2003/4, 226 teachers attended media training events at the centre, including extended courses (3–6 days) on media studies at GCSE and A level, A level film studies days, and running an effective media department. The centre publishes classroom resources for both English and media and two quarterly magazines for A level students (one of which is specifically targeted at AS/A2 media and film students). The centre is involved in a wide range of research and consultancy activities in media teaching and learning at both national and international level. An informal media teachers' forum meeting is held twice termly. Most recently, the centre has also provided training materials in media education for key stage 3 strategy consultants.

### *In the Picture*

In the Picture's (ITP's) provision includes a quarterly media studies teachers' magazine, covering all phases of education, published guides to teaching specific topics in media and film studies, and a range of resources around key media concepts and practices (with the BFI). It offers courses at GCSE and A level and training around the teaching of vocational qualifications in media. ITP works with a range of providers in Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield to support teachers and extend curriculum work with students through CPD and events. It also runs a media education certificate course, validated by Trinity and All Saints College, Leeds.

## Other sources of support

The providers below are larger organisations that coordinate training across the curriculum, and outsource their training to a small core of highly experienced freelance trainers who often run courses for more than one organisation. The providers all report maximum take-up on their courses, but no statistical data is available.

**The Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media** is based at the London Knowledge Lab, and focuses on the role of media technologies in children's lives in order to inform research, policy and practice as well as public debate in these areas. Directed by Professor David Buckingham, the centre runs a wide range of funded media education research projects with a strong relevance to classroom practice, including internet safety, young people's media experiences of love, sex and relationships, gender and popular culture, online learning, and computer game authoring. Many of these have an international focus and are disseminated through the centre's website and through major conferences and seminars open to teachers and advisers. The department also offers a range of research projects and CPD conferences for both PGCE and other postgraduate students.

**Keynote Educational** offers courses for teachers and revision days across the curriculum for students. The focus in media studies courses is on supporting new teachers. Training days include teaching GCSE media studies, AS/A2 film studies and AS/A2 media studies, basic hands-on media production skills and running a successful media/film department.

**Lighthouse** operates along similar lines to Keynote Educational in offering cross-curricular CPD. It runs a two-day residential workshop for GCSE media studies with one day on practical work and the other on theory.

**Philip Allan Updates** publishes a wide range of subject-specific educational resources, at A level and GCSE, and runs a comprehensive programme of conferences and courses in the UK for students and teachers, chiefly in London, Birmingham and Manchester.

**The regional film theatre programme** is an initiative coordinated by the BFI that builds links between exhibition houses and the community. Some of these initiatives are education-focused with events for schools and teachers. The BFI website has links to venue-based providers nationwide.

**Teacher input** is gathered from successful departments such as Long Road Sixth Form Centre in Cambridge; Hurtwood House, Surrey; Halesowen Further Education College, West Midlands; and City and Islington Sixth Form Centre, north London, who have worked closely with CPD providers and publishers to share good practice.

## **Accredited professional development in media teaching**

While there exists a very wide range of postgraduate courses on all aspects of media studies, this review only addresses those diplomas, certificates and masters courses with a direct CPD function.

**School of Culture, Language and Communication – London University Institute of Education** has offered a masters course in media studies for education (now called MA in Media, Culture and Communication) for the last 25 years and has trained several hundred media teachers during this period. The modules are designed for flexible use and distance learning, primarily through online discussion and residential sessions. This makes them accessible both nationally and internationally, and allows full- or part-time study. They include children's media culture, ideology, identity and the media, digital video and multimedia production, computer games and introduction to media education.

**The British Film Institute's education department** runs three distance-learning courses.

- Introduction to media education, a masters-level optional module, accredited by the Institute of Education (see above).
- A masters in media education, an action research project accredited by the Open University.
- Digital video production in education, accredited as part of the masters programme at the Institute of Education, offers training in the effective use of digital video in teaching and learning (see above).

These courses are all conducted via e-learning platforms with some seminar contact.

**The English and Media Centre** offers a masters module in media education worth 40 masters credits within the Institute of Education's MA in Media Culture and Communication (see above). The year-long module, which includes an action research project, is taught through workshop and seminar sessions, with online discussion and supervision.

**Trinity and All Saints' department of education, Leeds**, runs a two-year, part-time course in media education covering the four key concepts of media studies. The course integrates practical activity and academic enquiry.

## Internet resources and networks

The internet has had a significant impact on teaching and learning in media studies by increasing access to:

- subject knowledge
- information about the media industries
- media texts for classroom use
- online discussion, guidance and resource sharing
- information about training events and new resources.

Several websites combine a number of these functions, for example:

- *MediaEd* ([www.mediaed.org.uk](http://www.mediaed.org.uk)), the national UK media education website (funded jointly by BFI, In the Picture, Media Education Wales, and the Northern Irish and Scottish media education associations), provides summaries of current media issues; teacher and student pages with links to useful classroom resources; a calendar of support in different regions; contact details; and extensive links to a range of other websites. The online discussion forum addresses both specification-based enquiries and wider issues.
- A number of subject websites based in higher education media departments offer substantial amounts of media studies content, but offer no support for teaching at secondary level. The exception to this is the CSCYM's website, which focuses on issues and research of direct relevance to media education in schools.
- OCR's virtual teacher community (see above).
- Websites run by individual teachers, initially for their own students, but later for general access. Teachers frequently cite school-based websites as useful, particularly where schools have Beacon or specialist status and a responsibility for disseminating good practice.

### ***Getting inside the media industries***

Institutional and production data about individual media products is frequently available online, opening up production processes and institutional aspects of current and forthcoming films, advertising and TV programmes.

Further support is offered by broadcasting, advertising and regulatory institutions (for example, the Advertising Standards Authority, Ofcom, the Film Distributors' Association, Skillset and the Periodical Publishers' Association), many of which now offer micro-sites or substantial information packs for both teachers and students, as do a number of advertising agencies, newspaper groups and independent production companies.

In terms of general media data, teachers often cite the BBC website ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)) and the Guardian website ([www.guardianunlimited.co.uk](http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk)) as good sources of information. Channel 4's *4Learning* website ([www.channel4.com/learning/](http://www.channel4.com/learning/)) provides support material to accompany some of Channel 4's mainstream programming, while the *Amazing grades* website ([www.amazing-grades.com](http://www.amazing-grades.com)) includes resources to support film and media studies.

### **Online forums**

The network-building model provided by the OCR media teachers' website has proved successful in establishing not only information and resource-sharing opportunities, but also a forum for debates about the development of the subject itself. It is likely that the film studies website currently in development at WJEC will offer a similar service.

More pragmatic issues – for example, budgeting queries, beginners' questions about access to resources, or staffing concerns – are addressed through the growing range of dedicated chatrooms on websites such as *TeachIt*, *TES media staffroom* and *MediaEd*.

### **The lack of a professional association**

There is currently no dedicated national professional association for media studies teachers. In the survey, 73 per cent of media teachers report that they would find such an organisation helpful or very helpful.

One possible reason for the absence of a professional association of media teachers is the existence of publicly funded bodies like the BFI education department, which has, in effect, acted as an advocate of media education on behalf of teachers.

The case for a professional organisation to represent the voice of media teachers has assumed increasing importance in the last few years as subject associations have been invited to contribute to policy initiatives at all key stages, not only on the content of the curriculum, but also on matters relating to CPD. In the last two years subject associations have been formally involved both collectively and individually in consultation exercises mounted by the DfES and the TTA. Already various subject association projects have been directly funded by these two organisations and there is every likelihood that funding of this kind will increase in the future.

# The department and the teachers

This section is based on evidence submitted from the survey of media and film studies teachers. It is supplemented with additional information from focus groups and school visits. In this chapter, media studies refers to the discrete subject taught at examination level.

## Who teaches media studies?

Respondents to the survey teach in a range of schools:

- 11–16 schools (11 per cent)
- 11–18 schools (56 per cent)
- sixth-form colleges (17 per cent)
- further education colleges (16 per cent)

Respondents describe their status within the institution in the following ways:

- head of faculty (7 per cent)
- head of media (44 per cent)
- head of English (teaching media) (5 per cent)
- in charge of media (12 per cent)
- English teacher (teaching media studies) (12 per cent)
- media teacher (8 per cent)
- other (12 per cent)

Of the teachers responding to the survey, 58 per cent were female and 42 per cent were male.

### ***What qualifications do media studies teachers have?***

Of the media studies teachers who responded to the survey 22 per cent have a first degree in media studies; 59 per cent had studied no media at all in their first degree. However, 19 per cent have gained a postgraduate degree in media or film studies, with a further 18 per cent having a postgraduate degree including media studies modules.

The PGCE courses of 52 per cent of the respondents had not included any specific media component; 33 per cent report having more than four hours of media input (with 21 per cent having more than 10 hours). Of responding teachers, 21 per cent have gained a further diploma or certificate in media education.

While 66 per cent of respondents have received two or more days of media CPD, between 20 per cent and 30 per cent have had no training from either the awarding bodies or CPD providers. The survey showed that 41 per cent had not had any training in production work, a further 42 per cent receiving between one and four days' production training.

In spite of the relative lack of CPD in media studies, and particularly production work, responses to the survey indicate that teachers are confident about their ability to teach the subject. Between 66 per cent and 74 per cent agree or strongly agree that they felt competent in their subject knowledge, application of media theory, understanding of grade boundaries and up-to-date in their knowledge of contemporary issues and debates. Sixty per cent agree or strongly agree that they were competent to help students with their production work.

## **The nature of the departments**

### ***How long have the departments and teachers been teaching media/film?***

While almost 20 per cent of responding departments have been teaching media and film for more than nine years, 54 per cent of departments have introduced the subject at examination level in the last five years.

These figures are reflected in the length of time many of the respondents have been teaching media studies as a separate examination subject. Although only 19 per cent of respondents are under 30, 58 per cent have taught the subject for less than five years. This suggests that while media studies tends to be taught by experienced practitioners, many are new to the discipline. Responses to the survey show that 21 per cent of media studies teachers have been teaching examination courses for nine or more years.

### ***How much teaching of media studies?***

Although a significant number of respondents (71 per cent) identify themselves as media teachers, the survey reveals that this is not their only, or even main, teaching responsibility. Of the respondents, 50 per cent teach media studies for between three and 10 hours a week, with a further 37 per cent teaching the subject for 11 or more hours a week.

### ***Student numbers in departments***

The majority of departments have between 40 and 79 students studying GCSE and between 20 and 39 students studying post-16 courses. The average group size for most 14–16 classes and for 25 per cent of post-16 classes is between 20 and 24 students. Post-16, more than half (56 per cent) of respondents teach average group sizes of between 10 and 19.

### ***Entry requirements for courses***

The survey reveals that institutions tend not to have an entry requirement for students who want to study on GCSE and intermediate GNVQ courses. For more than half the respondents, admission to AS level and advanced VCE courses was open to students gaining five A\*–C grades, though a significant number (17 per cent) did specify a grade C in English at GCSE. In most schools and colleges, in order to progress to A2 level students had to successfully obtain the AS qualification. A small minority (5 per cent) required students to get a grade C at AS level before they could progress.

### ***Budget***

Average spend per student is more than £10 in 64 per cent of responding departments and less than £10 in 36 per cent.

### ***Facilities***

Of respondents, virtually all have access to at least one TV and video, but a significant minority do not have access to editing equipment for film and video work (16 per cent), multimedia computers (23 per cent) or broadband (29 per cent).

Sound and TV studios are rare (11 per cent and 8 per cent respectively), and 42 per cent of departments do not have dedicated media classrooms. Only 32 per cent of media departments had an office.

### ***Support from a dedicated media technician***

Of respondents, 65 per cent had no access to a media technician, 15 per cent of departments had a full-time technician and 20 per cent had access to a part-time technician.

### **Case study A: A different structure at Halesowen Further Education College**

The provision at Halesowen Further Education College is notably different from the way media studies is generally organised in the majority of schools. There is no relationship with the English department, as is frequently the case in further education colleges; the closest links are with drama, art and pop music courses. Neither are staff recruited from a background of English teaching; all have substantial academic experience and/or specialist training in media.

In 2004/5 the department is staffed by three full-time media/film lecturers (two of whom are course leaders), and four part-time lecturers from a range of different media specialisms. In addition, lecturers are 'seconded' from communication studies, art and photography to teach on film and various vocational units. There may also be up to 10 further part-time, hourly-paid lecturers at any one time, employed to deliver aspects of the vocational courses. Most significantly however, the department employs a full-time learning resources assistant/technician, who it acknowledges as the key to much of its success in supporting and extending the learning experiences of students, particularly in terms of assistance with software and editing of production work.

There is an independent learning centre stocked with stand-alone eMac computers and two editing suites for booking out to students. An audio recording room is shared with pop music courses. There appears to be considerable collaboration with the art department, including the sharing of resources for graphics and computer-aided design.

## **Media studies in 2004: teachers' perspectives**

Throughout this review reference has been made to the survey of media studies teachers conducted by the English and Media Centre. Over 420 teachers completed the survey and their responses to particular aspects of media studies are detailed in the appropriate sections. Summarised below are the teachers more general perceptions of the subject in 2004.

### ***The status of media studies***

Of respondents, 92 per cent feel that their specialist media studies course is highly regarded by students. However, over 70 per cent feel that non-media teachers on the staff hold it in low regard, while 44 per cent believe this is also true of senior management. However, 54 per cent feel media studies has high status with their senior management teams.

### ***Media studies as a discipline***

The results of the survey suggest that among teachers delivering media studies, there is broad agreement about its aims. Respondents were asked to rank a series of statements on the point of media studies from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The top three choices (agree or strongly agree) are:

- teaching students to read the media in order to become critical consumers (nearly 90 per cent)
- encouraging students to challenge ideas and representations in the media (89 per cent)
- generating pleasure and enjoyment (74 per cent).

### ***Issues of equity, inclusion and comparability***

In focus groups, teacher-forums and the survey the following areas emerge as areas in need of development with regard to comparability and equity in the teaching and learning of media studies:

- access to appropriate training and expertise
- provision of the technology needed to teach the production work components of the specification
- appropriate teacher to pupil ratios for production work to be carried out most effectively.

# Ways ahead for media studies

Some of the key ways in which digital, technological and institutional developments are likely to impact on media studies in the 21st century are considered in this chapter.

## Media studies for the 21st century

Future developments in media studies will be affected by:

- developments in technology (chiefly, forms of digital technology) and cultural activities (for example, broadcasting, films, phone-usage habits), which affect the production, reception and circulation of media products
- changes and trends in employment and entry to employment in the media-related fields of the creative and cultural industries
- changes in public debate and educational policy relating to young people and the media, for example, the changing regulatory environment in relation to the internet.

### ***Technology***

Technological and social change has affected media studies at every level of the subject. The fact that the subject is based on core concepts, practices and analytical frameworks rather than prescribed content has so far allowed it to adapt to the digital age. Further, where necessary, the key media concepts have shown themselves able to adapt in order to accommodate new developments in media and how these are reflected in media studies. This can be illustrated through computer games, the study of which raises interesting conceptual questions about whether a games player is a member of an audience, or an interactive producer of a new form of text, or both.

It is not yet clear whether the existing methods of analysing and creating media products are continually adapting to new developments or whether these changes have transformed the whole field of study. For example, the low cost and relative simplicity of computer-based editing systems have brought video/film making into an increasing number of schools. However, we do not yet know enough to understand the full impact of non-linear editing technologies on the processes of film making, and how far digital software offers learners a qualitatively different experience from older analogue practices. Similarly, the new types of communication generated by mobile phone technology (such as SMS and MMS) have not yet been sufficiently researched to be able to hypothesise whether new theoretical models may be required to analyse them.

### ***Relationship to employment***

Great emphasis is now placed on the economic significance of creative and cultural industries. This broad and varied sector includes the media. While media studies at secondary level may have some vocational relevance, it is unlikely that it will provide a direct route into the creative and cultural industries. Media studies would be well placed to respond to the needs of this growing job market by taking on a more explicitly vocational purpose.

### ***Relationship to public debate and educational policy***

The growth and accessibility of digital technologies, in particular the internet, has led to public debates about regulation and censorship, most notably in relation to young people's access to, and relationship with, these new media. Ofcom, created in 2003, is currently proactive in exploring and researching broader and more inclusive definitions of media literacy and in developing regulatory systems appropriate to the digital age that will both inform and change consumers' relationship with the media.

'The ability to think critically about viewing, for example to understand why one likes or dislikes certain programmes or genres and relate such preferences to moral and intellectual reference points; and having done so, to take greater responsibility for viewing choices and the use of electronic media.' (*Ofcom's strategy and priorities for the promotion of media literacy*, Ofcom, 2004)

The media studies curriculum will inevitably be affected by, and respond to, such public debates and policy developments.

### ***Reaching a real audience***

There are increasing opportunities for student work to reach a wider audience. For production work this can be through local screenings, festivals, community cable TV or via the internet to a potentially global audience. The potential of school and college websites is exemplified by the iCritique application at Long Road Sixth Form Centre. This application allows users not only to view a wide range of student work but also to comment on it and enter into dialogue with its producers.

### ***Media studies across the curriculum***

Media studies has a role to play in ensuring new media technologies are used effectively and critically throughout the curriculum. Its advocates claim it can offer an original, successful and informed way of using new media technologies for creative purposes, but also that its concepts provide a framework for evaluating and critically analysing information sources, data integrity and the representation of knowledge across a range of subjects.

### ***Access for all***

Students' access to new media technologies outside school varies widely. Schools have a role to play in ensuring that within the curriculum all students have access to high-quality digital production technologies and motivated, enthusiastic and appropriately experienced staff who are sensitive to the variations in young people's digital experiences.

## **Areas for further action or research**

Having conducted this research – and as a result of discussions with teachers and subject experts – the authors of this review offer the following recommendations to take media studies forward.

1. A reconsideration of the most appropriate forms of assessment for the different aspects of media studies.
2. Developments in media studies following proposals for 14–19 change need to draw on the views of organisations representing the interests of media education, further and higher education and media industries.
3. New models of vocational media studies that are appropriate to the school context, particularly the 14–16 age group, and sensitive to the needs of the media industries.

4. Specialist reports on teaching and learning in media studies (for example, by Ofsted) to help disseminate good practice and identify priorities for school and department development plans.
5. An investigation into ways to increase the number of centres across the country offering ITT courses in media studies as a main specialism, with English or other options as subsidiary subjects. This might also include offering optional extension modules in media studies within ITT programmes.
6. Research into learning progression in media education within and between the key stages and different levels of examination.
7. An exploration of the potential of co-teaching English and media studies and impact on achievement, with a particular focus on the performance of boys.
8. A more sustainable model for CPD in media studies.
9. Further investigation into ways of establishing networks of English and media teachers to explore and disseminate issues of teaching and learning in media education at key stages 3 and 4.
10. An association for media studies to have a coordinating function and act as a 'voice' for the subject at local and national level.

# Appendix 1: Research informing the review

## ***The teacher survey***

A questionnaire survey of teachers and students was carried out in late March 2004. Teachers and students were given a six-week period to respond.

All secondary schools were mailed with an invitation to respond to the online version of the questionnaire; hard copies were mailed to 800 subscribers to *MediaMagazine*, a quarterly magazine for A level media and film studies.

The questionnaire was completed by 420 teachers representing approximately 400 different institutions (30 per cent of all institutions offering media studies at examination level). Much of the ‘teachers’ perspectives’ included in the review are taken from the four open-ended questions in the survey. For further details of the teachers responding to the survey, see ‘The department and the teachers’.

## ***The student survey***

Students were notified of the online questionnaire via *MediaMagazine* and 282 AS and A2 students completed the online survey. Their views on media and film studies are included in ‘Media studies at A level’ and ‘Film studies at A level’.

## ***The ITT tutor survey***

Email questionnaires were sent to 75 PGCE tutors running English ITT courses in higher education institutions in May 2004. Of these 29 completed questionnaires were returned, and inform the chapter ‘Initial teacher training’.

## ***Interviews***

Telephone and face-to-face interviews were conducted with HMI, awarding bodies, heads of media departments in schools and colleges, human resource managers in the media industries, and media workers in arts organisations. (See acknowledgements on page 73.)

## ***Written submissions***

Written submissions were commissioned from a number of fields, including experts in media studies, ITT and GCSE English, vocational media in schools and colleges, production work, new media technologies, the informal arts sector, and CPD.

## ***Case studies and focus groups***

In addition to being invited to complete questionnaires, seven institutions were visited (see the case studies included in this report). Six focus groups were also convened to explore particular issues.

## ***Media studies conference***

The English and Media Centre hosted a conference to explore issues in teaching and learning in the media studies curriculum. This conference was attended by 25 delegates, comprising teachers in schools and colleges, awarding body examiners, lecturers and tutors in higher education and representatives from key support agencies.

### ***Feedback from key stage 3 literacy consultants***

As part of the national training in media education of 300 key stage 3 literacy consultants, the English and Media Centre received detailed feedback on the current state of media teaching and learning at key stage 3 across England.

### ***Desk research***

Research included an overview of available literature and statistical information from all awarding bodies, Yellis scores for 2004, media education literature (see bibliography), existing research from the BFI and academic studies of media teaching and learning in practice.

# Appendix 2: The theoretical framework for media studies

Studying the media means engaging with a diverse range of texts, genres, processes, practices, organisations, debates and issues. Study may range from the analysis of a single print advertisement in the popular press to an examination on the impact of an internet viral advertising campaign; from the exploration of a sequence in an action movie to an investigation of the film's distribution, marketing and regulation; from the analysis of hip hop lyrics to the controversies around their representations and perceived influence on audiences.

Over the past 25 years there have been many attempts to map out a conceptual framework for the study of media, both as a discipline in its own right, and as a cross-curricular subject. The conceptual framework, based on the four key concepts of language, audience, institutions and representation, forms the foundation of media studies at GCSE and A level and at key stage 3.

The four key media concepts referred to throughout this review are summarised here.

## ***Media language, forms and conventions***

In media studies 'language' analysis is understood to include visual images (still and moving); colour, movement, graphics and typography; pace and timing; the aural cues of voice, music, sound effects and silence; the narrative format and generic conventions of a media text; its voice and mode of address and its relation to a larger network of texts through which it has been marketed (for example, websites, promotional material and spin-offs).

Studying media languages means looking at:

- meanings: what different forms of language – visual, verbal, spatial and aural – do the media use to create meaning and convey ideas?
- choices and effects: how is meaning constructed through the selection and sequence of images, sounds, words, design and layout?
- codes and conventions – how are the 'grammatical rules' and accepted forms of media language established, and how do they operate in different media genres and narratives?
- technologies: how does language and meaning vary according to the technologies used to create them?

## ***Media audiences***

Media texts are industrially produced, specifically constructed and targeted to address particular audiences. Study includes the constitution of the audiences, the ways in which producers identify and play to the target audience's defining characteristics and the strategies used to market to them.

Studying media audiences means looking at:

- address and meaning: how do different media genres talk to their audiences, what appeals do they make, and how are they read and interpreted?
- targeting: how do media producers identify and target audiences for their products, and what assumptions do they make about those audiences?
- circulation: how do the media reach their audiences?

- patterns of consumption: how do audiences use the media in their everyday lives and what pleasures do they gain? How might media use vary according to social differences such as gender, social class, age and ethnic identity?

### ***Media production, industries and institutions***

Media texts are constructed within a network of economic, political and editorial constraints. Media studies, therefore, investigates not only the techniques used to create meaning, but also the production technologies, professional practices, and the ways in which the text is delivered to audiences by a network of interlinked institutions or industries. This, in turn, means considering the ownership of the text and the financial, ethical and regulatory context in which it is produced.

Studying media production, industries or institutions means looking at:

- the production process: how are media texts made, with what technologies, by whom, and in whose interests?
- the media industries: who owns the companies that make, buy and sell the media, and how does this affect the products?
- distribution and access: how do media texts reach their audiences – and who has access to opportunities for production?
- regulation: how are the media controlled, by whom, and why?

### ***Meanings, messages and values: re-presentation***

The basic premise of media studies is that all media texts offer subjective and constructed versions – or re-presentations – of the world. While most often focused around discussions of stereotypes, bias or realism, the concept of re-presentation is complex, raising challenging and contentious questions about the ideologies of texts, their implied or overt values and their supposed or potential influence.

Studying re-presentation means looking at:

- views of the world: how do the media re-present events, issues, social groups and ideas? How accurate and objective are those re-presentations and what ideas, politics or values do they imply?
- presence and absence: whose views are re-presented in the media? Whose voices are included – and whose excluded?
- realism and authenticity: how do the media re-present ‘real life’, and how do they construct a sense of authenticity?
- influences and effects: how far do the media affect our views of the world, our ideas and behaviour?

This framework of interrelated conceptual questions should be at the heart of media study wherever it happens across the curriculum. Although the framework has been formulated in many ways as the subject has become established over the last three decades, the underpinning areas of study have remained broadly the same. They exist within the current formulation of media education in national curriculum English, are relevant to a range of other curriculum subjects, and inform the media studies specifications at GCSE, A level and beyond.

However, it is important to note that this theoretical framework does not in itself constitute a curriculum. It is not taught in the abstract, nor as a discrete series of concepts. It is taught as a series of key questions that might be asked of any media text, process or institution. The strength of the framework is perceived as being its ability to encompass or adapt to new technological developments or issues as they arise.

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- <sup>3</sup> Buckingham, D (ed), *Watching media learning*, Falmer Press, 1991; Buckingham, D, and Sefton-Green, J, *Cultural studies goes to school: reading and teaching popular media*, Taylor and Francis, 1995; Buckingham, D, and Sefton-Green, J, *Making media: learning from media production*, English and Media Centre, 1995
- <sup>4</sup> Barratt, 1998; Hart and Hicks, 2002; Kirwan et al, 2003; Goodwyn, 2004
- <sup>5</sup> Barratt, AJB, *Audit of media in English*, BFI, 1998
- <sup>6</sup> In 2002 this was comedy film, in 2003, local and community radio; TV advertising is the topic for 2005
- <sup>7</sup> In 2002, teenage magazines or science fiction films; in 2003, music magazines or TV situation comedy
- <sup>8</sup> For 2004 and 2005, either news or advertising
- <sup>9</sup> For 2004, examination, print advertising and TV news; for 2005, magazines and TV advertising
- <sup>10</sup> Figures for the increase in the number of candidates being entered for media studies between 2002 and 2004 are supplied by the awarding bodies
- <sup>11</sup> To become an applied A level from 2005
- <sup>12</sup> Statistics from *Being seen being heard*, BFI, 2002
- <sup>13</sup> See [www.firstlightmovies.com](http://www.firstlightmovies.com)
- <sup>14</sup> For more information contact the London Development Agency ([www.lda.gov.uk](http://www.lda.gov.uk))
- <sup>15</sup> The BFI (2002) study *Being seen, being heard* provides an excellent snapshot of provision in the non-formal film making area, and summarises the common curriculum structures and pedagogic arrangements typically found in the sector
- <sup>16</sup> An open questionnaire was sent to all PGCE English course tutors in April 2004. This was a qualitative survey focusing on the provision of media teacher training in single and joint English courses
- <sup>17</sup> The BFI strategy document *Making movies matter* has been very influential, as has its co-publication *Moving images in the classroom*, distributed free and available online



# Curriculum and Standards

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Audience</b>    | Teachers of English at key stages 3 and 4, teachers of media studies at key stage 4 and post-16, teachers of film studies, local education authority English consultants, advisers and inspectors and initial teacher training departments                  |
| <b>Type</b>        | Information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Description</b> | This booklet provides an overview of the current state of media education in secondary schools and colleges in England, both within the national curriculum for English and as a separate discipline in qualifications, including vocational qualifications |

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