

Millom School

GCSE and A Level Media Rationale:

What is the importance of the subject? Why should students be studying it? Why should they care about it? How might the subject link to real world scenarios?

All mass media content, from news, film and TV, through to advertising, radio, video games and social media, is about the stories we tell about ourselves as a society and as individuals. We need to understand who is producing it, how it is produced, what it is saying and what effect it is having?

Today, more than at any time since the invention of the first truly mass communication technology in the early 20th century, media is having a profound effect on our social, political and economic lives. As a result, media studies frequently takes an interdisciplinary approach to its enquiry, embracing politics, economics and psychology, as well as law and ethics. While some may see this as a flaw, in our frantically interconnected world, perhaps it should be acknowledged as another strength. The very fact that many other subjects now embrace media in their own enquiry attests to the growing significance.

It is time to take the subject seriously; Media is the **only** subject that moves with the times and the generations studying it. It requires academic approaches that historically academic subjects do not – the study of theories and analyses that traditional subjects do not. There is an expectation that students of Media are able to apply their theoretical knowledge to everyday, 21st century texts and scenarios – things they are actually living through now - something most other subjects lack.

Media academics are also increasingly working with government, regulators and institutions as they critically engage with the new digital age and its fallout. Likewise, the creative industries continue to be the fastest-growing part of the UK economy, accounting for one in 11 jobs, further supporting to the need to study the impact of media and to build a workforce with the skills to support it – something some current generations of workers are sadly lacking and potentially unable to move forward with.

Skills training in universities may be controversial, but students **don't just learn to be journalists, or just learn to be film-makers**. They learn to critically assess their cultural production, to understand that it can be part of a system that is steeped in cause and consequence. They learn that communication and its changing landscape needs to be understood not just by them but by everyone. Creating a message is what Media is all about.

Whether we like it or not, media is one of the defining subjects of our age, so isn't it finally time we took it seriously?

The word 'media' is derived from the word medium, signifying mode or carrier. Media is intended to reach and address a large target group or audience. The word was first used in respect of books and newspapers i.e. print media and with the advent of technology, media now encompasses television, movies, radio and internet. In today's world, media is as essential as our daily needs. The media of today is playing an outstanding role in creating and shaping of public opinion and the strengthening of society. Media can sway and challenge democracy. It should and does act as a watchdog to protect the public interest against malpractice and create public awareness. Media heightens awareness, teaches moral pathways and suggests new ways of believing and thinking. It enables those who feel they have no voice to develop one through social use and enables the public to stand together against those whose beliefs and attitudes are wrong.

It would be short sighted of any member of society to think that Media is just a 'soft subject for arty types'. Perhaps those that think this are the people being left behind by the rapid development and growth mind set of the next generation of employees, primed to see exactly where their knowledge of how to socially advertise a business, promote moving image online, develop the next big app, create a world of gaming, or

be involved in the making of great TV and films can take them. Let's face it – without Media, we are nothing in the 21st Century.

What are the Key Concepts underpinning the subject?

Media Studies provides students with opportunities to discuss and create media texts. On the AQA course, we look at all forms of media - from **established print media** like **newspapers, magazines, TV and film**, to newer digital forms like **websites, games and apps**. Media Studies is unique in that it synthesises the analytical with the practical - asking students to consider the **key concepts of audience, language, institutions and representations** in all of their work. It tests their ability to take their **theoretical knowledge** and place it in a practical representation, for 'real world' audiences.

Media products have saturated almost every part of public and private life. The creative and media sectors currently include some of the most powerful, successful and sophisticated industries in the country, especially in the **world of online design, advertising and influencing**. Media Studies examines all forms of visual communication and enables students to be participants in media practices. It hopes to empower students so that they are able to recognise the way in which our **consumption of media influences our behaviours, attitudes and beliefs**. The subject belongs in a world where online media dictates our everyday lives and influences all forms of Media.

In brief, what topics will students be studying in each year group?

GCSE – Year 10 / 11

What's assessed

Section A will focus on Media Language and Media Representations. Questions in this section can test any two of the following forms:

- magazines
- advertising and marketing
- newspapers
- online, social and participatory media and video games.

Section B will focus on Media Industries and Media Audiences. Questions in this section can test any two of the following forms:

- radio
- music video
- newspapers
- online, social and participatory media and video games
- film (industries only).

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes
- 84 marks
- 35% of GCSE

Questions

- A range of questions relating to an unseen source and Close Study Products.
- An extended response question (20 marks).

What's assessed

Section A will be based on a screening from an extract of one of the television Close Study Products and can test any area of the theoretical framework.

Section B will be based on either newspapers or online, social and participatory media and video games and can test any area of the framework.

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes
- 84 marks
- 35% of GCSE

Questions

- Short, medium and extended response questions assessing depth of knowledge and understanding of the course.

**What's assessed**

- Application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework.
- Ability to create media products.

How it's assessed

- A choice of one of five annually changing briefs, set by AQA.
- 60 marks
- 30% of GCSE
- Assessed by teachers
- Moderated by AQA.

Tasks

Students produce:

- a statement of intent
- a media product for an intended audience.

A Level – Yr12/13

What's assessed

Section A will focus on Media Language and Media Representations. Questions in this section will test the following forms:

advertising and marketing

music video.

Section B will focus on Media Industries and Media Audiences. Questions in this section can test any two of the following forms:

radio

newspapers
film (industries only).

How it's assessed

Written exam: 2 hours
84 marks
35% of A-level

Questions

A range of questions relating to an unseen source and Close Study Products.
Two essay questions (20 marks), one of which is an extended response question.



What's assessed

Questions will focus on the in-depth media forms of television, magazines and online, social and participatory media/video games.

How it's assessed

Written exam: 2 hours
84 marks
35% of A-level

Questions

One medium length unseen analysis question.
Three essay questions (25 marks), one of which is an extended response question and one of which is a synoptic question.



What's assessed

Application of knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework.
Ability to create media products.

How it's assessed

A choice of one of six annually changing briefs, set by AQA.
60 marks

30% of A-level

Assessed by teachers

Moderated by AQA

Tasks

Students produce:

a statement of intent

a cross-media production made for an intended audience.

In brief, what skills will the students develop?

Through studying Media students will view, evaluate and analyse a variety of media products, and develop practical skills spanning a range of media forms. They will **research** and **develop an understanding** of contemporary, diverse topics and varied and engaging content, helping your students to develop research, problem-solving skills as well as their creativity. They'll also refine their debating skills through the discussion of contemporary issues from a range of perspectives.

At A-level students will develop make a smooth progression from GCSE Media and learn about contemporary thinking in media. Students will also extend their practical skills in their chosen medium, building their capacity for independent research, and gaining a deeper appreciation and understanding of the role media plays in day-to-day life. Students will learn to be critical in their thinking, analytical in their approach to texts, observers and participators in the analysis and creation of texts but, most importantly, engaged, educated consumers of a contemporary technological world which will shape their futures.

In brief, how are the students learning and being assessed in this subject? How does the subject support the learning of ALL students, including stretch?

Students learn through CSPs – Close Study Products. There are 16 to be taught at both GCSE and A Level. These are set projects which are linked to dominant aspects of today's media culture. Students will earn through audio and visual examples, presentations on each CSP, analysis of techniques and reasons, creation of set practical pieces, recall of theory and technical vocab and examination.

All students will be able to access a level of Media through what they learn. There is differentiated work provided and clearly the grade descriptors help to differentiate what is expected from each ability profile. There is a taught module on practical editing – students can choose the professional but difficult to master 'Industry standard' editing suites or simpler, DTP based software.

To stretch the more able, their NEA can be tailored to suit their skill set and the teaching of theories and the application to set media texts can be expanded. There are basic theories that all students should know and then more academic theorists whose suggestions require a deeper understanding of the contexts in which they are applied – studying feminist theories, post-modern theories etc

Using media is especially good for cognitive reasoning. Bloom's (1956) taxonomy lists the following cognitive functions: data recall, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Many media provide the opportunity for teachers to activate all six cognitive domains.

Exam board provided assessment materials (exam papers) can not be differentiated – there is no tiered entry to this subject.

How do students progress in this subject, as in opportunities at KS4 and beyond?

As there is no specific teaching of Media at KS3, students need to be 'aware' of the media around them at GCSE. There are opportunities for students to participate in school projects (making short films to promote the school), join in with opportunities in the local area (Barrow based Signal films) and opportunities to develop their own interests by using their knowledge and gained skills to provide for business etc (app development, web design etc). As well as opportunities to develop their practical skills in school, there is also the chance to take that further on work experience. Students have worked for web design companies, local theatres and become technicians.

GCSE students can progress on A Level Media courses and from there, University courses and apprenticeships at specialist companies etc. Some of our former media students have gone on to set up their own advertising companies and photography businesses.

How does the subject support CEIAG? What careers pathways can students take by studying this subject further?

These are just some of the ways Media specialists can develop a careers pathway:

Journalism

While you might work for a newspaper, magazine, website or broadcaster you'll increasingly need to have multimedia skills and be able to work across all platforms. You'll need a combination of the skills from your degree and work experience to help you stand out and break into this competitive sector.

- Broadcast journalist
- Editorial assistant
- Magazine features editor
- Magazine journalist
- Newspaper journalist
- Press photographer
- Press sub-editor
- Web content manager
- Writer

Production

If writing the headlines or being in front of the camera doesn't appeal then there is lots you can do behind the scenes. A mixture of creative and technical skills is important for most production roles. You'll also need to be able to work with others and take and give directions, meaning effective communication skills are a must.

- Animator
- Film director
- Film/video editor
- Lighting technician, broadcasting/film/video
- Location manager
- Multimedia programmer
- Multimedia specialist

- Sound technician, broadcasting/film/video
- UX designer
- UX researcher

- **Publishing**

The obvious role in publishing is to work with an author to edit their book but you could also work in design, production, marketing and sales. This can then be broken down into specialist areas including academic, educational, fictional or medical. The increase in eBooks means that those working in publishing also require digital skills.

- Commissioning editor
- Publishing copy-editor/proof-reader
- Publishing rights manager

Radio and television

Many roles will start as entry-level positions and you'll need to build your skills and experience to work your way up the ladder. It's not all about being the voice or the face and many roles involve the creation of the programme or getting it out there for audiences to hear.

- Broadcast engineer
- Broadcast presenter
- Programme researcher, broadcasting/film/video
- Radio broadcast assistant
- Radio producer
- Runner, broadcasting/film/video
- Television camera operator
- Television floor manager
- Television production coordinator
- Television/film/video producer

Social Media Specialist

- Brand ambassador
- Social media strategist
- Social media manager
- Community manager
- Content manager
- Digital media manager
- Brand manager
- Creative manager
- Chief marketing officer
- Influencer

How can students enrich their knowledge in and understanding in the subject?

Media students usually already have a vested interest in the makings of film, TV, music or online. Students are encouraged to develop their own understanding of technological worlds – using Youtube, creating apps, editing their own pictures and short films on imovie, PowerDirector etc.

It would be useful if students are able to access theatre, cinema and music opportunities in the local area. Students also need to be up to date with current affairs and the news – it is a main driver behind the CSP's.