



Higher
course
specification



Higher Media, SCQF Level 6 Course Specification

Course code:	C848 76
Course assessment code:	X848 76
SCQF:	level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2026–27

This document provides detailed information about the course and course assessment to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the course and the course assessment in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

This document is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver the course.

The information in this publication may be reproduced in support of Qualifications Scotland qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, Qualifications Scotland must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from permissions@qualifications.gov.scot.

This edition: June 2026 (version 8.0)

Copyright © Qualifications Scotland 2026

Contents

Course overview	1
Course rationale	2
Purpose and aims	2
Who is this course for?	2
Course content	4
Skills, knowledge and understanding	4
Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work	7
Learning for Sustainability	7
Course assessment	8
Course assessment structure: question paper	8
Course assessment structure: assignment	10
Assignment marking instructions	15
Grading	21
Equality and inclusion	22
Further information	23
Appendix: course support notes	24
Introduction	24
Developing skills, knowledge and understanding	24
Approaches to learning and teaching	24
Preparing for course assessment	34
Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work	41

Course overview

The course consists of 24 SCQF credit points which includes time for preparation for course assessment. The notional length of time for candidates to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has three components.

Component	Marks	Duration
Component 1: question paper 1 — analysis of media content	30	1 hour and 45 minutes
Component 2: question paper 2 — the role of media	20	1 hour
Component 3: assignment	50	see 'Course assessment' section

Recommended entry	Progression
Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre. Candidates should have achieved the National 5 Media course and/or the National 5 English course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.	♦ other qualifications in media or related areas ♦ further study, employment and/or training

Conditions of award

The grade awarded is based on the total marks achieved across all course assessment components.

Course rationale

National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide time for learning, focus on skills and applying learning, and provide scope for personalisation and choice.

Every course provides opportunities for candidates to develop breadth, challenge and application. The focus and balance of assessment is tailored to each subject area.

This course enables candidates to analyse and create media content and to think critically about the media and its role in everyday life. They develop an appreciation of media content in a cultural context, and in the context of the media industry. Through analysing and creating media content, candidates develop skills that enable them to engage more fully in society and in learning.

The course provides candidates with the opportunity to develop knowledge of media contexts, roles and the key aspects of media literacy: categories, language, representation, narrative, audience, institutions and society.

Candidates encounter different types of content in different media. The course enables candidates to communicate, to be critical thinkers, develop cultural awareness, and to be creative.

Purpose and aims

The course enables candidates to develop and extend a wide range of communication, critical literacy, independent learning, interpersonal and creative thinking skills. The course allows candidates to work independently or in collaboration with others, and can help them to plan and organise, to make decisions, and to take responsibility for their own learning.

The main aims of the course are to enable candidates to develop:

- ◆ the ability to analyse and create media content, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of media literacy
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of the role of media within society
- ◆ the ability to plan and research when creating media content, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- ◆ the ability to evaluate

Who is this course for?

The course is for candidates who are interested in film, television, advertising, the press and/or other media, and in creating their own media content. It combines theory with practice which enables candidates to be analytical and creative, and provides opportunities for personalisation and choice.

The course is designed for candidates who are ready to develop their skills of analysis and production at Higher level. They are likely to have gained an award in National 5 Media and/or National 5 English.

The course provides a pathway for candidates who aim to go on to study media and/or film in a higher or further education context. It also provides opportunities for vertical and lateral progression to National Courses, and to other qualifications such as National Progression Awards, National Certificates, Higher Nationals in Media, and other related fields. The range of skills developed in the course prepares candidates for future learning in other subjects, vocational training, and employment.

Course content

The course enables candidates to develop knowledge of the role of media and the key aspects of media literacy: categories, language, representation, narrative, audience, institutions and society. The course is highly individualised, allowing teachers or lecturers to select media content that suits their candidates' interests.

The course enables candidates to experience the opportunities and challenges within the media industry by creating their own media content. To allow for personalisation and choice, candidates are not required to make a particular form or genre of media content. They can create individual media content, or a section of a larger group project.

The course consists of two areas of study: analysing media content and creating media content. The key aspects of media literacy underpin learning in both areas of study. The development of skills in each of these areas informs practice in the other.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

- ◆ analysing media content, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- ◆ applying and analysing the key aspects of media literacy, as appropriate to content
- ◆ critical understanding of the role of media
- ◆ creating media content, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of how to plan and research when creating media content, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- ◆ knowledge of contextual factors, constraints and freedoms that affect producers of media content
- ◆ a wide range of evaluation skills

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

The following provides details of skills, knowledge and understanding sampled in the course assessment:

Analysing media content

Candidates acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to be able to analyse:

- ◆ how and why media content is constructed in particular ways
- ◆ the potential use or effect of media content
- ◆ the relationship between media content and context(s)
- ◆ the similarities and differences between different pieces of media content

This requires knowledge and understanding of the following media analysis concepts:

Media content

Content-based key aspects of media literacy:

- ◆ categories — genre, purpose, tone, style
- ◆ language — medium/form-specific technical codes, cultural codes, anchorage
- ◆ narrative — medium/form-specific structures, codes, conventions
- ◆ representation — selection and portrayal, stereotypes, non-stereotypes, cultural assumptions, ideological discourses

Media contexts

Context-based key aspects of media literacy:

- ◆ audience — target audience, preferred reading, differential decoding, consumption
- ◆ institutions — internal factors, external factors
- ◆ society — time, place (for example facts, ideas, history, events, politics, economics, technology or any other factors relevant to the society in which particular examples of media content were made and/or set)

Role of media in society

The ways in which media functions within society:

- ◆ meeting needs — entertainment, education, information
- ◆ achieving particular purposes — profit, promotion, public service
- ◆ influencing attitudes and behaviour — intentionally, unintentionally

Analysis skills

Candidates apply their knowledge of concepts by:

- ◆ analysing the ways in which they are evident in, or can be applied to, particular examples of media content
- ◆ analysing cause and effect or relationships between particular elements of content, contexts and roles of media
- ◆ demonstrating understanding of how media has been created
- ◆ demonstrating understanding of how and why relevant factors may shape the construction of, and reactions to, media content

Creating media content

Candidates acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to be able to create media content relevant to particular purposes, audiences and contexts. They may make such content as a short film or trailer, a print or moving-image advertising campaign, a poster campaign, or a few pages of a magazine.

The following areas are covered in this section of the course:

Planning and research

- ◆ identifying areas of content, audience and institutional research appropriate to a brief
- ◆ carrying out appropriate research and drawing conclusions from findings
- ◆ planning how to carry out specific production role(s) and/or institutional research
- ◆ using research findings to plan media content appropriate to purpose, audience and context

Production processes

- ◆ applying knowledge of pre-production, production and post-production processes appropriate to medium/form
- ◆ applying knowledge of production roles and responsibilities appropriate to medium/form
- ◆ applying knowledge of media codes and conventions to create finished content appropriate to purpose, audience and context

Evaluation

- ◆ evaluating how effectively production role(s) were carried out within the institutional context
- ◆ evaluating how effectively media codes and/or techniques were used in finished content

Application of key aspects of media literacy

- ◆ applying, where relevant, content- and context-based key aspects of media literacy to planning and research, production processes and evaluation

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level, and can be found on the SCQF website.

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

This course helps candidates to develop broad, generic skills. These skills are based on the [Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#) framework and draw from the following main skills areas:

1 Literacy

- 1.1 Reading
- 1.3 Listening and talking

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

- 4.3 Working with others
- 4.4 Enterprise
- 4.6 Citizenship

5 Thinking skills

- 5.4 Analysing and evaluating
- 5.5 Creating

Teachers and lecturers must build these skills into the course at an appropriate level, where there are suitable opportunities.

Learning for Sustainability

Qualifications Scotland is committed to identifying opportunities to develop the values, skills, knowledge and understanding of Learning for Sustainability within all National Courses.

Course assessment

Course assessment is based on the information provided in this document.

The course assessment meets the key purposes and aims of the course by addressing:

- ♦ challenge — requiring greater depth or extension of knowledge and/or skills
- ♦ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This enables candidates to:

- ♦ extend and deepen knowledge and understanding of analysis
- ♦ apply knowledge and understanding in a challenging context
- ♦ apply skills in problem solving and planning to create media content

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper 1: Analysis of media content

30 marks

This question paper has a total mark allocation of 30 marks. The combination of marks from both question papers represents 50% of the marks for the course assessment; the assignment represents the other 50%.

This question paper assesses candidates' ability to apply knowledge and understanding by analysing media content in context.

This question paper enables candidates to demonstrate:

- ♦ analysis of media content in context
- ♦ understanding of the relationship between key aspects of content and context
- ♦ knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of media literacy through the analysis of a pair of previously unseen print texts

This question paper has two sections:

- ♦ section 1: analysis of media content in context (20 marks)
- ♦ section 2: analysis of media texts (10 marks)

Section 1: analysis of media content in context

Candidates will choose to answer either question one **or** question two on relevant key aspects of media literacy. Question 1 samples one key aspect of context which candidates should then integrate with their knowledge of at least one content-based key aspect.

Question 2 samples one key aspect of content which candidates should then integrate with their knowledge of at least one context-based key aspect.

Section 2: analysis of media texts

Candidates analyse a pair of film posters. This requires candidates to analyse in detail the ways in which key aspects have been used in the pair of film posters in the question paper.

Marks are awarded for candidates' analysis of key aspects which includes comment on similarities and/or differences between the two texts.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

This question paper is set and marked by Qualifications Scotland, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by Qualifications Scotland.

Candidates have 1 hour and 45 minutes to complete this question paper.

Question paper 2: The role of media

20 marks

This question paper has a total mark allocation of 20 marks.

This question paper assesses candidates' ability to apply knowledge and understanding by analysing the role of media in society.

This question paper enables candidates to demonstrate:

- ◆ critical understanding and discussion of the role(s) of media
- ◆ making judgements and drawing conclusions
- ◆ analysis of how specific examples of media content develop or exemplify points made in discussion

Marks are awarded for candidates' discussion of the role(s) of media sampled in the question stem, and for the analysis of evidence from media content which is used to exemplify points being made.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

This question paper is set and marked by Qualifications Scotland, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by Qualifications Scotland.

Candidates have 1 hour to complete this question paper.

Specimen question papers for Higher courses are published on Qualifications Scotland's website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers candidates sit. The specimen papers also include marking instructions.

Course assessment structure: assignment

Assignment

50 marks

The assignment has a total mark allocation of 50 marks. This is 50% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

The assignment assesses candidates' ability to apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired throughout the course in the production of media content.

In the assignment candidates plan and develop media content in response to a negotiated brief.

Candidates demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding of production techniques in an assignment which involves a degree of personalisation and choice.

In the assignment, candidates:

- ◆ consider possibilities and apply problem solving in planning and production processes
- ◆ apply knowledge and understanding of the relevant key aspects of media literacy
- ◆ create a finished media product
- ◆ evaluate the production experience and challenges
- ◆ evaluate their finished content

The assignment has two sections:

- ◆ section 1: planning (20 marks)
- ◆ section 2: development (30 marks)

Section 1: planning

In response to a negotiated brief, candidates research and plan media content, and consider the impact of actual or likely constraints. Marks are awarded for candidates' ability to research and justify in detail specific planning decisions about media content, appropriate to a brief.

Section 2: development

Candidates make the planned media content and evaluate the effectiveness of their development process and finished content. Marks are awarded for evaluating the impact of actual constraints or opportunities on the media content, and for evaluating the effectiveness of the use of media codes and/or techniques in the finished content.

Assignment overview

Setting the brief

The candidate may negotiate a brief to plan and develop a piece of media content in its entirety; or plan and develop one part of media content which can be combined with the work of other candidates to make a finished piece.

The requirements for setting the brief are sufficiently open to provide for personalisation and choice. Candidates can use a brief provided by their teacher or lecturer, or discuss ideas with them and agree on the brief together. Each candidate should have their own, individual brief; the brief may relate to a larger group or whole class project. The brief must include the following information:

An instruction or stimulus

The instruction might be to make an advertising campaign, a trailer, a short film, a factual programme, content for a magazine or website, or other media content for a particular purpose. Alternatively, a stimulus might be used. This could be an experience, a theme, an extract from a book, a news story, or anything else that can suggest an idea for media content.

A target audience

Candidates must know the age group and gender of the target audience, as well as anything else that is relevant about them. This could be negotiated by the candidate as part of the planning process, or it could be provided by the teacher or lecturer.

The level of finish expected

The media content must be a **finished** media product. This means a completed media text, or a completed part of a media text, for example, a section of a film or a few pages of a magazine.

Storyboards, mock-ups, scripts, sketches or other pre-production materials are not acceptable as a level of finish in Higher Media, and must not be submitted.

Access to resources

Candidates may require some assistance to access resources, locations and personnel to make their media content. Teachers or lecturers can provide resources or assist as necessary. The assignment has been developed to ensure that all candidates are assessed in the same way, regardless of the technical capabilities of the equipment they have access to, or the medium, form or genre they work in. Consequently, the instructions for the assignment direct all candidates to adopt a common approach regardless of their brief or resources. Some candidates may be able to produce content of a very high finish, but some may not, despite their creative intentions. Artistic or technical skills are not assessed because the course does not have a specific focus on these, and because of possible resource implications within the centre which may make a high technical finish difficult.

Setting, conducting and marking the assignment

The assignment is:

- ◆ set by centres within Qualifications Scotland guidelines
- ◆ conducted under some supervision and control

Evidence is submitted to Qualifications Scotland for external marking. All marking is quality assured by Qualifications Scotland.

Assessment conditions

Time

The assignment is carried out over a period of time. Candidates should start at an appropriate point in the course, that is once they have studied the medium, form and genre of the proposed media content, and developed the appropriate production skills.

Supervision, control and authentication

Where a candidate has a brief to plan and develop their own piece of media content, they are expected to work independently to complete the assignment. However, during the making of the content, if more than one person is required for technical reasons, a candidate can organise assistance from others, with permission from the teacher or lecturer. An example of this is where a candidate is making a moving-image text and requires one person to present a piece to camera, and another person to film. The candidate is unlikely to be able to effectively carry out both of these roles alone, and would therefore require some assistance. Candidates should give clear instructions to anyone helping them and must take all decisions about the content and technical aspects of the work themselves.

Where a candidate has a brief to plan and create a piece of media content within the context of a class or group project, working in a group to create the media product is acceptable, providing that all evidence submitted by a candidate can be authenticated as their own work. Candidates should explicitly reference their individual production role(s) in their written submissions. The written work to be submitted **must** be produced independently by the individual candidate, and not produced in conjunction with other candidates or group members. Teacher or lecturer advice and guidance should only be given to the whole class, not on an individual basis.

Teachers or lecturers must exercise their professional responsibility to ensure that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work. The assignment is conducted under some supervision and control. This means that although candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, teachers or lecturers must put in place processes to monitor progress and ensure that the work is the candidate's own, and that plagiarism has not taken place. For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ short, spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress
- ◆ photographs, film or audio evidence

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access.

Teachers or lecturers have an important role in providing resources and setting the brief. Candidates may seek clarification regarding the wording of a brief or specification, or instructions for the assignment if they find them unclear. In this case, the clarification should normally be given to the whole class.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates must undertake the assignment independently. However, reasonable assistance may be provided prior to the formal assessment process taking place. The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If candidates require more than what is thought to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment, or it may be that they have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance, for example advice on how to develop a plan, may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something a candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment and teachers or lecturers need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance. It is not acceptable for teachers or lecturers to provide comments on candidates' written submissions.

Evidence to be gathered

The following evidence is required for the assignment:

- ◆ responses to the planning stage assessment task
- ◆ responses to the development stage assessment task
- ◆ the finished media content

Media product files for the Higher assignment should be uploaded using Qualifications Scotland's Digital Coursework Submission service. Files should not exceed 1GB. If files exceed the 1GB limit, candidate work should be saved onto a CD, DVD or memory stick and

be readable by standard media players. Further information can be found in the *Coursework for External Assessment* document.

Where a candidate has planned and finished media content as part of a group or class project, the same piece of media content may be submitted by more than one candidate, providing that the written responses to the planning and development stage tasks clearly identify which parts of the content the candidate was responsible for.

Note: the requirements for the National 5 Media assignment are different. Refer to the National 5 Media course specification for details.

Volume

There is no word count.

Assignment marking instructions

In line with Qualifications Scotland's normal practice, the following marking instructions are addressed to the marker. They are helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b For marks to be awarded, points must relate to the given task.
- c 'Justify in detail' requires candidates to make a number of developed points that provide a rationale or give supporting reasons for decisions made, as appropriate to the task. Points may relate cause and effect, or make relationships between things clear. Points made do not need to be in any particular order. Candidates may provide a number of developed points or a smaller number of points in depth, or a combination of these.
- d 'Evaluate' requires candidates to make a number of developed points that make a judgement about or determine the value of their work in relation to relevant elements of their institutional contexts, production role(s) or creative intentions. Points made do not need to be in any particular order.

Marking instructions

Section 1: planning (20 marks)

In this section, candidates' justifications for their planning decisions are assessed.

Candidates summarise their plans for their media content and justify in detail the specific decisions made, with reference to the following:

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| a | Creative intentions in response to the brief | 5 marks |
| b | Content research (refer to at least one key aspect) | 5 marks |
| c | Production role(s) and/or Institutional context research | 5 marks |
| d | Audience research | 5 marks |

Assessment task 1	Max mark	The following marking instructions apply to each part of the assessment task in section 1
a	5	Candidates are expected to justify specific planning decisions.
b	5	Candidates must make developed points of justification which provide a rationale or reasons for planning decisions, or which show a causal relationship between the planning and the area specified by the task.
c	5	Developed points of justification can include detailed description of research findings, facts and information relevant to the task, and/or detailed description of reasons for specific planning decisions.
d	5	For each part of the assessment task, award up to 5 marks as follows: ◆ award 1 mark for each relevant, developed point of justification ◆ award subsequent marks for further development of a relevant point ◆ award a maximum of 2 marks where candidates only discuss planning decisions or details about their creative intentions, or only discuss research findings or production roles (as appropriate to a–d), and give no justification in either case

Section 2: development (30 marks)

In this section, evidence that candidates can evaluate their ability to work within institutional controls, carry out specific production role(s), and achieve creative intentions is assessed.

Candidates need to evaluate how effectively they:

- a carried out their production role(s) within the institutional context
- b used media codes and/or techniques to achieve their creative intentions in their finished content

The finished content and evaluations are considered together. Assessment judgements are based on the extent to which candidates demonstrate the ability to carry out production roles within the institutional context and to achieve creative intentions. This is evident through the combination of finished content and evaluations.

In their evaluations, candidates must make a number of developed points that make a judgement about or determine the value of their work in relation to relevant elements of their production roles, institutional context or creative intentions. Points made do not need to be in any particular order. Candidates may provide a number of developed points or a smaller number of points in depth, or a combination of these. The points may include discussion of production roles and/or institutional factors and/or creative intentions and/or the finished content.

Some candidates may be able to produce content of a very high finish, but some may not, despite their creative intentions. Artistic or technical skills are not assessed because the course does not have a specific focus on these, and because of possible resource implications within centres which may make a high technical finish difficult.

For both task 2a and 2b, markers select the band descriptor which most closely describes the standard of the response. Candidates may display ability across more than one band descriptor. It is important to recognise the closeness of the band descriptors and consider carefully the most appropriate overall band for the candidate's performance. Once the best fit has been selected:

- ◆ where the combination of finished content and evaluation response fully meets all the standards described in the band descriptor, award the highest mark
- ◆ where the combination of finished content and evaluation response just meets the standard described, award the lowest mark
- ◆ where the band descriptor has more than two marks available and the evidence does not match the criteria for the lowest or highest mark, award a middle mark

Task 2a

Task 2a	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-1	0
Production roles and/or institutional context The response contains:	Consistent technical and/or theoretical understanding of production role(s) and/or institutional context relevant to the content/process.	Detailed understanding of production role(s) and/or institutional context relevant to the content/process.	Understanding of production role(s) and/or institutional context relevant to the content/process.	Explanation of production role and/or roles and/or institutional context relevant to the content/process.	Reference to production role(s) and/or institutional context relevant to the content/process	No information relevant to the task.
Evaluation The response contains:	Three developed points of evaluation.	At least one developed point of evaluation OR several evaluative comments.	Several evaluative statements.	A few evaluative statements.	OR one evaluative statement.	No evaluation.

Additional guidance

Candidates may display ability across more than one band descriptor. It is important to recognise the closeness of the band descriptors and consider carefully the most appropriate overall band for the candidate's performance.

The production roles and institutional context that candidates reference must be relevant to the finished content.

Points made about production role(s) may include references to: pre-production/production/post-production; technical and non-technical production role(s); professional practice, roles and responsibilities; any other appropriate factor.

Points made about the institutional context may include references to: legal and voluntary controls; health and safety; technology and equipment; school or college factors, for example, time, resources and budget; any other appropriate factor.

Points of evaluation must relate to the process and should include reference to the candidate's production role(s), and/or institutional context. Candidates must give specific and detailed examples from the finished content and/or process in support of their evaluative points.

Task 2b

Task 2b	20–19	18–17	16–15	14–13	12–11	10–8	7–5	4–0
Use of media codes and/or techniques The combination of written response and finished content contains:	A highly technical and/or highly theoretical and/or insightful understanding of how to use and combine a range of codes and/or techniques to achieve creative intentions.	A consistent technical and/or theoretical and/or analytical understanding of how to use and combine a range of codes and/or techniques to achieve creative intentions.	A consistent technical and/or theoretical and/or analytical understanding of how to use and combine a range of codes and/or techniques to achieve creative intentions.	A consistent understanding of how to use and combine a range of codes and/or techniques to achieve creative intentions.	A consistent understanding of how to use and combine a range of codes and/or techniques to achieve creative intentions.	A consistent understanding of how to use a range of codes and/or techniques to achieve creative intention	Understanding of how to use a range of codes and/or techniques to achieve creative intentions	Some understanding of how to use a range of codes and/or techniques to achieve creative intentions.
Evaluation The response contains:	Four or more points of evaluation.	At least three developed points of evaluation.	At least two developed points of evaluation OR one developed point of evaluation and some evaluative comments.	At least one developed point of evaluation OR several evaluative comments.	At least one evaluative statement about specific parts of the finished content.	OR some evaluation of the finished content combined with some understanding of how to achieve creative intentions.	OR limited evaluation of the finished content combined with some understanding of how to achieve creative intentions.	No evaluation.

Additional guidance

Candidates may display ability across more than one band descriptor. It is important to recognise the closeness of the band descriptors and consider carefully the most appropriate overall band for the candidate's performance.

Candidates should discuss specific and detailed examples from their finished content.

A detailed example is more than the description of one code and its connotations. It can be reference to a part of content where several codes were combined to make meaning. Alternatively, it might be something that applies throughout the content.

Evaluation should make a judgement about or determine the value of the content in relation to creative intentions.

Grading

Candidates' overall grades are determined by their performance across the course assessment. The course assessment is graded A–D on the basis of the total mark for all course assessment components.

Grade description for C

For the award of grade C, candidates will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Grade description for A

For the award of grade A, candidates will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Equality and inclusion

This course is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible.

Qualifications Scotland's equality of access to qualifications [policy](#) outlines our commitment to:

- ◆ the Equality Act 2010
- ◆ anti-racist education
- ◆ protecting children's rights
- ◆ corporate parenting

Teachers and lecturers must consider the needs of individual candidates when planning learning experiences, designing learning resources, or choosing texts.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and those with additional support needs is available on the [assessment arrangements web page](#).

Further information

- ◆ [Assessment arrangements](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Recent Qualifications Scotland research](#)
- ◆ [Remote assessment](#)
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook](#)
- ◆ [Know Your SCQF Level — Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#)
- ◆ [Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work framework](#)

Appendix: course support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance to teachers and lecturers on approaches to delivering the course. Teachers and lecturers should read these in conjunction with this course specification and the specimen question papers and/or coursework.

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

This section provides further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that teachers and lecturers could include in the course. Teachers and lecturers have considerable flexibility to select contexts that will stimulate and challenge candidates, offering both breadth and depth.

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

- ◆ analysing media content, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- ◆ applying and analysing the key aspects of media literacy, as appropriate to content
- ◆ critical understanding of the role of media
- ◆ creating media content, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of how to plan and research when creating media content, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context
- ◆ knowledge of contextual factors, constraints and freedoms that affect producers of media content
- ◆ a wide range of evaluation skills

This course enables candidates to communicate, be critical thinkers, develop cultural awareness, and be creative. The 'Approaches to learning and teaching' section provides suggested activities that teachers and lecturers can build into their delivery to develop these skills, knowledge and understanding.

Approaches to learning and teaching

Effective learning and teaching draws on a wide variety of approaches to enrich the experience of candidates. Practical approaches to learning and teaching which provide opportunities for personalisation and choice help to motivate and challenge candidates.

Teachers and lecturers should provide an engaging and supportive learning environment to encourage active candidate involvement when studying a range of media texts.

Learning about Scotland and Scottish culture enriches candidates' learning experience and helps them to develop the skills for learning, life and work they need to prepare them for taking their place in a diverse, inclusive and participative Scotland and beyond. Where there

are opportunities to contextualise approaches to learning and teaching to Scottish contexts, teachers and lecturers should consider this.

The combined theoretical and practical skills-based focus of Higher Media is suited to a variety of delivery methods. Central to these should be the following seven mandatory key aspects of media literacy:

- ◆ categories
- ◆ language
- ◆ narrative
- ◆ representation
- ◆ audience
- ◆ institutions
- ◆ society

These media concepts are interrelated and it is important that candidates develop knowledge and understanding of them from the start of the course. These key aspects are a starting point for the analysis of any text, and are central to the creation of media content. Teachers and lecturers should use other relevant contexts and elements, and consideration of the role of media, to help prepare candidates for course assessment.

Analysing media content

Content which can be easily categorised in terms of genre and purpose can be useful, as these structuring elements often lead to the conventional use of media codes, conventions and content, which candidates are expected to be able to analyse in detail. It is the complexity of the analysis and not of the media content studied which is assessed. Teachers and lecturers should select texts which offer candidates a wide range of examples to choose from, but these do not need to be complex. A straightforward text, such as a big-budget blockbuster, can be a rich text for analysis of how the key aspects work together in the film industry.

Candidates benefit from studying a broad range of media content which enables them to analyse concepts in varying levels of complexity, and stimulates discussion and critical analysis. Teaching a variety of media content not only makes the course stimulating and engaging, but it means that candidates have a selection of media texts to refer to in the question papers. Teachers and lecturers should also encourage candidates to apply the skills of analysing media content to texts that they experience as part of their own lives. In order to develop analytical skills and an understanding of recurrent patterns in media content and contexts, teachers and lecturers should give candidates opportunities to analyse key concepts as they apply to a wide variety of texts, as well as studying particular examples of media content in depth.

Theory, concepts, contexts and terminology can be taught in an expository style but it may be more effective to design learning activities which begin with the consumption of media content and thereafter deal with the teaching and application of relevant concepts. Practical and creative activities can also reinforce knowledge and understanding of analysis concepts.

Analysing a mixture of extracts, complete texts and groups of texts which are linked in some way (for example, by genre, theme, topic or institution) enhances candidates' understanding of media content in context. This, in turn, helps candidates to develop skills in applying and integrating the challenging concepts which form the basis of the course.

The Higher Media course focuses on the detailed and complex analysis of how and why media content is constructed in particular ways, and on the potential use or effect of media content.

Teaching and learning should be informed by the following concepts:

Content-based key aspects of media literacy:

- ◆ categories — genre, purpose, tone, style
- ◆ language — medium or form-specific technical codes, cultural codes, anchorage
- ◆ narrative — medium or form-specific structures, codes, conventions
- ◆ representation — selection and portrayal, stereotypes, non-stereotypes, cultural assumptions, ideological discourses

Context-based key aspects of media literacy:

- ◆ audience — target audience, preferred reading, differential decoding, consumption
- ◆ institutions — internal factors, external factors
- ◆ society — time, place

Candidates should develop the skills to analyse in detail how these concepts are evident in, or can be applied to, media content, and how they inform or impact on each other.

Content-based key aspects of media literacy

Candidates should be taught to analyse how the **language** codes and conventions of the appropriate media are used. Some candidates incorrectly interpret language as simply dialogue but should be taught that in Media it has a particular meaning, depending on the form and genre. In their analysis of language, candidates should learn to discuss, in depth, how and why codes and conventions are used by the producers of media content to create a specific impact or meaning on the intended audience(s).

For example, in moving image texts candidates could analyse the use of the following language techniques to create particular meaning and/or effects:

- ◆ lighting — high key, low key, chiaroscuro
- ◆ angles — low, high, canted, bird's eye
- ◆ framing — long shots, medium shots, close-ups, focus
- ◆ camera movement — tracking, panning, tilting
- ◆ editing — jump cuts, fades, dissolves, eye line matches, graphic matches
- ◆ sound — diegetic, non-diegetic, contrapuntal, parallel, foley, music, dialogue

- ♦ mise-en-scène — props, body language, costume, facial expression, sets, hair and make-up
- ♦ special effects — computer-generated imagery (CGI), green screen, matte painting, bullet time

For **narrative**, candidates should learn how to deconstruct and analyse a text using recognisable structures, codes or conventions. Candidates may discuss narrative theorists such as Roland Barthes, Vladimir Propp, Tzvetan Todorov, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Christopher Vogler or Joseph Campbell, but it is not necessary for them to identify specific theorists; rather it is an understanding of how to use their theories to analyse the function of narrative within the text(s) studied that is important.

In learning about **categories**, candidates could study the genre, tone and style of media content, and relate this to purpose. Alternatively, they might study the ways in which the genre can influence the purpose, tone and/or style of a text, or part of a text. For example, they might look at the genre of fitness magazines and analyse how technical and cultural codes have been used to create a tone of urgency and excitement in a youthful style, with the clear purpose of showing the magazine as a ‘must-have’, which (if purchased) can have life-changing effects.

Candidates should also learn about the constructed nature of **representations** in the text(s) they are studying, and how to analyse this construction, examining how and why the representations have been used. This could be done by focusing on the way in which particular groups or individual characters are represented, such as women, or the hero versus the villain; or the focus could be placed on the way in which ideologies are represented in the text(s) and how this might link to the purpose of the text. When studying representations, it is natural to be drawn into an analysis of how **language** codes are used to construct the representations, and this is a valid way to teach analysis of this key aspect.

Context-based key aspects of media literacy

Candidates should learn about the composition of different target **audiences** for media content and be able to use evidence from the text(s) to show how they reached their conclusions. This may be related to age, gender, political bias, nationality, class and/or other factors. They should learn that audiences are active consumers of texts and may have different reactions to those hoped for by producers. Candidates should learn how to analyse different possible responses to the text(s) by discussing specific reactions that different audiences might have to specific examples from the text. Their analysis should explore the relationship between the different responses and the text.

Candidates should learn that the **institutions** that create media texts are bound by many internal factors including ownership, budget, time, equipment, and resources, and by external factors which might include legal and voluntary controls, general laws, health and safety, and copyright. It is important that candidates know, and can discuss in detail, the specific details of how these factors have impacted the text(s) that they are studying. This should be underpinned by an understanding of internal and external factors in general.

In learning about **society**, candidates should learn how media texts are affected by the society in which they are made and/or set. Several factors which could have an impact on a

text should be considered, alongside discussion of whether the text is perpetuating or challenging these ideas. An approach might be to look at texts from two distinct eras to examine how attitudes have changed over time. For example, candidates might look at how changes to foreign policy under different administrations in the USA have influenced the way in which enemies are shown in Hollywood films, with the USSR being seen as the main enemy to western civilisation during the Cold War, whereas post-9/11 villains tend to be terrorists from extremist groups. This could be examined through studying two or more films from the same franchise, or by studying different films with a thematic link. This example would also allow candidates to consider how the place where the text(s) were made has had an impact.

Example approach

The following is an example of a possible learning and teaching approach to the combined study of some key aspects:

- ◆ **Moving image:** candidates view a feature film which belongs to a specific genre or genres, and begin by discussing genre conventions, tone and the overall narrative structure. These are then linked to the purpose of entertaining and making a profit, which, in turn, are neatly connected to a study of the role played by institutions in making a feature film. This leads to a study of the audience segments being targeted by the institution(s), the desired audience responses, and a discussion of potential differential decodings. More focused viewings of specific sections of the film allow candidates to analyse the use of language in key sequences, and to develop an analysis of significant representations. The relationship between the content-based key aspects and the context of the society in which the film was made and/or set can then be explored in detail, with connections being made to the impact of this on specific aspects of the film.
- ◆ **Print:** candidates undertake a content analysis of a magazine of their choice, noting the types of editorial and advertising included. This leads to a discussion of investment, funding and income sources as well as the concept of target audience. Terminology such as socio-economic, demographic and psychographic profiles can be introduced and applied to the audience analysis. The relationship between the content and the contexts of audience and institutions can be explored.

When using a magazine as a text for in-depth study, candidates can also analyse narrative structure, as well as representations, ideology, technical and cultural codes, genre, purpose, style and tone. They can analyse the relationships between these, society, audiences and industries. Examining representations within advertising can lead to a very full discussion of the influence of the society context on the content.

Role of media

Candidates should be able to analyse the roles of media, and the effect of these on the content they have studied, or on reactions to it. Different theories, opinions or perspectives can be explored and teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to think critically about the role of media, and develop their own opinions.

Teachers and lecturers should cover the following roles of media:

- ◆ Meeting needs — entertainment, education, information. This could cover:
 - reasons people may have for consuming particular media content
 - how producers use their knowledge of these needs to construct content in particular ways
 - how reactions to content may depend on the extent to which needs are met
- ◆ Achieving particular purposes — profit, promotion, public service. This could cover:
 - profit motives
 - promotion of products, ideas, individuals or organisations, as appropriate to the content
 - public service: content which does not only have a profit motive, but which benefits, advises or helps individuals or groups, or acts on their behalf
- ◆ Influencing attitudes and behaviour — intentionally, unintentionally. This could cover:
 - the intended influence of media content on individuals, groups or organisations
 - the unintended, possible or consequential effects of media content

Content, contexts and roles of media are closely linked, and approaches to learning and teaching should reflect this. While teachers and lecturers may teach particular analytical concepts discretely, candidates can only gain a full understanding through examining the ways in which they inform one another.

Some content may meet several needs and achieve more than one purpose, for example some documentaries inform, persuade and entertain their audience while also making profit.

Example approach

The following is an example of a possible learning and teaching approach to the study of the role of media:

Candidates read a selection of tabloid and broadsheet front pages from the same day or week, preferably dealing with the same major news story, and through comparison of how the same news is treated in different ways, identify the role(s) of media evident (such as achieving the purpose of profit or promotion, or attempts to influence behaviour and attitudes). Candidates then look more closely at the techniques being used to achieve this (such as language codes, representations, narrative codes), and use these examples to examine bias in the press.

This can be further extended to look at how the same news stories were treated in news bulletins on channels such as the BBC, Channel 4 or Fox News. This then leads into a broader study of the news industry and the power and influence of the institutions behind the headlines.

Once candidates have a good understanding of these concepts, they can be given a role of media task and asked to debate it, using the evidence they have gathered in their study of these news outlets. Initially this debate could be done in groups as an oral task, to help

candidates understand how to make points of information in a debate setting, before candidates finally practise making their individual arguments in written form.

Classroom tasks could include:

- ◆ answering restricted-response questions
- ◆ writing an extended essay
- ◆ compiling a paper or electronic log of research and analysis
- ◆ producing a series of posters analysing various key aspects, using terminology as it applies to the text and illustrating the links between content and contexts
- ◆ producing a piece to camera
- ◆ giving an individual or group presentation using multimedia content
- ◆ annotating print texts, identifying and analysing the use of a variety of key techniques
- ◆ creating a print advert, magazine cover or film poster, to demonstrate understanding of key aspects and print terminology

Suggestions for texts

Teachers and lecturers should choose the texts in discussion with candidates, based on their preferences, interests, age, sensitivities and maturity. Not all texts are suitable for all candidates.

Commercial cinema works very well for the 'Analysis of media content' paper, questions 1 and 2. At Higher, films with clear narrative structures, and sharply-defined representations work very well. Although films with more complex narrative structures can be studied, some candidates find these confusing and this level of complexity is not required at Higher. It is the sophistication of the candidate's response rather than the complexity of the text(s) studied which is being assessed. Possible choices include:

Stand-alone films

Stephen Daldry's *Billy Elliot*; Ridley Scott's *Thelma & Louise*; Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*; Emerald Fennell's *Promising Young Woman*; Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*; Todd Phillips' *Joker*; Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther*; Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker*; Jordan Peele's *Get Out*; John Hughes' *The Breakfast Club*; Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*; Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*; Jason Reitman's *Juno*; Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire*; Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*; the Wachowskis' *The Matrix*; Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris' *Little Miss Sunshine*; Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island*; Bill Forsyth's *Local Hero*; Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*; Martin Scorsese's *The King of Comedy*; Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*; Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*; Ava DuVernay's *Selma*; Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham*; Gavin Hood's *Eye in the Sky*; Sarah Gavron's *Suffragette*; and Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake*.

Film franchises

Candidates could study two or more films from the same franchise, therefore allowing them to consider how various aspects have evolved through time, or not. Some franchises which could be considered include:

A selection from some of the recent superhero blockbuster franchises from Marvel and DC, such as the *Avengers* series, *Wonder Woman*, *X-Men* and *Batman v Superman*; *Star Wars* (the original trilogy, the prequels, or the most recent sequels and spin-offs); James Bond (for example, *Dr. No*, *Casino Royale*, *Skyfall* and *Spectre*); The *Indiana Jones* films; The *Back to the Future* trilogy; Christopher Nolan's *Batman* trilogy; Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* trilogy; *The Fast and the Furious*; *The Lord of the Rings*; and *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

With the rise in popularity of streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, there is a wide variety of quality **television** series which could be used for the 'Analysis of media content' paper, questions 1 and 2. Possible choices include:

The Last of Us; *Chernobyl*; *The Handmaid's Tale*; *Homeland*; *The Good Wife*; *Breaking Bad*; *The Wire*; *24*; *House of Cards*; *Lost*; *Orange is the New Black*; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; *Battlestar Galactica*; *The Big Bang Theory*; *The Walking Dead*; *The X-files*; *This is England*; *Orphan Black*; *Stranger Things*; *Sherlock*; *Black Mirror* and *Mad Men*.

Print texts can be very useful for 'The role of media' paper, where providing candidates with a selection of print texts to choose from equips them to respond to any of the roles of media which might be sampled. Possible choices include: tabloid or broadsheet newspapers; commercial advertisements for products or retailers; political posters; film posters; consumer magazines; special interest magazines; professional trade magazines; and television listing magazines.

Documentaries can work well for 'The role of media' paper and giving candidates the capacity to select from a small number of carefully-selected contrasting documentaries enables them to cover all the roles of media. Possible feature-length choices include:

James Marsh's *Man on Wire*; Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*; Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man*; Steve James' *Hoop Dreams*; Leon Gast's *When We Were Kings*; Jehane Noujaim and Mona Eldaief's *Solar Mamas*; Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line*; Asif Kapadia's *Amy* or *Senna*; Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* or *Fahrenheit 9/11*; Wim Wenders' *Buena Vista Social Club*; and Ava DuVernay's *13th*.

TV documentaries, whether stand-alone or as part of a series, can also offer rich texts for 'The role of media' paper. These could also lead to discussion of the role of institutions such as the BBC, commercial channels or, streaming services, as part of the ways in which texts achieve a purpose. Possible choices include: David Attenborough's *Blue Planet* or *Planet Earth*; Netflix's *Making a Murderer*; *Cowboy Builders*; Louis Theroux's *Weird Weekends*; *Newsnight*; and *Panorama*.

Moving image advertisements can also be very useful for 'The role of media' paper as their short length enables candidates to study a range of adverts which serve different purposes, and this gives them a variety of texts to select evidence from in the question paper. Possible choices include: big brand adverts or advertising campaigns (for example, Chanel, M&Ms,

Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Nike, Puma, Cadbury, Ikea, Jaguar, Sony, iPhone, BMW, AirBnB, Samsung, Lynx, Dove, Irn-Bru and Tetley Tea); public service announcements (for example, anti-smoking or safe driving campaigns); charity adverts (for example, Barnardo's, British Heart Foundation and NSPCC), and any other appropriate advertisement.

Creating media content

There are many opportunities for personalisation and choice in this course, and for candidates to develop their creativity in response to negotiated briefs. Candidates could benefit from being given a range of creative tasks which enable them to develop planning and production skills prior to assessment, as well as an understanding of the constraints or opportunities that time, technology, copyright, school rules, health and safety, and any other institutional factors, may present for production processes. Candidates should also have an understanding of the production process, and the constraints which may impact on this, along with production skills and roles relevant to the medium in which they are working. This helps them to make active decisions about what they wish to include in their media content and why, and how to go about making the final content.

While they are learning how to create media texts, candidates should also be learning about and applying the key aspects of media (categories, language, narrative, representations, audience, institutions and society), and understanding the relationships between these in terms of the content and contexts of media production. They are not expected to demonstrate knowledge of all the key aspects in the assignment, but a successful approach to the tasks given requires clear understanding of them.

In producing media content that, due to the nature of the task, involves a group production, candidates **must** individually respond to the brief with at least one specific production role in mind. Candidates should learn how to undertake research which is relevant to their individual production role(s). For example, a film editor could consider an institutional factor like certification and apply that research to editing choices made in the production, such as minimising gore in response to British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) guidelines. A cameraperson could also research certification, independent of the film editor, and apply the same research finding in their choice of framing. It is acceptable for group members to carry out similar research, but candidates should write up the findings and planning in terms of the role(s) they carried out individually within the production.

The following examples show possible learning and teaching approaches for creating media content:

Example 1

Teachers and lecturers give candidates a brief to plan and produce an online or print special interest magazine of 4–6 pages, either individually or as part of a group, aimed at their negotiated choice of target audience. The brief must be compatible with the available resources and achievable within the technological or other constraints of the centre. It should also be compatible with media and/or forms which have already been covered in the course, to ensure that candidates are familiar with the conventions of the medium and form they will be working with. A brief such as this complements the analysis of print texts and uses key aspects. It also requires understanding and implementation of production technology, processes and challenges, and provides opportunities for personalisation and choice. The

group members can negotiate target audience, purpose and subject matter with their teacher or lecturer, again allowing for personalisation and choice.

At the planning stage, candidates could generate and plan content ideas through research which relates to form, audience, purpose, institutions and subject matter. They can do this through, for example, surveys, discussion, content analysis and online research, and this provides candidates with an understanding of relevant content and context issues, as well as the roles and responsibilities of media producers.

Ideas, findings, plans, storyboards and any other material can be recorded or stored in an electronic or paper planning log. Teachers and lecturers may wish to give candidates a log with instructions, sections, guiding questions or activities that they can fill in or follow. This work should **not** be submitted to Qualifications Scotland. From the start, candidates should choose at least one specific production role which they will carry out. They may adopt technological and/or non-technological roles, depending on their ability and interest.

Once candidates have completed 'section 1: planning', they should move on to creating their media content. Teachers and lecturers could encourage candidates to maintain a production log book to help record rationale for decisions made during the production process. This could then inform the evaluation of the process in section 2a.

Once candidates have completed the media content, they should reflect on the process and finished content in their written evaluation. They should evaluate the production process; how effectively they carried out their individual role(s); and the effectiveness of the finished content in terms of their creative intentions and the impact on the audience.

Example 2

Teachers and lecturers could give candidates a brief for a group task, such as to make a 1–2 minute short film, inspired by their choice from three different stimuli. Each individual in the group must take on at least one specific production role, and research and produce plans as dictated by that role. For example, the editor could investigate the editing, titles, and pace of a range of short films of a similar length. The camera operator could analyse lighting, camera angles and framing in professionally-produced moving image content in the same genre. This would encourage an awareness of the different roles of personnel within this type of production as well as promoting team working.

The group would produce the content, with each individual fulfilling their role(s) in a way that has been informed by the research and planning in section 1. Each candidate could maintain an individual production log book to help record rationale for decisions made during the production process, with a particular focus from the perspective of their own production role. This could then inform the evaluation of the process in section 2a.

Once the content has been made, candidates should evaluate the strengths and/or weaknesses of the process and their own ability to carry out their production role. For section 2b, candidates should evaluate the finished content from the perspective of the production role(s) they were responsible for. For example, the editor could evaluate the effectiveness of a montage discussing the impact of shot selection, cuts made and how well (or otherwise) these work with the music. A camera operator could evaluate the composition of specific shots, discussing how effectively techniques such as framing, lighting and camera movement

have been used to create meaning or impact. A costume or set designer could evaluate the impact of the use of costume for particular characters in specific scenes, or the meanings created by a specific piece of set-dressing and discuss how effectively these were conveyed to the audience.

Preparing for course assessment

The course assessment consists of three components: two question papers which assess candidates' ability to apply knowledge and understanding by analysing media content in detail; and an assignment that assesses candidates' ability to apply skills and knowledge acquired throughout the course in a production task.

Question paper: Analysis of media content

Candidates answer questions on familiar and unfamiliar media content. The answers in section 1 can be on moving image, print texts, or both. There are no specified texts in the Higher Media course. It is also not necessary to study whole texts — extracts can be used to exemplify key aspects. However, for some key aspects it is helpful for candidates to have an understanding of the text as a whole.

In section 1, candidates gain marks for their analysis of previously-studied media content in context. In section 2, they gain marks for their analysis of a pair of unfamiliar film posters.

Candidates can prepare for the question paper by analysing a range of media content and gathering evidence to exemplify their understanding of the key aspects of media through:

- ◆ analysing the ways in which key aspects are evident in, or can be applied to, particular examples of media content
- ◆ analysing cause and effect or relationships between particular elements of content, contexts and roles
- ◆ analysing what has been presented in both familiar and unfamiliar media content
- ◆ analysing how and why meaning has been created
- ◆ analysing how internal and external factors may shape the construction of, and reactions to, media content

Section 1: analysis of media content in context

Candidates should learn about a variety of media content which, combined, covers all aspects of the skills, knowledge and understanding of the course.

Content-based key aspects

Categories: genre, purpose, tone, style

Language: technical codes, cultural codes, anchorage

Narrative: structures, codes, conventions

Representation: selection and portrayal, stereotypes, cultural assumptions, ideological discourses

Context-based key aspects

Audience: target audience, preferred reading, differential decoding, consumption

Institutions: internal controls and constraints, external controls and constraints

Society: time, place

Candidates can discuss one text or multiple texts in response to question 1 or 2. It is recommended that for whichever question they choose to answer, they discuss the same text(s) across parts a and b.

Section 2: analysis of media texts

Candidates should study the form-specific techniques of a range of film posters. They should have experience of attempting the task with a variety of genres such as:

Film posters

- ◆ film noir
- ◆ western
- ◆ comedy
- ◆ romantic comedy
- ◆ action
- ◆ drama
- ◆ science fiction
- ◆ horror
- ◆ fantasy
- ◆ animation

Candidates should learn to analyse film posters using all the key aspects. Terms may include:

- ◆ layout
- ◆ billing block
- ◆ central image
- ◆ fonts
- ◆ taglines
- ◆ rule of thirds
- ◆ testimonials
- ◆ visual flow, reading order and reading path
- ◆ logos
- ◆ colour
- ◆ unique selling proposition (USP)
- ◆ composition
- ◆ repetition
- ◆ direct or indirect gaze
- ◆ vectors
- ◆ focal point

Question paper: The role of media

Candidates should learn about a variety of media content which, combined, covers all aspects of the skills, knowledge and understanding for this part of the course.

Candidates gain marks for their discussion of the role of media task, and for their comments on specific examples of media content they use to exemplify their discussion points.

Candidates should study several different texts for this part of the course. The texts could all be of the same medium or form, or might be linked together in some other way. Common groupings include a focus on tabloid journalism looking at several different tabloid front pages and/or articles; or a range of moving image advertisements covering different purposes; or an advertising campaign, spanning print, moving image and social media; or a contrast between tabloid, broadsheet and television journalism.

Candidates need to make specific and detailed references to the content they have studied, and also need to comment on the examples to make clear how they exemplify and support the points they are making.

Roles of media

Meeting needs: entertainment, education, information

Achieving particular purposes: profit, promotion, public service

Influencing attitudes and behaviours: intentionally, unintentionally

Candidates can draw from a range of texts in their response to the task. A useful exercise that teachers and lecturers could set to prepare candidates for this paper would be giving them a list of all the media texts they have studied in relation to the roles of media, and asking them to match each text to the roles and their concepts. Candidates can work out how to 'group' these texts in a way which helps them identify connections or conflicts. This will enable them to use this evidence to support their response to the task set.

Assignment

The assignment assesses candidates' ability to apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired throughout the course in a production of media content. The assignment has been developed to ensure that all candidates are assessed in the same way, regardless of the technical capabilities of the equipment they have access to, or the medium, form or genre they are working in. Candidates gain marks for their ability to research and generate ideas appropriate to the brief, develop and justify media content choices, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the process and their finished content.

Teachers and lecturers can introduce the assignment once candidates are familiar with the concepts and contexts of analysing and producing media content. A set amount of class time could be devoted to the assignment, or a programme of deadlines and tutorials devised to supervise progress. Candidates perform well when they are given stimulating briefs with realistic deadlines.

Teachers and lecturers should consider candidates' interests, abilities and characteristics when setting the brief. They should give candidates the opportunity to negotiate or set aspects of the brief — candidates should negotiate as much of the brief as possible. Some

candidates need more support and direction than others in negotiating the brief. A brief should stimulate research into audience, institutions and content.

Teachers and lecturers can help candidates prepare for the assignment by providing them with opportunities to:

- ◆ conduct research to generate ideas for creating media content
- ◆ plan the production processes necessary for the creation of media content
- ◆ apply a range of media skills in the creation of media content
- ◆ describe a range of codes and explain their impact
- ◆ evaluate media content
- ◆ evaluate the process and their own role in producing media content

The assignment gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding of production techniques. Candidates must:

- ◆ consider possibilities and carry out problem-solving in planning and production processes
- ◆ apply knowledge and understanding of the relevant key aspects of media literacy
- ◆ evaluate the impact of the constraints and/or opportunities of their institutional context on their media content
- ◆ evaluate their own role(s) in the production process
- ◆ evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their finished content

Section 1: planning — assessment task 1

In response to a negotiated brief, candidates research and plan media content, and consider the impact of actual or likely constraints. Candidates should conduct their written work on the planning stage before they make the media product.

The brief must highlight the necessity for a candidate to take on a clearly specified production role(s), even when making content on an individual basis. In this situation, a candidate may have assistance from others, and they need to give clear instructions to anyone helping them. An example of this type of assistance is where a candidate wants to act in a scene which requires a handheld camera. They would need to get someone else involved and give them clear and precise direction beforehand about the camera work. Conversely, a candidate who doesn't want to appear on camera will need the involvement of actors. The actors will need to be given clear and precise direction about how the script should be delivered. Teachers and lecturers should remind candidates that the work must be their own.

When setting the brief, teachers and lecturers should consider the following:

The brief should ask candidates to plan and develop content which is for a particular purpose and audience, and which uses a range of appropriate media codes. While it is important that teachers and lecturers ensure candidates are set a task which allows them to create a piece of media content which contains sufficient content for them to complete all the written tasks in sections 1 and 2, it is also important not to ask candidates to make something which is too

long. For a moving image text, 2–3 minutes in length is more than enough and many candidates achieve success with a moving image text of just 1–2 minutes.

No medium, form or genre is necessarily more appropriate than another, but teachers and lecturers must take care to ensure that the brief given to, or negotiated by, candidates is neither too simplistic, nor overly ambitious, and allows them to achieve the assessment criteria to the best of their ability. An appropriate brief might specify a 3-poster advertising campaign, a 30-second trailer, a 2-minute fiction or non-fiction film, or four pages of a newspaper, magazine or website, for example.

A candidate's ability to respond to the brief may be constrained by more than their creativity. The resources available from centre to centre will vary considerably, and may have an impact on what can and cannot be produced. The brief must be compatible with the available resources.

Evidence that candidates have actively planned content by carrying out appropriate research and making decisions based on this is assessed. Evidence assessed covers the research and planning related to:

- a creative intentions in response to the brief
- b content research (refer to at least one key aspect)
- c production role(s) and/or institutional context research
- d audience research

Candidates' research should be detailed and relate to the brief. Possible areas of research include the following:

- ◆ Content research, for example:
 - professional techniques and practice
 - technology and language of particular media
 - techniques in categories, language, narrative and representations found in similar content
- ◆ Production role(s) research, for example:
 - professional techniques and practice
 - familiarisation with technology or equipment available
 - professional practice, roles and responsibilities
- ◆ Audience research, for example:
 - focus groups
 - questionnaires for target audience
 - wants, needs and expectations
 - trends or data in consumption of and/or reaction to content
 - consideration of mode of address, preferred reading and differential decoding
- ◆ Institutional contexts research, for example:
 - legal and voluntary controls

- professional practice, roles and responsibilities
- health and safety
- technology and equipment
- school or college factors such as time, resources, budget and other constraints

Research findings should give candidates ideas which help them draw up their plans, but could also lead them to realistically consider the constraints they might face at the development stage. Candidates should understand that it might not be possible to realise all their creative ideas, for example, they may have to reject or modify some of them because they are unworkable with the constraints they have.

In line with professional practice, before beginning production, candidates should draw up final plans which should include detailed plans for their content, specifying the technical and cultural codes to be used. Their plans could take any appropriate form: a mock-up, storyboards, shooting script or anything else relevant to the medium in which they are working. The important thing about it is that it provides a clear vision that they can work from at the development stage. They might also wish to produce production schedules, checklists of equipment and resources required, or anything else which will help them manage the process of making their content. This work is to help candidates plan and **is not submitted to Qualifications Scotland**.

Section 2: development — assessment tasks 2a and 2b

Candidates make the planned media content and then complete a written evaluation of the process, and of their finished content. For task 2a, candidates should explain specific opportunities available to them, or constraints they had to overcome, due to the institutional context, from the perspective of the production role(s) they have undertaken. They should then evaluate how effectively they dealt with these opportunities and/or constraints. For task 2b, candidates should discuss specific examples of how they intended to create meaning or impact through the use of media codes and/or techniques, and evaluate how effectively they achieved these in their finished content. Candidates should conduct their written work on the development stage after they have made their media product.

Example approach

The broad brief could be to plan, design and create a 30–45-second moving image advertisement for a charitable cause of candidates' choice. They may then choose from a diverse range of topics according to their personal interest. The target audience and purpose could also be negotiated. Teachers and lecturers should ensure that the negotiated brief is appropriate to the resources available within the centre. Internal factors might include: time, equipment, resources, rules and regulations relevant to the centre. External factors might include: legal and voluntary controls, general laws, health and safety, and copyright.

Note: the requirements for the National 5 Media assignment are different; refer to the National 5 Media course specification and assignment assessment task for details. If a candidate changes level, they will need to revise their work before submission.

Useful links

- ◆ [AMES](#)
- ◆ [BFI](#)
- ◆ [BBFC](#)
- ◆ [ASA](#)
- ◆ [IMDB](#)
- ◆ [Creative Scotland](#)
- ◆ [Creative Skillset](#)
- ◆ [Into Film](#)
- ◆ [Film Bang](#)
- ◆ [BAFTA](#)
- ◆ [Shooting People](#)
- ◆ [MPAA](#)
- ◆ [HSE](#)

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

Teachers and lecturers should identify opportunities throughout the course for candidates to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

Candidates should be aware of the skills they are developing and teachers and lecturers can provide advice on opportunities to practise and improve them.

Qualifications Scotland does not formally assess skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

There may also be opportunities to develop additional skills depending on approaches being used to deliver the course in each centre. This is for individual teachers and lecturers to manage.

Some examples of potential opportunities to practise or improve these skills are provided in the following table.

Skill	How it could be developed
1 Literacy	♦ watching a range of media texts ♦ reading newspapers ♦ listening to radio broadcasts or podcasts ♦ communicating when working in groups, during discussions, question and answer sessions, and through presentations ♦ carrying out mini-investigations ♦ conducting research ♦ presenting findings from research in a structured format, to convey ideas, decisions and information ♦ creating structured responses to questions ♦ listening to guest speakers
4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship	♦ encouraging autonomy and initiative through personal research ♦ working with others ♦ increasing understanding of the role of media in society ♦ exploring real-life topics through a range of media texts ♦ exploring the constraints and opportunities in the media industry ♦ researching professional practice ♦ enhancing time management and organisational skills ♦ improving ICT skills for a technology-driven society

Skill	How it could be developed
5 Thinking skills	◆ applying the key aspects of media to the analysis of a range of media texts ◆ distinguishing fact and opinion ◆ discussing bias, balance and point of view ◆ sharing information and explaining its importance ◆ using evidence to support points of information or opinion ◆ completing personal research and team working ◆ applying problem-solving in planning and production processes ◆ applying evaluation skills to product and process

Administrative information

Published: June 2026 (version 8.0)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Course support notes added as appendix.	August 2018
3.0	Marking instructions for tasks 2a and 2b of assignment updated.	July 2019
4.0	Duration of question paper 1 — analysis of media content changed to 2 hours and 30 minutes.	October 2019
4.1	Updated with 2020–21 amendments.	November 2020
4.2	Session dates updated for 2021–22. No content changes.	August 2021
4.3	Session dates updated for 2022–23. No content changes.	August 2022
5.0	Reference to modifications removed. Guidance on digital submission of assignment added to the ‘Evidence to be gathered’ section. Clarification of assignment marking guidance for task 2a, 6–5. In course support notes, new texts added to the ‘Suggestions for texts’ section.	May 2023
6.0	Changes to the Marking Instructions to provide clearer guidance. ‘Further information’ documents updated. Tables amended for accessibility reasons.	October 2024
7.0	We have removed advertisement and magazine cover options from section 2 of the Analysis of media content question paper, as very few candidates have been using these options. What you need to do differently Candidates and centres should focus on film posters when preparing for section 2 of the Analysis of media content question paper. Candidates can still study adverts and magazines for other parts of the course.	June 2025

Version	Description of change	Date
8.0	We've updated the description of 'Question paper 1 section 2: analysis of media texts' to reflect the new wording of question 3 in the question paper. We've updated the marking instructions for assignment task 2a and 2b to reflect that fewer points of evaluation are now required for each task. We've made some changes to the suggested texts for stand-alone films and television series in the course support notes. We've changed references to 'SQA' to 'Qualifications Scotland' throughout. We've updated the title to include the SCQF level. We've added a new 'Learning for Sustainability' section and updated the 'Equality and inclusion' and 'Further information' sections. We've made changes to the format and layout of the document to improve accessibility. What you need to do differently Refer to the specimen question paper for the updated wording of question 3. Ensure candidates are aware of the change and update any documentation associated with this part of the question paper. Refer to the coursework assessment task document where the changes to the requirements for task 2a and 2b are detailed. Ensure candidates are aware of the changes and update any documentation associated with this part of the assignment.	June 2026

Note: you are advised to check Qualifications Scotland's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.