



Common questions about National 3, National 4, National 5 and Higher Media

Analysing media content — unit and course assessment

Can I use the same media content for analysis and/or assessment at different levels?

Yes, any media content can be used at any level. There are three important things to bear in mind:

- ◆ The ability of the candidate — some content might be too complex for candidates at lower levels.
- ◆ You should be confident that all the relevant assessment tasks can be completed in relation to the given content.
- ◆ You must ensure that the candidate is assessed against the appropriate assessment standards for the level they are studying.

How many media texts should candidates study/be assessed on?

There are no prescribed types or amounts of media content that candidates should study. They should be presented with an engaging range of media content that allows them to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding outlined in course documents. Course and unit support notes give further advice on the types of media texts that might be suitable for various levels.

At National 5 and Higher, course assessment samples from across the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding given in the course specification and course assessment specification, respectively. Candidates should be given opportunities to accumulate examples of media content which illustrate their knowledge of the concepts that may be sampled in a question paper.

Candidates can reference one or more than one example of media content in their response to any question paper item or Higher unit assessment task.

In both analysis and creation units, ‘key aspects of media literacy’ are mentioned in distinct assessment standards rather than within others. Why is this? How should I assess them?

Key aspects of media literacy underpin both analysis and creation of media content. They are given as distinct assessment standards so that they can be used and credited as flexibly as possible in both analysis and creation units. It is not anticipated that discrete activities are used to assess key aspects: evidence should occur naturally. For example: in analysis, key aspects will be used or evident across the analysis of media content, contexts, relationships between these and role of media; in creating media content, key aspects can inform or be evident in any of the planning, making and evaluation skills that candidates are asked to demonstrate.

The detail and depth required for National 3, 4, 5* and Higher is outlined in the ‘making assessment judgements’ section of the unit assessment support packs.

*Since August 2017, units no longer form part of the National 5 Media course but can be taken as freestanding units. From session 2018/19 onwards, Higher units will no longer form part of the Higher course. More information on freestanding units and changes to National Qualifications are available on our [website](#).

In course documents, why are ‘medium’ and ‘form’ referenced in relation to the key aspect of language rather than categories, where they traditionally sit?

At National 5 and Higher, knowledge of medium and form are not assessed in units or discretely sampled for course assessment; they are therefore not listed in the mandatory knowledge for categories.

However, they are relevant terms for categorising media content and centres may wish to make reference to them during analysis. To acknowledge this, they are referenced in language as follows: ‘medium/form-specific technical codes, cultural codes and anchorage’. This is also to emphasise that it is not necessary to cover every type of technical code, cultural code or type of anchorage found in media content, only those relevant to the medium/form/content being studied.

Until now, the role of media hasn’t been assessed in NQ Media courses. How should it be approached in National 5 and Higher Media?

The three roles of media that National 5 and Higher candidates can be expected to understand, apply and be assessed on, are the same at both levels, and are as follows:

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

This list represents **mandatory** content. In Higher units, candidates should reference whatever roles are relevant to the media text(s) referenced. In the question paper, candidates should be prepared to answer questions on any of the roles given above. Questions may be general, or may focus on one or more of the elements given in brackets.

Unit assessment — Higher

For unit assessment, candidates should analyse the ways in which media content reflects or might have a causal relationship with at least one of the given roles of media.

Candidates should include a description of a relevant role of media and examples from the content which exemplify this. They should explain how the role may reflect, cause or be caused by the specific content choices which have been made in the content. Content may be described using key aspect terminology or by making any valid general references.

The detail and depth required for Higher is outlined in the ‘making assessment judgements’ section of unit assessment support packs. This also applies to the freestanding Media units at National 5.

Course assessment — question papers

At **National 5**, candidates should be able to give clear examples of how the role of media is, or may be, evident in or applied to media content, as above.

At **Higher**, candidates are expected to be able to discuss the role of media referenced in the question. By ‘discuss’ we mean communicate ideas and information on the role of media, and offer opinions, arguments or conclusions backed up with evidence from at least one example of media content.

Specimen question papers exemplify role of media questions, and describe in detail how these will be marked.

Possible approaches

Meeting needs — entertainment, education, information:

- ◆ 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:

- ◆ 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/helps individuals or groups, or acts on their behalf

Influencing attitudes and behaviour — intentionally, unintentionally:

- ◆ the intended influence of media content on individuals, groups or organisations
- ◆ the unintended, possible or consequential effect of media content

Roles of media have been defined in the very broad way given to be as flexible as possible and to be applied in whatever way is appropriate to media content being studied. For example, some may wish to examine the intentional creation of behaviours and/or attitudes by public service or commercial advertisers, or theories about effects of violence in films. Ideas about the role of mainstream media in influencing voter opinion, the use of social media in political activism, or the effect of investment and funding on the predominance of genre texts could be studied. The role of media in challenging or perpetuating stereotypes or ideological perspectives would also be a suitable way to approach the topic. Historical or contemporary analysis, within or across texts, genres, or different media, could present a variety of interesting approaches.

These are examples: they do not represent an exhaustive, prescriptive or mandatory list, and anything else relevant to selected content or the interests of candidates is acceptable. The examples are intended to illustrate the fact that the role of media should not be seen as an unfamiliar, new topic with complex ideas but rather, as another way to use already familiar concepts and key aspects to frame and consider analysis of media content.

It is not intended or expected that candidates gain complex knowledge of, for example, sociological or psychological theories about the potential role of media, although including such perspectives is not precluded if relevant to the content and/or candidate ability. Rather, it is expected that candidates will be able to exemplify or discuss ways in which facts, opinions, or perspectives on the role of media are evident in, or can be applied to, particular examples of content.

At Higher, should candidates respond to the role of the media question in a single integrated essay, or should they separate their response into (a) and (b) sections?

It is strongly recommended that candidates respond in a single essay, as this allows them to make much clearer connections between their argument and their references to media content. When candidates separate their answers into (a) and (b) sections, they often find it hard to comment relevantly on how their references to media content support their argumentative points.

Can candidates use new media (ie internet, digital media, social media) texts to respond either to media content in context or role of the media questions?

The course specifications for National 5 and Higher are deliberately very open and non-prescriptive in allowing a wide range of different media to be studied, as appropriate to the needs and interests of both candidates and teachers. Many examples of media content that would traditionally have been accessed via print, TV or film are now accessed via the internet

or mobile apps (eg news articles delivered via Facebook feeds, TV and film via Netflix, Amazon Prime etc).

It is appropriate to use such texts as the basis for answering questions on media content in context, and the shift in delivery and consumption should allow for interesting reflection on audience, society and institutional contexts (eg the use of algorithmic marketing to target particular news articles to individuals on Facebook, or to create lists of suggested viewing on Netflix; the narrative freedom arising from the absence of fixed programme lengths and advertising breaks in content made for streaming services etc).

As far as the role of the media is concerned, new media texts can potentially allow for interesting reflections on how the media interact with society. For instance, candidates could look at the role of Youtubers/Instagrammers as paid brand ambassadors. The use of 'influencer marketing' could be contrasted with more traditional brand advertising strategies, and there are potentially fruitful areas for reflection around the ways that this kind of marketing blurs boundaries between the roles of profit, promotion and entertainment, and around its intentional and unintentional influences on behaviour and attitudes.

When using new media texts for either media content in context or role of the media questions, it is important to bear in mind the requirement for reference to 'particular media content.' This means that approaches that simply reference a platform (eg Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat etc), rather than specific media content which may be distributed via that platform, are unlikely to be successful. It is also very important to ensure that the texts chosen are rich enough to allow for a depth of discussion as appropriate to the question. When answering media content in context questions, candidates need to be able to discuss content-based key aspects as exemplified in their chosen content in the appropriate level of depth for National 5 or Higher. Similarly, for role of the media questions, they need to be able to refer in detail to the text(s) to exemplify their discussion of the question. It is therefore likely that the most suitable content to discuss will be professionally-produced media texts that exemplify a full range of codes and conventions, rather than individual posts to social media or micro-blogging platforms such as Facebook or Twitter.

What is meant by the context of 'society'?

Society contexts — time, place

At both National 5 and Higher, and in relation to both unit and course assessment, candidates should be able to describe facts or ideas relevant to the society in which at least one particular example of media content was produced, consumed or set, and explain the effect of these on the content.

For Higher units, the detail and depth required is outlined in the 'making assessment judgements' section of unit assessment support packs. This also applies to the freestanding Media units at National 5.

Specimen question papers exemplify questions and describe in detail how these are marked.

In terms of contexts we are accustomed to audience and institution. The context of society has been included to widen the possible approaches to the study of media, and has been defined as 'time' and 'place'. The terms 'time' and 'place' have been used to encompass any

relevant society factors that might apply to media content (anything from fandom to technology, economics, history, politics, social and cultural factors etc). Society is an extremely broad concept and is has been intentionally left as such so that it can be defined and applied in any appropriate way relevant to the content being studied.

This might mean that some of the ways in which societal factors can be described may be similar to concepts from other key aspects, but the overlapping nature of concepts is something we are accustomed to: genre analysis may include reference to narrative, representation and will almost certainly include reference to language, and so on. As with the role of media, including the concept of society simply gives us another way to approach and frame analysis, rather than adding any previously unknown or complex ideas.

Creating media content — unit and course assessment

Can I still use the National 5 units?

Yes, the National 5 units still exist as freestanding units, and candidates can be entered for them if appropriate. However, the units no longer form part of the National 5 course, and candidates should not be entered for both the National 5 course and the National 5 units at the same time.

For the units, can I use the same creating media content brief with candidates at different levels?

Yes, any brief can be used or adapted across different levels. There are two important things to bear in mind:

- ◆ You should be confident that all the relevant assessment tasks can be completed in relation to the given brief.
- ◆ You must ensure that the candidate is assessed against the appropriate assessment standards for the level they are studying, even where a brief has been used/adapted from that given in a unit assessment support pack for another level.

Can I use a brief from a Creating Media Content unit assessment support pack for the Media assignment?

Yes, any brief can be used or adapted for the Media assignment at National 4, National 5 and Higher, and could be based on an experience, a theme, an extract from a book, a news story, or anything else that suggests an idea for media content. There are two important things to bear in mind:

- ◆ You should be confident that all the assignment tasks can be completed in relation to the given brief.
- ◆ You must ensure that the candidate is given the appropriate assignment tasks for their level, even where you have used/adapted a brief from another level.

Do candidates have to make an entire production for both the Creating Media Content unit and the Media assignment?

No, the Creating Media Content unit focuses on the discrete skills needed to plan, make and evaluate media content; there is no need to develop and assess these within the context of a full production, although this is not precluded. Discrete planning, making and evaluation tasks, or material generated in response to learning and teaching activities, can be used to gather evidence for assessment standards.

Can I use the same work for the Higher Creating Media Content unit and the Media assignment?

The Higher Creating Media Content unit assesses discrete skills on a pass or fail basis at minimum competence; the assignment is designed to be completed once the unit skills have been gained. The added value of the assignment is the integration and application of skills in a more challenging context, and candidates are assessed and rewarded accordingly.

Candidates might base their work for the assignment on activities, work or ideas generated during the Creating Media Content unit, or take a completely fresh approach. This is for the centre and candidate to decide.

Work completed for the assignment could be credited against some unit assessment standards. However, as candidates should have had opportunities to gain competence in the unit skills before beginning the assignment, there is already likely to be evidence of these.

How much support and time should candidates be given for the written submission for the Media assignment?

There is no time limit specified for the Media assignment, and candidates are expected to complete the assignment independently. The National 4 Added Value unit assessment, the National 5 course specification, and the Higher general assessment information documents give advice on what constitutes reasonable assistance to candidates.

At National 5 and Higher, it is recommended that candidates complete the written part for the planning section after completing the other planning tasks, rather than waiting until their content is made. It can sometimes be difficult for candidates to separate their reflection on planning from their reflection on the developed/finished media content once the assignment is complete.

When setting a brief for the Media assignment, is a storyboard an acceptable level of finish for candidates?

A storyboard is an acceptable level of finish at National 4 and National 5.

A storyboard is **not** an acceptable level of finish at Higher. At Higher, candidates are expected to make finished content — this can be an extract or a complete piece. Candidates who make and submit a storyboard will not be able to access the full range of marks available for the Media assignment.

The National 4 Added Value unit assessment, the National 5 course specification and assessment task, and the Higher general assessment information and assessment task documents give full advice.

If candidates create a storyboard for their National 5 assignment, how can they evaluate it, given that they have not gone through the full production process?

They will still be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their ideas as expressed in the storyboard, so they will not be disadvantaged compared to candidates who have created finished products.

Can candidates submit a group production for the National 5 and Higher assignments?

Yes, a group production is acceptable. However, it is very important that their role in the production is clearly defined (for instance, one candidate could be fully responsible for one section of a short film, or they could take on a clearly-defined role such as cinematographer, director, editor etc). Candidates' responses to the planning phase questions and to the development phase need to be clearly focused on the element(s) of the production that they were personally responsible for — any responses that focus on elements that were another candidate's responsibility will not be credited.

Can candidates use templates to create their product (such as the trailer templates on iMovie)?

Yes they can, although it is important to bear in mind that in both the planning and development phases of the assignment, candidates can only be credited for their own work, so where a template has built-in choices of music, font, editing transitions etc, candidates cannot be credited for those choices. For this reason, it is recommended that wherever possible, candidates work to produce their finished products without the use of templates.

National Qualification questions and answers can be found on the [frequently asked questions section](#) of SQA's website.