2017 VCE Media examination report

General comments

Generally, students responded well to the 2017 VCE Media examination. Many responses indicated that students had employed advice given in previous examination reports. However, it should be emphasised that students should not use either these reports or other resources to construct prepared answers for use in the examination. These types of responses seldom answer the question correctly or obtain full marks. The highest-scoring responses demonstrated good control of media language. These responses were characterised by the use of a broad and suitable vocabulary and by accurately answering the questions.

This examination featured questions that provided students with various options. The options were included in dot points or open-styled questions. Students managed these questions with varying competence. Students who scored highly embraced these opportunities to provide responses that allowed for greater integration of content across key knowledge sections of the outcomes. This was particularly evident in Section B, Question 4 and Section C, Question 4.

Students are reminded to indicate in the question and answer book if they have continued writing a response in the extra space for responses.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.
This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Narrative

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	2	4	93	**1.9**

The majority of students were able to accurately identify two production elements. A small number of students inaccurately identified story elements or named related film terms such as non-linear structure of time or non-diegetic narration.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	13	30	34	21	**2.6**

Students demonstrated a diverse understanding of the term 'setting' by identifying specific locations or time periods. Some students discussed setting as an emotional space such as a

moment of liberation. Overall, most students were able to articulate how two production elements revealed setting; however, higher-scoring responses employed a higher degree of suitable language, for example, as in the following high-scoring response.

> *In Woody Allen's 'Midnight in Paris', the setting of Paris plays an integral role in the construction of narrative. During the opening scene, the wide shots of Paris throughout the day and night ensure that the audience understands where the text is set. Additionally, the wide shots are all positioned at eye level, as if every frame was from the perspective of someone standing on a street or on a bridge. These angles create a relationship between the city and its people, and as if the audience was there themselves. Furthermore, the use of soft yellow lighting during the daytime romanticises the city and presents a positive view. This contributes to the texts discussion of the idealisation and romanticisation of places or time periods.*

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	7	18	25	24	16	5	**3.3**

This question challenged most students. Although most students adequately described two or more storylines, very few were able to discuss with any authority the relationship between these storylines and how they contributed to the audience's reading. Higher-scoring responses, like the one following, articulated the nature of the relationship (for example, concurrent) and how it contributed to the audience's understanding of the text either through character or story development.

> *Multiple storylines in The Sixth Sense are structured to purposely disillusion audiences and influence their reading of the text. Across the film, Malcolm Crowe's endeavours in assisting Cole Sear are presented as the main storyline, as Malcolm spends the majority of his on-screen time with Cole. Beyond this, the larger plot twists that occur within the text, such as when Cole reveals that he "sees dead people", happen in the presence of Malcolm and Cole, adding to the importance of their storyline. Conversely, the concurrent storyline which explores Malcolm's relationship with Anna is treated as secondary to Malcolm's journey with Cole. This can be seen as Malcolm and Anna are rarely pictured in the frame together during the disequilibrium portion of the text, and any scenes in which they interact abruptly end as the scene cuts away, until the closing sequence. Indeed, the relationship between these storylines develops for the sake of audience reception, especially in preparation for the climax of the film. By drawing focus away from storylines in which Malcolm interacts with people lacking Cole's abilities, the audience is indirectly persuaded to view Malcolm as a living person, rather than considering the possibility that he may be a ghost. As such, the structuring of multiple storylines in The Sixth Sense fundamentally alters audience readings.*

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	3	7	10	15	15	16	12	9	5	3	**5.1**

The focus of this question required comparison of similarities and/or differences in narrative structure as they reference genre(s), styles or techniques in order to engage audiences and construct meaning in two media texts. While the comparative nature of this question was generally addressed to some degree by most students, either through structure or language, few students actively compared texts. Most commonly, students referred to how production and story elements were employed to construct genre. Relatively few students discussed film styles or techniques. When discussed the term 'techniques' was interpreted widely, for example, camera techniques, acting techniques, or techniques of well-known practitioners such as directors or cinematographers.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

In the opening sequence of both The Dark Knight and V for Vendetta the genre of action thriller is established through the elements of sound, lighting, mise en scene and character. In V for Vendetta the dystopian totalitarian London setting is established in the parallel edited shots of Evey and V getting ready in their respective spaces. The mise en scene illustrates the stark dichotomy between the two characters as Evey's room is bare and minimalistic, whilst V's is theatrical and foreshadows the violence to come in the film as a multitude of weapons line the walls. The weapons signal to the audience that the film is within the action thriller genre, as eerie foreboding non diegetic music also plays in the background, positioning the audience to feel unease and trepidation as they could be uncertain as to why the camera keeps cross cutting between Evey and V and the possible relationship between two starkly different characters. Similarly, The Dark Knight establishes the dichotomy between the protagonist (Batman) and the antagonist (the Joker). Action thriller films often involve a struggle between a protagonist who seeks order and justice and an antagonist who seeks to destroy it. This is epitomised in the Joker's bank heist. The light hitting his face as he shoots the bus driver accentuating his grotesque scars. In contrast, a laudatory portrait of Batman is painted as he fights crime, Christian Bale portraying Batman's strong physicality as he attempts to restore order in Gotham. This immediately establishes the notion of 'good vs evil' in the text, therefore positioning the audience to feel a similar unease as in V for Vendetta, engaging them in the opening as for both texts it establishes the conflict ridden worlds of the films.

Section B – Media texts and society's values

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	23	35	39	2.1

Students seemed ill-equipped to explain the difference between a value and a social issue or discourse. However, most students defined or provided examples of a value and a social issue or discourse adequately and in doing so provided reference to how they were different.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

A discourse is an abstract umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of social issues and values. In contrast, a value is a belief or attitude held by society that can either be a dominant value; a belief held by the majority of society, an emerging value; a belief held by a growing number of people in society or an oppositional value; a belief in direct opposition to one held by the majority or society.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	9	35	36	18	2.6

Students described text representations of values in diverse ways. This was done through production elements, storylines, characters and character relationships. High-scoring responses identified a clear value and described the representation through technical, symbolic and/or written codes, or conventions of the media form.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

In regard to the discourse of family and gender roles in contemporary Australian society, an emerging value is that women are able to perform both caregiver and breadwinner roles. In the House Husbands (season three, episode one), Abbey struggles to adhere to her moral obligations and maternal instincts as a mother, and maintain a successful career as a doctor. The mise en scene of Abbey's kitchen emblemizes this struggle as all surfaces are covered in multi-coloured post-it notes, indicative of Abbey's attempts to be organised and be seen as

perfect in both caregiving and breadwinning, in order to adhere to the moral views in society associated with the emerging value of women being capable of performing both roles.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	4	12	27	26	17	8	**3.5**

Generally, students outlined two representations from different texts that reflected a common value. Higher-scoring responses actively compared these representations through structure and/or language, as does the following high-scoring response.

Representations in American Beauty serve to directly reflect the values held in American society during the 1990's surrounding the discourse of economic materialism. In this film, Lester Burnham is represented as embodying and endorsing the dominant value of the time, which is that money can be soul destroying. This representation is primarily generated through the use of symbolic codes and mise en scene. At the beginning of the film, Lester is depressed and sick of his job, and meanwhile he is surrounded by visual bars like those of a prison cell, such as the rays of light in his bedroom, his pyjamas, the streams of water in the shower and the lines on his computer screen. These serve to highlight the torturous cycle of materialism Lester is trapped in, echoing the dominant value. Similarly, Lester's wife Carolyn Burnham is represented as pertaining to the oppositional value of the time, which is that money can still buy you happiness and this is also achieved through mise en scene. Carolyn drives a Mercedes, wears formal clothing and is obsessed with the material image of her home and life such as matching gardening clogs and shears, her immaculate rose garden and her "$4000 couch upholstered in Italian silk". By emphasising the importance of these items to Carolyn over her family and wellbeing, the film represents her as opposing the dominant value of the time.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	11	5	9	14	18	16	15	9	4	**4**

High-scoring responses provided an in-depth and coherent discussion of the role that media texts play in the construction, distribution and/or interpretation of ideas and values. Most students based their responses on the way texts reflected ideas and values from a time period, as does the following high-scoring response.

Media texts can be seen to be significantly influential in constructing and importantly distributing values in society. In Family Ties, the chess match symbolically presents the Cold War. What starts as a competitive match between a Russian, Ivan and Alex, who represents the conservative Reagan ideals that Russians are cold-hearted. However, as the match progresses, there is comedic commentary and the match ends in a humorous wrestling match. This chess game constructs a direct mocking and challenging of dominant values and conversely represents emerging values. However more broadly, the fact that the episode is aired on prime time as a humorous sitcom illustrates America's readiness to change their attitudes towards the Cold War, and the Russians. It is this distribution which urges the audience to acknowledge these emerging values.

The Russians are coming 20 years earlier in 1966, similarly aims to encourage audiences to consider emerging values towards the Cold War and Russia, as in the film's resolution, the Americans and the USSR are seen to work together to save the child. As this resolution directly contradicts fundamental values held by the majority of Americans, it's construction can be seen to be crucial in challenging social values, or developing new ones. Ultimately, the consumption of media texts can have a considerable influence on the development of values within the community, particularly in texts that are in primetime TV slots.

Section C – Media influence

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	3	13	83	**1.8**

This question was correctly answered by students who identified and described one communication theory. The most commonly named communication theories or models were: Hypodermic Needle, Agenda-setting Function Theory, Spiral of Silence, Encoding and Decoding.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's Propaganda Model (1989) argues that large media corporations have majority of the power over the audience. This is proposed to be done through the 5 filters: advertising, flak, sourcing of information, fear and media ownership. This ultimately creates a more susceptible audience.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	27	32	41	**1.2**

Most students were able to outline an argument that supported the communication theory they had identified. Many students misunderstood the term 'substantiates' and instead provided an argument against the nature and extent of the media's influence according to the theory. Some students provided an argument in support of a theory other than the one they had identified in Question 1a.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

An argument supporting The Propaganda Model (1989) is that the nature of media influence is focused on how the media influences the audiences and why, identifying the power of the media to be for the purpose of political economy and its gain. The extent of this influence is large, as the audience almost becomes passive and more accepting of the messages selected to be implied.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	6	13	24	24	18	8	**3.4**

High-scoring responses gave a thorough description of one appropriate instance in which a media form or text was claimed to influence an audience and then compared two relevant communication theories or models that could be applied to justify or challenge the claim. Higher-scoring responses discussed contemporary media examples that students were very familiar with, such as instances of fake news justified by theories such as the Agenda-setting Function Theory and the Political Economy Model.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

One media text that was said to be influential was the 2015 'Break the Barrier' advertisement campaign released in the state of New South Wales by the St. John's Ambulance. In the advertisement, which attempts to sell First Aid courses, a child lethally injures themselves at a backyard pool, and his mother is unable to help him. Research found that in 2014, 190,000 adults and 100,000 children signed up for the course, although in 2015 the numbers increased to 200,000 adults and 125,000 children, indicating a significant positive influence. This can be explained by the Agenda Setting Function Theory, as the advertisement engages in a form of

gatekeeping by only selecting to show a dangerous activity of swimming in a backyard pool, encouraging audiences to focus on these dangerous consequences and therefore consider receiving First Aid training. However, the theory could be alternatively explained through the Reinforcement Theory. Under this theory, it could be assumed that members of society were already considering the issue of pool safety in a similar light, such as parents who may have discussed the issue with the socialising agents of their friends, fellow parents and their children. As such, upon seeing the advertisement these viewer's existing opinions would have been reinforced to the point of influence as they signed up for the First Aid courses.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	9	31	33	20	**2.5**

This question was generally handled well. To attain full marks, students had to first outline a type of media regulation, such as government regulation (ACMA, ACCC, ACORN, Classification Board, defamation law, tax rebates), industry regulation (ASB, Free TV Australia, Instagram's terms of use, YouTube code of conduct and ethics) or personal regulation (parental controls, internet monitoring). Then, students were required to analyse an argument for or against this type of regulation. Higher-scoring responses, such as the one below, provided an accurate and relevant outline of an argument. Some students misread the question and provided both an argument for and against.

One type of regulation is self regulation. This involves media corporations internally regulating the content they distribute without direct government involvement. An argument for the use of self regulation is that it is highly efficient compared to traditional or formal forms of regulation. This can be seen with the implementation of the International Age Rating Coalition(IARC) system of self regulation for mobile app platforms such as the Google Play store. Indeed, a Government spokesperson stated in 2013, when IARC was first introduced that it would have taken 20 years to classify all of the apps awaiting review and consideration. As such, it can be seen that self regulation is beneficial as it allows for massive amounts of content to be classified in a streamlined, efficient and rapid manner.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	16	7	11	16	17	14	12	6	2	**3.5**

Students were generally able to provide some reference to the statement drawn from the study design, though many seemed to either misunderstand or avoid the term 'dissemination'.

Students approached this question in diverse ways. Most commonly they discussed how audiences are central to the construction of media products and provided support from communication theories and/or evidence.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

As new media technologies develop, audiences become central to the construction of media. Social media sites specifically tailor content to individual audiences. Facebook, for example, has claimed to prevent audience exposure to content that is unsuited or irrelevant to them. Facebook newsfeeds are constructed around previous searches and website activity of its users. The Reinforcement Theory can be applied to this claim. Facebook conducts research into their audience's interests, as determined by the usage on other websites, to create 'filter bubbles', exposing audiences to no new content. Reinforcement Theory suggests that the media can only reinforce audiences pre-existing opinions and hence cannot change the beliefs and attitudes. Michela Del Vicario et al conducted research in 2015 and concluded that users of Facebook tend to only receive content that they have been exposed to similarly in the past and therefore act as reinforcers of their beliefs. Audiences therefore play a central role in the

construction and dissemination of the media, as audiences individual schema of knowledge and beliefs are being catered to. Social media personalises their content to suit the needs of the audience.