



Curriculum Description for Australian Matriculation (Tertiary Entrance Examinations)

MEDIA PRODUCTION and ANALYSIS

The breadth of the Media Production and Analysis course outcomes reflects the importance of media skills and understandings to so many aspects of contemporary life. The media are central to entertainment, information dissemination, communication and education and so they are of fundamental importance in defining the ways we see ourselves and others. The media both reflect and shape the culture and values of their society; thus, media analysis can provide critical insights into the culture and values of one's own society as well as an appreciation of the values of other cultures.

The media speak to audiences and when studying media the role of audiences is critical. Audiences are composed of complex individuals with unique histories, experiences, attitudes and values that they bring to their viewing and listening and which influence their interpretations of media works. Students as consumers of media debate their media experiences in the family or peer context. Students' own cultural backgrounds, values and media experiences are taken into account by teachers when developing the teaching/learning programs.

Behind every media product are the producers; the men and women involved in the design, making, editing and final appearance of the product. These people make decisions about the target audience, the style of the product, the story to be told and the best way to tell it. Their work is characterised by decisions about what to include and what to leave out. Through the creation of their own media works, students have opportunities to engage in this production process. The production of media works designed to entertain, inform, communicate or critique enables students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts as well as their creativity and originality. Production also provides students with the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their own creative work, intentions and outcomes.

The modern media are marked by the convergence of communication and information technologies, brought about by digitisation. Digitisation makes possible the conversion of a range of different media into a form that enables them to be understood and manipulated through a computer. At the same time, different forms of communication have converged. Through networking the computer itself has become a medium located somewhere between the telephone and broadcasting. It offers both interpersonal and mass communication opportunities and, unlike older forms of media, interactive possibilities. Multimedia provides opportunities for the full integration of analysis and production. Through multimedia, students can deconstruct a work, transform it or produce an original work combining visual, audio and print production skills. Studies in this field are of vocational relevance in a workplace dominated increasingly by multimedia applications.

Media Production and Analysis aims to prepare all students for a future in a digital and global world by providing the foundation for lifelong learning about the media.

Through engaging with this course, students have the opportunity to further their achievement of specific overarching learning outcomes from the Curriculum Framework. The course also provides opportunities for the promotion of core-shared values identified from the Curriculum Framework.

Course outcomes

Media Production and Analysis is designed to facilitate the achievement of four outcomes. These outcomes are based on The Arts, Technology and Enterprise and English learning area outcomes in the Curriculum Framework. Outcomes are statements of what students should know, understand, value and be able to do as a result of their learning.

Outcomes are elaborated into aspects that identify the underpinning knowledge, concepts and/or skills in more detail.

Outcome 1: Media ideas

Students use critical awareness and cultural understandings to explore and develop media ideas.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand how media communicate ideas in particular contexts and for different audiences and purposes;
- explore technologies, codes and conventions to create meaning and develop ideas; and
- present ideas, designs and/or production plans.

Outcome 2: Media production

Students use skills, techniques, processes, conventions and technologies to create media works for audience, purpose and context.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- use media skills, process and technologies;
- use media codes and conventions for audience, purpose and context; and
- fulfil a range of production roles and responsibilities.

Outcome 3: Responses to media

Students use critical, social, cultural and aesthetic understandings to respond to, reflect on and evaluate media works.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand how meaning is constructed in media works;
- understand interrelationships between media texts, cultural contexts and audiences; and
- use strategies to investigate and comment on media works and evaluate media productions.

Outcome 4: Media in society

Students understand the role of media in society.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand the impact of technological developments, and controls and constraints, on media production and use;
- understand the influence of social, historical and cultural contexts on media production and use; and
- understand how cultural values are influenced by the media and in turn influence media production.

For each of these outcomes, standards are defined in terms of progressive levels of achievement (see Course Standards).

Course content

The course content needs to be the focus of the learning program. It enables students to maximise their achievement of both the overarching learning outcomes from the Curriculum Framework and the Media Production and Analysis course outcomes. By engaging with this essential content, students can demonstrate their achievement.

The course content is divided into three content areas:

- media language
- audiences
- production context.

Media language

An understanding of media language is fundamental to the study and practice of media. In learning the language of the media, students develop conceptual understandings and skills relevant to:

Media form

An understanding of form and how it shapes content should underpin the study of any medium. Knowledge of the technologies, terminology, production styles, processes, skills and techniques, modes of distribution/transmission, audiences and viewing/listening contexts associated with different media is fundamental to the understanding and production of media works. Alternative and experimental media forms and structures may also be introduced.

Narrative, codes and conventions

Narratives are intrinsic to media works and the narrative elements of character, setting, conflict and resolution are essential components of both fiction and non-fiction genre. Codes and conventions are tools used in the construction and deconstruction of narratives. Producers construct preferred meanings and viewpoints through the selection of technical, symbolic, written and audio codes, and multiple meanings are interpreted by different audiences. An understanding of how selection processes construct meaning, realism and viewpoints in a range of genre is essential in both analysis and production of media works.

Representation

The concept of representation is fundamental to the constructed nature of all media, including fiction, non-fiction and realist forms. Representation includes processes of stereotyping through which oversimplified representations become naturalised, and values become associated with particular issues and cultural groups.

Skills and processes

Production skills, techniques and processes in a range of media forms are integrated with specific technologies for a variety of purposes. Critical skills involving processes of investigation, analysis, interpretation and evaluation, and appropriate media language are used to communicate ideas. Other skills and processes involve carrying out production and investigative processes, fulfilling production responsibilities, following health and safety guidelines and applying technologies in creative and original ways.

Audiences

Audiences are complex groups of people with histories, experiences, attitudes and values which they bring to their understanding of media texts. In learning about how audiences construct meaning, students develop conceptual understandings and skills relevant to:

Readers' social and cultural experiences

Studies of the reader should begin with personal histories and how these help determine the meanings made from media texts. This leads to the development of more detailed audience profiles based on their cultural experiences, and understanding of how the reading situation influences meaning,. These concepts are included in the critical framework for analysing media texts.

Values, attitudes and ideologies

Values underpin all media works, shaping narratives and the selection of codes and conventions. Audiences make meaning from the media according to their own values, attitudes and ideological positions. Knowledge of how values are embedded in particular media forms, styles and content, and recognition of the values held by different audiences, are applied in student media productions.

Sub-cultures

The existence of sub-cultural groups is often overlooked in popular media forms that target mass audiences. An extension of audience studies shows how sub-cultural groups based on ethnicity, lifestyle, religion and/or economic status have different beliefs and values. Understanding how different media forms and media works cater for sub-cultural groups provides scope for experimentation with alternative styles.

Past, present and emerging trends

Engaging with the media of different times develops an understanding of the relationship between media works, audiences and cultural context. Awareness of technologies, styles, narratives, representations and values from the past illustrates the changing nature of the media and of cultural trends, values and audience expectations. Local, national and international media provide services for and impact on, particular communities. Consideration is given to the benefits and potential problems associated with globalisation, including its effects on cultural identity and on remote and indigenous communities.

Production context

Many factors shape the style of production and the media works that are produced. In learning about the production context, students develop conceptual skills and understandings relevant to:

Institutions and independents

Popular culture tends to be the product of large institutions driven by the need to make profits and reach mass audiences. Their organisation is structured toward centralisation and mass production, highly specialised roles, repetitive genre and formats, and intensive marketing strategies. The products of these institutions are compared with those of independent producers whose experimental and avant-garde styles target more specific audiences and sub-cultures.

Media use and target audience

Recognising the various purposes of the media and the ways in which media are used by mass and minority audiences is fundamental to understanding the media industry and its economic power base. Consideration is given to how media use is influenced by demographic patterns, the expectations of producers and audiences, marketing strategies and measures of audience reach. The recognition of entrepreneurial and enterprising opportunities in media production encourages the development of skills in this area.

Cultural contexts

Cultural contexts within which media production takes place are significant in shaping the form and content of media works. Investigation reveals how particular cultural contexts have shaped the media: historical events that shape attitudes and the representation of people and issues; political trends that influence technological development and the style and content of media works; and audiences themselves, whose expectations and values influence production values and decisions.

Controls and constraints

The impact of controls and constraints that influence media production and shape media works must be recognised and the implications considered. There is a wide range of controls and constraints:

Ethical issues and legal implications control and constrain media. Debating the influence and impact of regulatory bodies and pressure groups, forms of censorship and classification, and the consequences of deregulation of the media provides a basis for developing codes of conduct for student productions.

Technologies and factors related to production such as budget, time, resources and audience expectations control and constrain production styles and audience reach.

Economic structures and practices also are factors that control and constrain media. It is important to consider the impact of ethos and objectives, sources of revenue and target audiences on the styles of production for commercial and non-commercial media. A focus on the Australian media and the effect of competition with international media highlights the impact of economic structures and practices on the media.

Ownership, power and politics are all factors that control and constrain media. Understanding constraints imposed by power relationships in student media productions extends to understanding hierarchical power structures within media organisations; the political influence made possible by concentrated media ownership in Australia; government influence; and regulations on foreign and cross-media ownership.

Course units

To cater for the full range of students, six units have been developed to sequence the syllabus content. Stage 1 units enable student achievement at levels 3 to 5; Stage 2 units at levels 4 to 6; and Stage 3 units at levels 6 to 8.

Each of the units is designed around the same essential content areas which increase in complexity from one unit to the next. Each unit allows students to achieve all four of the course outcomes.

Unit 1AMPA

The focus for this unit is **entertainment**. Students view, listen to and analyse relevant media texts as they are introduced to the language of media and how audiences' cultural experiences influence their responses to media. They learn basic production processes and create their own productions.

Unit 1BMPA

The focus for this unit is **infotainment**. A range of non-fiction commercial and non-commercial media styles and genre provide opportunities to examine how reality is dramatised and re-presented whilst engaging and informing audiences. Students create their own non-fiction media works learning about aspects of production.

Unit 2AMPA

The focus for this unit is **popular culture** such as that demonstrated by reality television, popular music clips, tabloid press, interactive forms and animation. Students learn to interpret how codes and conventions are used to create meanings in a variety of ways in different forms of media. They create their own productions as they apply their understanding of media language and work in specific contexts.

Unit 2BMPA

The focus for this unit is **press and broadcasting** in areas such as television, press, radio or photojournalism. Students explore journalistic or documentary forms as they research how cultural groups and issues are represented and reported. They become increasingly aware of production responsibilities and independent as they manipulate technologies to express their ideas in their productions.

Unit 3AMPA

The focus for this unit is **media art forms**. Students develop an understanding of aesthetics by exploring meanings and values depicted in contemporary and traditional media art. They develop competence in expressing their own ideas in creative media art forms by experimenting with production technologies, codes and conventions.

Unit 3BMPA

The focus for this unit is **power and persuasion** in diverse fiction and non-fiction media forms ranging from the seductive nature of popular media forms to propaganda material. Students consider the purposes and values of producers and audiences and examine the role of the media in reflecting, challenging and shaping values, beliefs and ideologies. They create media productions that express their views and show a distinct flair or personal style.

Examination details

External assessment is a requirement for students aspiring to university selection. Students need to complete two units to be eligible to sit the WACE exam.

The total examination length is 3 hours and 10 minutes. This comprises a written paper of 3 hours working time and 10 minutes reading/planning time. Outcomes 1, 3 and 4 are examinable. The examination paper has three sections: Section A (short answer), Section B (pre-production) and Section C (extended responses).