Media

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Study Specifications used in the study?

The Study Specifications are the key concepts, and they provide the structure of the Media study design across Units 1-4. The Study Specifications are also examinable in the written examination for Units 3 and 4. They are on pages 12-16 of the study design. Teachers should unpack the Specifications as an introduction to Units 1-4. Further information about the Study Specifications is in the Learning approaches under Planning in the Support Materials on the VCE Media study design webpage.

#### Can you clarify the terms audience reception, engagement, consumption and reading?

The Study Specifications have a definition of Audience on page 15. Audience reception, engagement and response are described in the context of creation and consumption. Students develop a knowledge of and use media language in discussing the reception, engagement, consumption and reading of media products by audiences.

**Consumption** refers to the ways audiences’ access, experience and use media products. For example, the technologies used to experience media (such as streaming, smartphones and cinema screenings) and the environment that may influence the reception of a media product, such as a cinema or a living room.

**Reception** refers to both the way audiences consume media products and the context of the time and place in which they receive it. The context in which an audience engages with a media product, and their prior experiences and understandings can affect their engagement.

**Reading** is the process by which audiences interpret and make meaning from media products. Media products can be understood in multiple ways depending on the cultural background of an individual, personal experiences, values, and contexts.

**Engagement** refers to how audiences are affected emotionally and cognitively by a media product, and the level of involvement an audience demonstrates when experiencing a media production. Engagement can be influenced by a range of factors, including how an audience reads a media narrative, their prior knowledge and understanding, as well as consumption.

#### Can you clarify how codes and conventions are defined in VCE Media?

The Study specifications on page 13 define media codes as the **technical and symbolic tools** used to construct meaning and media forms and products. Media conventions are **the rules or generally accepted ways of constructing meaning or organising media products**.

There are three listed forms of conventions in the Study specifications. Each of these conventions have a focus across the Areas of Study in Units 1-4.

**Conventions of media forms and products**; the rules and common practices for constructing and organising media forms and products. Students should study the construction of the form, for example the conventions of films, photographic series, newspapers, online journals, YouTube clips, free to air television or streamed programs. Across Units 1 and 2, the Areas of Study focus on a range of media products, so students gain an understanding of a range of Media forms and their conventions.

**Genre conventions:** the rules that define genres are subject to debate and change, revealing cultural assumptions about the significance of media products, audiences, and the media industry. Genre conventions are the specific elements commonly associated with a particular genre, such as recurring characters, storylines, settings, and narrative structures. Often a combination of media codes can become a genre convention when used consistently. Unit 2 Area of Study 2 focuses on the study of genre, narrative, and conventions.

**Narrative conventions**: the rules that apply to the construction of a ‘story’ in a media product. Common narrative structures can include character (often referred to as characterisation), character arcs and three act structures (opening, development, and resolution). Other narrative conventions can include cause and effect, point of view, multiple storylines, setting and structuring of time.

Unit 3 Area of Study 1 focuses specifically on narrative conventions and how a story and meaning in a Media form is constructed as ‘codes and narrative conventions’ are listed in the Key knowledge and Key skills. Unit 3 Area of Study 2 also lists ‘narrative conventions’ in both Outcome 2 and the Key knowledge and Key skills.

#### What is the difference between genre and style in VCE Media?

Generally, the term ‘genre’ refers to the classification of media products based on shared characteristics or conventions. However, an understanding of genre goes beyond the categorisation of narratives and students should understand how genres are subject to debate and change. (Unit 2 Area of Study 1, page 22)

The key examples of genre in media products include horror, science fiction, comedy, and drama. However, the concept of genre is fluid and genres can often overlap and evolve over time. Genres typically contain subgenres. Genres can also combine to form hybrids of a genre. It is important that students can identify the characteristics of a range of genres and understand the conventions specific to these genres.

Style refers to the distinctive way media creators use codes and conventions to create a media product. Style also can include the application of media codes and conventions, including the application of conventions distinct to a media form or product, genre conventions or narrative conventions.

Across Units 1-4 of VCE Media genre and style are referred to as individual concepts. Unit 2 Area of Study 2 is focused upon narrative, genre and style and Unit 3 Area of Study 2 and 3, genre and style are included in the Key Knowledge and Skills.

#### What is the difference between Media contexts, factors and constraints in VCE Media?

A definition of Media contexts is listed in the Study specifications on page 13. Media contexts refer to the societal context in which media products are produced and read. The factors that can be examined include social, cultural, historical, economic, and political influences that may influence production and audience readings. This is not a definitive list and there are additional factors that could be considered that may influence production and audience reading. The concept of ‘period’ or ‘time’ is embedded in these factors to help students understand both the production and reading of media products.

In essence, factors can act as a constraint, influence practices and are embedded in a context, however, often factors are listed as constraints or practices in the different Areas of Study of VCE Media. The understanding of these different concepts is dependent on the focus in the Area of Study. For example:

* in Unit 1 Area of Study 1 students study the construction of media representations in different periods of time, locations and contexts
* in Unit 1 Area of Study 3 students study the cultural, institutional, economic, social and political constraints as there is a focus on Australian fictional and non-fictional narratives
* in Unit 2 Areas of Study 1 and 2 students build on their knowledge from Unit 1 by studying historical and cultural contexts of narratives
* in Unit 2 Area of Study 3 students study the social, cultural and economic practices as the Area of Study focuses on the use of media technologies by media creators and audiences.
* in Unit 3 Area of Study 1 specific contexts that students should study are listed such as social, cultural, institutional, historical, and economic and political contexts. In this Area of Study, the concept of ‘time’ and ‘location’ is embedded in these contexts.

#### Can students study more than one narrative in Unit 3 Area of Study 1?

The Unit 3 Area of Study 1 states that students must examine one fictional or non-fictional narrative in the form of film and/or television and/or radio and/or audio product (that may be broadcast or streamed) and or photographic products (VCE Media Study design page 26). However, to meet the requirements of the outcome students can analyse the construction of media narratives and the contexts in which they are produced. Therefore, they may select more than one media narrative to cover the key knowledge and skills of Unit 3 Outcome 1.

#### What are some examples of evidence, arguments and ideas that students can use to discuss audience agency in Unit 4 Area of Study 2?

When selecting evidence, arguments, ideas and issues and audience agency, teachers should consider how these concepts align with the contemporary media landscape, the media and audiences. Ideas are generally broad and consider how media products are produced, distributed, received and read. Arguments are positions that support ideas. Evidence can be empirical evidence such as formal academic research studies and papers, communication theories or models that explain aspects of the nature of communication and the relationship between the media and audiences, or more informal evidence such as opinion pieces or editorials.

#### Do students have to study media regulation, ethical and legal issues in the media using only examples from Australia?

The Key knowledge and skills for Unit 4 Outcome 2 state the students must study ethical and legal issues in the media and how the media is used by globalised media institutions, governments and individuals. They are required to explain and discuss regulation of the media in Australia. Teachers can combine the two areas when teaching Outcome 2.