

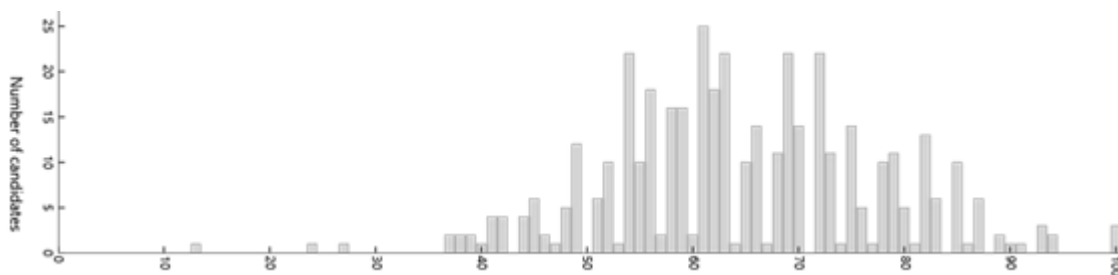


Summary report of the 2024 ATAR course examination report: Media Production and Analysis

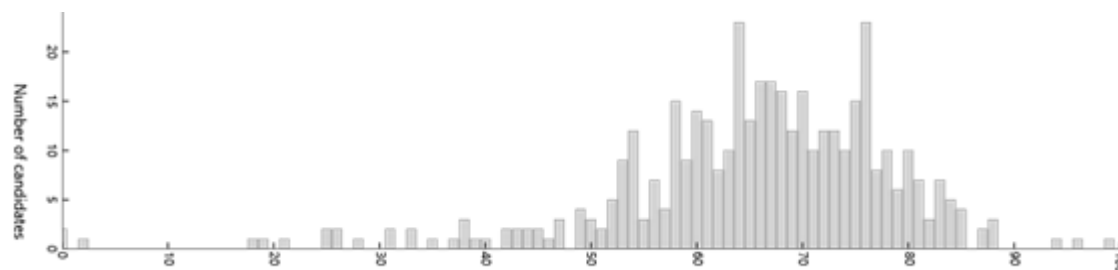
Year	Number who sat all examination components	Number of absentees from all examination components
2024	418	3
2023	416	1
2022	395	8
2021	508	4

The number of candidates sitting and the number attempting each section of the examination can differ as a result of non-attempts across sections of the examination.

Examination score distribution–Practical



Examination score distribution–Written



Summary

Overall, the standard of productions has improved. Some films featured outstanding cinematography, editing, and occasionally sound design, all of which supported their narratives effectively. Most candidates used the full five minutes available. Many also employed voice-over to ensure their themes were clearly understood and their narratives were effective. Most candidates effectively used the *Practical production statement* two-page limit to articulate how they attempted to convey the theme in their films. This year, there were films with more carefully constructed narratives that effectively addressed a theme within a genre or style. Most candidates demonstrated a solid understanding of theme as an underlying topic for their films. The use of AI-generated statements was noticeable; however, they did not benefit the candidates' work, as they were often not relevant to the production.

Although there were fewer documentaries, there was a notable willingness to explore various documentary sub-genres and modes beyond the expository. However, many persuasive documentaries relied heavily on pre-existing archival footage filmed on phones, which often impacted on the candidates' cinematography scores. There were limited

attempts to create B-roll or recreations, thus not effectively employing techniques to support themes. Some candidates prioritised technical roles such as cinematography, art direction, and editing, while neglecting other crucial aspects of the production process. A balanced approach is essential, as several films with strong technical elements were undermined by a disjointed narrative or an inadequate understanding of style and genre. At the highest level, candidates were producing professional-grade productions that demonstrated consistent quality in style, genre, film language, and technical execution—including cinematography, editing, art direction and sound design. These films were often underpinned by mature and sophisticated thematic intent, indicating a thoughtful approach to pre-production and scriptwriting. There was an increase in high-quality animation submissions this year.

The range of topics explored, from personal growth and grieving to pressing social issues such as domestic violence and environmental concerns, reflects a deep engagement with contemporary themes. This diversity demonstrates an awareness of societal issues as well as personal themes, enriching the media productions with meaningful content. Grief and mental health were prevalent themes, though many representations were generic and sometimes stereotypical, often conveying themes at a basic level.

In the written examination, questions in Section One and Two covered a broad range of syllabus content, particularly in the extended response section. Most candidates attempted all questions in Section One, though some found it difficult with questions, such as synthesising others' work with their own productions, indicating a potential area for improvement. The examination assessed candidates' understanding of various media production and analysis concepts, revealing performance discrepancies. Some candidates were well-prepared for specific questions; however, demonstrated gaps in other areas. Candidates generally preferred questions unrelated to distribution and censorship. While comprehension was generally good, synthesis of the question statement and evaluation remain key areas for improvement.

The paper effectively discriminated between candidates with detailed knowledge of a specific media text and those with deeper insights into media concepts, awarding higher marks to the latter. In Section One, candidates generally demonstrated a solid understanding of key concepts. However, some answers lacked depth due to misinterpretation of broad questions or vague specificity when providing textual evidence. Questions introducing new thematic linkages, such as Question 1, proved more challenging. In Section two, candidates provided prepared essays, often neglecting the specifics of each dot point. This was evident when dot points were addressed in isolation, leading to fragmented or disjointed answers. It appeared that some candidates ran out of time during the 'evaluate' portion of the extended answer section. Overall, while comprehension was strong, synthesising question statements throughout answers could be further developed.

Practical examination

Attempted by 418 candidates	Mean 64.65%	Max 100.00%	Min 12.76%
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Section means were:

Section One: Themes	Mean 62.20%		
Attempted by 418 candidates	Mean 12.44(/20)	Max 20.00	Min 1.33
Section Two: Production Roles	Mean 65.27%		
Attempted by 418 candidates	Mean 52.21(/80)	Max 80.00	Min 11.43

- Emphasise the significance of mise-en-scene to the students and illustrate its impact through the analysis of studied films.
- Ensure students have a comprehensive understanding of how to use production equipment in relation to the theme, style, and genre of their production.

Written examination

Advice for candidates

- Answer the questions posed.
- Use media language.
- Address each dot point in Section Two of the examination.
- Understand all key syllabus dot points.
- Combine syllabus dot points to deepen your media understanding.
- Engage with past examination papers.
- Practise both short and extended answers.
- Understand the context in which media works are constructed.
- Understand the context of a production.

Advice for teachers

- Ensure students are immersed in close readings of specific media extracts or scenes to enhance depth and specificity in answers.
- Cover all the unit content in the syllabus and relate the content to real media works.
- Practise past examination papers so that students understand how to unpack and answer questions in the examination.
- Model relevant examples and answers for students to use in examinations.
- Provide production contexts to students.
- Steer candidates away from rote learnt answers and provide critical literacy frameworks.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Practical examination

Section One: Themes (15 Marks)

Many candidates were unable to provide a clear theme. This resulted in the clarity of complex themes and clarity within the production being weak. Many productions delved into the psychological thriller genre with candidates struggling to articulate a purpose or audience as distinct from explaining the theme itself.

Section Two: Production Roles (28 Marks)

Criterion 4: Role 1

Attempted by 418 candidates	Mean 5.41(/8)	Max 8	Min 1
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Criterion 5: Role 2

Attempted by 418 candidates	Mean 5.20(/8)	Max 8	Min 1
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Criterion 6: Role 3

Attempted by 418 candidates	Mean 3.96(/6)	Max 6	Min 1
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Criterion 7: Role 4

Attempted by 418 candidates	Mean 3.71(/6)	Max 6	Min 1
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The results indicate that candidates were appropriately nominating their roles based on their perceived strengths. Please note that for the analysis of Section 2: Production Roles, an overview of how candidates approached each of the four production roles will be discussed due to candidates selecting one of four roles for each criterion, with two as primary and two as secondary roles.

The most commonly selected role for Role 1 was Art direction, reflecting increased understanding and confidence in this area. This trend indicated higher standards in location selection, set design, costuming, and casting. Some candidates demonstrated exceptional attention to detail, enhancing visual and thematic coherence. However, 'incidental' art direction was still evident in lower-quality films, where candidates filmed in their homes without deliberate set dressing or mise-en-scene, often using whatever costumes the actors had available.

The role of Cinematography (most commonly chosen as Role 2) proved to be stronger amongst candidates as they excelled in cinematography, showcasing strong film grammar, movement control and composition. Some candidates struggled with advanced DSLRs or 4K/6K cameras, producing flat and noisy footage due to improper settings. Drones enhanced visual scope, while phone footage, especially from iPhones, was clean and sharp. Many candidates included irrelevant shots that did not support the narrative or theme. Issues with focus and framing were common, indicating a need for better understanding of exposure, focus locking, and the use of tripods.

The role of Editor demonstrated an improved use of techniques like match cuts, graphic matches, and thoughtful colour grading. Titles were often enhanced with After Effects. However, variation of pace remains underused, and jump cuts were frequently used to shorten long takes instead of creating narrative distance. Documentary creators often lacked B-roll to disguise jump cuts, reflecting a reliance on social media content over professional productions. Few psychological thrillers used editing for suspense, but some horror films effectively employed jump scares. Most candidates used Premiere Pro, with fewer using Final Cut Pro and more using Da Vinci Resolve. Some candidates used After Effects for motion tracking titles. Animation producers frequently used Blender and Procreate.

In Sound design, many candidates were creating their own scores, with stronger candidates producing complex sound scapes to support their production. However, many productions typically featured minimal foley work, leading to sparse diegetic sound. Wind interference in audio suggests poor recording techniques or neglect in post-production. Many films lacked dialogue or natural sound, relying on online sound effects. This bypasses a crucial filmmaking component. Audio levels were often inconsistent, with volume peaks and drops. Candidates should ensure even audio levels, record background sounds to avoid sharp cuts, and address sound during cross-fades. Heavy reliance on voice-over narration instead of visual storytelling often resulted in disconnected footage that does not support the narrative effectively.

Written examination

Section One: Short answer (22 Marks)

The quality of responses varied, with notable differences in how candidates approached and completed specific questions. While candidates made appropriate observations, their evidence was often undermined by overusing general examples from feature films.

Section Two: Extended answer (40 Marks)

Overall, the examination effectively discriminated candidate abilities across a range of media studies topics. Candidates were unprepared in many questions of the Extended answer section.