

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Media Studies 2024

Performance standard 93303

General commentary

The 2024 questions and quotes offered plenty of opportunities for candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of the relationship between media and wider society, their media production experience, and the close reading of media texts. Successful Scholarship candidates interrogated the quotation prompts clearly and thoughtfully, focusing their argument on all aspects of the quotations. They provided relevant arguments / analysis and consistently integrated both historical and contemporary issues and events into their responses. These candidates often provided a range of perspectives across all three questions. Unsuccessful candidates generally offered generic or unconvincing responses, often relying on factually inaccurate evidence, or failing to substantiate their arguments with appropriate media examples. Weaker responses were often either pre-prepared using past examination material, or were more suited for Level 3 assessments, such as genre studies or media representations, rather than the Scholarship level.

Candidates aiming for Media Studies Scholarship should undertake a comprehensive course of study that includes an understanding of media industries and practical media production experience.

The most popular options chosen by candidates for Question One: The relationship(s) between media and society, were quotation 2: “The biggest problem in movies [or other media industries] is too many formulas. There is a lack of originality, and that’s why the industry isn’t performing”, and quotation 3: “A healthy democracy relies on the ability of experienced journalists to decipher, in depth, the state of our country, our identity, and to hold power to account”. While quotation 4: “Artists always get [exploited], no matter what time period or technology is prevalent”, was the least popular. Candidates who selected this, in general, addressed the prompt effectively with well supported arguments.

Successful responses to Question One typically demonstrated a thorough understanding of the relationship between a media industry and wider society. For instance, successful responses to quotation 2 focused on specific mediums like movies or streaming platforms and critically analysed both parts of the quote (e.g. “... too many formulas ...” and “... lack of originality ...”). On the other hand, candidates responding to quotation 1: “I feel that AI can still be a very powerful tool for us ... But we have to view it as a tool. The person who wields it still has to maintain responsibility for wielding that tool” sometimes strayed into non-media industries, such as commerce, or focused disproportionately on one part of the quotation while neglecting the other. Those addressing quotation 4 often provided compelling analyses of the exploitation of artists across various media.

For Question Two: Media production, quotation 1: “Film-making [or other media] is not about the tiny details. It’s about the big picture”, was the most popular, followed evenly by quotation 2: “Forget the audience, make what you want to see”, and quotation 3: “The most personal is the most creative”. Successful candidates balanced their responses by addressing the quotation prompt, while critically reflecting on their production experiences. They linked their creative decisions to broader influences and demonstrated how these choices impacted the outcome, using evidence from their production

journeys. Many strong responses also referenced other film-makers or media creators to contextualise their reflections.

Quotation 2 prompted some thoughtful arguments about the importance of audience engagement in media production. However, weaker responses often focused excessively on pre-production, production, and post-production processes, particularly when addressing quotation 1, without critically analysing the broader implications of these details. Additionally, some candidates referenced non-media texts, such as drama or literary works, which fell outside the scope of the question.

Successful candidates described their intended audience and evaluated how their design and production choices catered to this audience. They also effectively linked their experiences to external influences. Less successful responses lacked specific references to audience considerations or their production experiences and failed to provide insights into the success or challenges of their projects.

For Question Three: The close reading of media texts, quotation 2: “Cinema [or other media] is not only about making people dream. It’s about changing things and making people think” was the most popular choice, followed evenly by quotation 3: “My job is not to give you all the answers. My job is to ask the questions”, and quotation 4: “Whatever your style or subject matter, in the end, film-making [or other media] is about searching for authenticity – that is what the audience will divine”. Candidates who chose quotation 2 were most successful when they addressed both parts of the quote. Many candidates forced their knowledge of specific genres or directors into their responses, without fully addressing the quote’s key ideas. Similarly, responses to quotation 1: “There is a different kind of vulnerability when a woman is directing”, often focused on stereotypical representations of women in genre films by male directors, but did not adequately explore how female directors challenged these norms.

Case studies on specific directors or genres were a common feature of successful responses. For example, candidates who analysed Taylor Sheridan’s (quotation 3), or Paul Greengrass’s (quotation 4) works offered compelling insights into how these directors engage with societal issues. Greta Gerwig’s films were also a popular choice, with candidates providing thoughtful discussions on female media producers. Film noir and the works of Jordan Peele were other frequent case study topics, though some candidates failed to connect these effectively to the specifics of the question, often offering genre overviews or film summaries instead.

As in previous years, some candidates discussed non-media texts, such as literary works, which fall outside the scope of the question. Successful responses addressed the entire quotation, linked films to societal developments, and used detailed evidence and multiple perspectives to support their arguments. Weaker responses, however, tended to lack theoretical or academic grounding, relying on general awareness rather than specific study.

Across all three questions, a strong understanding of media industries and practical production experience is essential. Candidates are advised to:

- address all aspects of the chosen quotation, avoiding partial or surface-level responses
- provide a balance of historical and contemporary examples to support their arguments
- reflect critically on their media production processes, linking creative decisions to broader influences and evaluating their outcomes
- avoid relying on pre-prepared material or referencing non-media texts
- prepare to approach the statements with a range of perspectives, supported by in-depth studies of media texts and contexts.

Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- provided well-considered, thoughtful analyses with considerable insight and / or originality, including multiple viewpoints and cultural considerations where appropriate
- developed a clear, convincing argument that addressed the whole quotation
- demonstrated a strong understanding of historical context and societal links and could make connections between the past and current trends / events / developments
- unpacked the quotation and argued from a range of positions
- demonstrated originality and flexibility of thought with considerable understanding of ambiguity and subtlety in their argument
- applied their considerable subject knowledge in a convincing argument
- wove media theory and critical perspectives in their argument in a convincing and knowledgeable manner, by choosing relevant theorists, and framing their approaches in a clear and appropriate way
- stated personal opinions appropriately and questioned both historical and contemporary decisions and trends
- synthesised critical understanding of their production experience with realistic and convincing reference and comparison to other media creators and / or texts.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- responded effectively to the whole quotation and developed an argument using their subject knowledge
- included well-considered analysis with some insight
- used evidence from a range of sources in support of their argument
- demonstrated some understanding of ambiguity and subtlety in their argument
- demonstrated an understanding of historical context and / or societal links, in relation to the quotation, and how it fitted within the context of the question (going beyond giving an historical summary, by offering thoughtful reasons for specific developments)
- showed broad and / or deep subject knowledge through their argument
- used media theory where appropriate
- analysed their media production experience with reference to those of other film-makers or media creators
- made insightful connections to media producers and products to support their critical reflections on their production experiences where relevant
- made well-considered and effective choices when writing about the representation of particular groups in media texts.

Candidates who were **not awarded Scholarship** commonly:

- did not adequately address the whole quotation in a convincing way
- developed simplistic arguments
- applied pre-learned answers that were not reflective of the quotations chosen
- made claims without clear supporting evidence
- used inappropriate or insufficient evidence
- did not attempt or complete all three essays
- argued from one narrow point of view
- responded to only one text in Question Three
- described or summarised their production experience with limited analysis or reflection.