

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Media Studies 2025

Performance standard 93303

General commentary

The 2025 quotations / statements presented candidates with a range of opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and comprehension of the interconnected relationship(s) between media and wider society, their practical media production experience, and their skill in the close reading of media texts.

Successful candidates exhibited the ability to clearly and systematically interrogate their selected quotation / statement, ensuring their arguments addressed all components consistently. They provided relevant arguments and insightful analysis, consistently integrating both historical and contemporary issues and events into their responses where necessary. These higher achieving candidates offered a range of perspectives across all three questions.

Conversely, less successful candidates generally delivered generic, brief, and unpersuasive responses. They often relied on factually inaccurate evidence or provided limited supporting analysis of specific media texts to illustrate their points, while not directly addressing their chosen quotation / statement. These responses often appeared to be pre-prepared, sometimes utilising quotes or keywords from previous years' examination materials, or other sources.

Achieving success in the Scholarship examination is contingent upon possessing a sound knowledge and understanding of a media industry coupled with practical production experience. Candidates optimally positioned to succeed had undertaken dedicated study of a media industry, processed extensive knowledge concerning the conventions of media texts, and critically reflected on their own production experience.

For **Question One: The relationship(s) between media and society**, quotation 1: "Old media is now scared stiff. They finally have figured out that they must adapt – or die" (Ted Gioia) and statement 4: 'Social media services are now the shapers of mainstream culture', were selected the most, with over two-thirds of candidates selecting one of these options. Overall, these quotations / statements elicited the best responses, with candidates demonstrating insight, addressing the entirety of the question, and using detailed evidence to support their arguments. However, there were also a significant number of Below Scholarship responses among these popular selections, which lacked a framework of theoretical or academic context. This suggested the candidates' understanding was based on general awareness rather than specific scholarly study.

Candidates who selected quotation 1 often struggled to construct a response convincing enough for Scholarship due to not fully grasping the concept of 'old media', or failing to clearly articulate the specific ways media industries or mediums might adapt or face decline. Conversely, those candidates who had prepared thoroughly performed well using quotation 1 for Question One, regularly achieving Outstanding Scholarships.

Candidates who selected quotation 3: "AI will reshape industries; it will not end industries" (Nathaniel Whittemore) often opted to argue against its premise, asserting that Artificial Intelligence (AI) would lead to the demise of industries. This opposition was supported by no evidence or by evidence that actually showed the industry was adapting, such as generating revenue from licensing AI-produced

media content. Unfortunately, a high proportion of these candidates did not differentiate between the inherent integrity or appeal of human artistry, and the commercial opportunities presented by access to AI technology.

For **Question Two: Media production**, the selection of quotations / statements was more evenly distributed, with quotation 2: “‘Make me care’ – please, emotionally, intellectually, aesthetically, just make me care” (Andrew Stanton) the most popular choice, followed closely by quotation 3: “With every film that I am doing, I am learning new things either about myself, or about film-making” (Sanya Malhotra). These two quotations / statements yielded higher quality responses, with over half of the candidates who selected them achieving Scholarship or a higher grade. A consistent characteristic of these successful responses was the level of detail provided by candidates, alongside clear justifications for their creative and practical production decisions.

Quotation 1: “... knowing and understanding genre conventions informs my decisions ... and whether to conform to or subvert genre expectations” (Raelke Grimmer) and quotation 4: “Part of film-making is always a guessing game, and part of it is always a game of trust” (Greg Kinnear) were the least popular selections and consequently registered the lowest percentage of Scholarships awarded. Candidates who did select these statements struggled to engage convincingly. Instead, they often defaulted to simply describing a range of conventions they incorporated into their productions but did not justify the necessity or impact of these choices. In some instances, candidates merely described the process of planning and production without making any explicit link or reference to genre conventions.

More generally, successful candidates described the intended audience for their product and were able to discuss how design and production choices were specifically implemented to appeal to that audience. Crucially, they also offered a critical evaluation of the outcome of those choices. These higher level responses also included references to influences, model texts, or producers, and were able to convincingly connect the candidates own production experiences to these model texts. Less successful responses either made non-specific or no reference to an audience or, in some cases, omitted the candidates own production experience entirely. Furthermore, they tended to lack insight into the factors that contributed to the outcome of their production experiences, in terms of either completion or audience appeal.

For **Question Three: The close reading of media texts**, all candidates utilised film and television texts in their responses. Popular genres continued to include film noir, slasher films, and dystopian narratives, as well as the cinematic works of Jordan Peele. While these genres and film texts facilitated some successful case studies, candidates did not adequately engage with the specifics of the question. They often reverted to providing broad genre overviews or simple summaries of key films, offering only tenuous connections to wider society and the production/release context of the texts.

Quotation 4: “Film-making [or other media productions] is a way of understanding the world” (Alice Rohrwacher) was the dominant choice, selected by more than half of all candidates. Successful candidates who chose this quotation structured their responses with a clear thesis and effectively integrated theory, critical perspectives, and an extensive knowledge of media text conventions. A secure understanding of the context of media production was also evident in their responses.

Conversely, less successful candidate responses displayed limited knowledge of media texts and their conventions, sometimes based on a single text, or a disparate range of texts that lacked a clear or convincing thematic connection. These responses tended to be more descriptive than analytical, often presenting sequential summaries of texts with only brief, token references to the quotation at the start or conclusion.

Quotation 1: “My films have often looked at the whole dilemma of identity as a straitjacket for people ...” (Todd Haynes) was the least selected option. However, those candidates who did select it were evidently well-prepared and successfully achieved Scholarship grades. These strong responses focused on the representation of traditionally marginalised and stereotyped groups. They discussed the impact generated by an increasing number of films that narrate stories from and about these communities in a more sympathetic and authentic way.

Overall, most quotations / statements were sufficiently broad to allow candidates to approach them from diverse perspectives. Unfortunately, many candidates were equipped with only a limited range of texts and scenarios, occasionally resorting to using outliers or extreme examples, which were often cherry-picked to support their particular argument. Responses relying on this approach were generally unconvincing.

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 / statement
- 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 / statement and argued from a range of positions and perspectives
- 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 / statement 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 / statement, 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 / statement in a convincing way
- struggled to discuss a medium or media industry in Question One
- summarised their planning and production in Question Two, without critically reflecting on what they had learned during these processes
- developed simplistic arguments
- did not provide sufficient evidence
- applied pre-learned answers that were not reflective of the quotations / statements 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.