

Media Units 3 & 4

Chapter 4 — Research, development and experimentation

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Chapter 4 Research, development and experimentation — 4A Developing and researching production ideas

Theory

In Topic 1 you learned to *analyse* finished media narratives. Chapter 4 opens the second half of the course, where you move to the other side of the camera: **researching and developing a media production of your own**. This is the start of Unit 3 Area of Study 2, and the study design introduces it with a statement worth learning almost word for word: “Media creators and producers frequently reference ideas and techniques that have been developed by others. Collecting, acknowledging and building upon ideas, structures, aesthetics and techniques informs the direction of media productions and an understanding of how audiences are engaged.” Two pieces of key knowledge sit directly under that statement, and they are the whole of this subtopic: **methods for developing ideas for a media production**, and **research on a media form and products to inform a production**.

This is a practical, portfolio-building area of study — the work you do here feeds your School-assessed Task research folder. But the workbook is exam preparation, and the exam tests these skills **in writing**. In 2025 the paper’s whole middle block (Questions 4–7, under the *Media production* banner) was a linked chain built on a single client stimulus: develop an idea into four boxes, describe a skill experiment, explain the narrative and how it meets the client’s intention, and discuss how feedback would be gathered in post-production and used to refine the product. The 2024 paper set the same kind of work from a provided intention-and-audience extract — outline two connected moments of a proposed narrative, then apply a code or convention to it — and the official sample paper asked for a **statement of intention** and a **statement of audience** for an idea developed from a boxed shire-campaign brief. So every idea-development and research skill below is taught the way the assessors ask for it: as a **written answer with a specific, documentable result**, not a vague description of “the creative process”.

Developing ideas — methods, not magic. The first key-knowledge dot is *methods* for developing ideas. A method is only useful if it leaves a **record you can point to**: “I thought about it” is not a method, but a dated page of twenty brainstormed premises is. The study design prescribes no set list — its dot reads simply *methods for developing ideas for a media production* — but five methods are in wide use, and you should be able to define each, say what it produces, and give a concrete example of using it.

- **Brainstorming** — generating many ideas quickly *without judging them yet*, usually as a list or a spray of words around a starting word. Its product is the list. From the starting word “distance” a brainstorm might throw up: a long-distance friendship, a runner training alone, a phone call that keeps dropping out, a family moving away, a returned soldier. One of those becomes a premise.
- **Mind-mapping** — organising ideas *around a central concept*, with branches and sub-branches that show how the parts relate. Its product is the map. A mind-map centred on “isolation” might branch into *setting* (an empty schoolyard), *character* (a new student), *codes* (wide shots, cold colour), and *sound* (an echoing bell) — showing at a glance how the idea could be built.
- **Mood board** — a collage of reference images, colours, typography and textures (and sometimes sound cues) that fixes the intended **look and feel** — the *style* — of a proposed product before a word of script is written. Its product is the board. A mood board for a sun-bleached rural short might gather ochre landscape photographs, a harsh midday-sun palette, a weathered serif typeface and images of empty highways.
- **Production journal** (also called a director’s journal or research log) — an ongoing, **dated** record of ideas, research findings, sketches and decisions kept across the whole project. Its product is the journal itself, which shows how an idea *developed* over time. Professional directors and documentary makers routinely keep such notebooks.
- **Brief** — a short statement of what a product must achieve, for whom, and within what constraints. A brief may be set by a client or written by the producer, and it is the **anchor** every idea must answer to. Working *from* a brief is itself an idea-development method, because the constraints focus the invention.

Working from a brief — answer the intention, not the plan. Client-style briefs are the exam’s favourite production stimulus, so read them carefully. Every brief contains two anchors: an **intention** (what the client wants to *achieve*) and an **audience** (who it is *for*). Your job is to invent a media product that serves that intention for that audience. The most costly error in this whole topic — the one the 2025 report listed first against Question 4 — is to make a product that

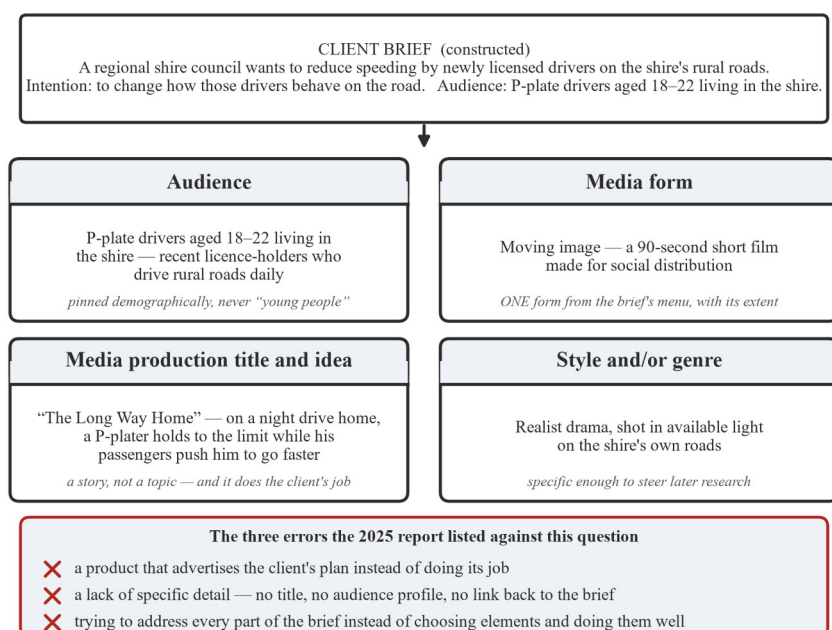
advertises the client's plan itself instead of fulfilling its purpose. If a broadcaster's brief is to engage young viewers, the answer is a *drama that engages young viewers*, not an *advertisement announcing the broadcaster's new strategy*. Read for the intention; respond with a product, not a promo for the plan.

The four-box outline (the 2025 format). In 2025 VCAA introduced a new answer format for the develop-an-idea question: four labelled boxes to be filled in. Learn them, because they are now a standing fixture:

Box	What it must contain
Audience	The target audience, pinned <i>demographically</i> : age band, life-stage, location and/or interest — “P-plate drivers aged 18–22 in the shire”, never “young people” or “everyone”.
Media form	ONE form chosen from the menu the brief provides — moving image, still image, audio, print, digital (or convergent) — named precisely, with a rough duration or extent (a 90-second short film; an eight-page zine).
Media production title and idea	A working title and a one-sentence idea that is a <i>story or product</i> , not a topic — and that answers the brief's intention.
Style and/or genre	The style and/or genre that will steer later research and planning — realist drama, observational documentary, true-crime, comedy, and so on.

The 2025 report listed three common errors on this question: **products that advertise the client's plan** rather than doing its job; **a lack of specific detail** about the title, the audience profile or the links back to the client's brief; and **trying to address every part of the brief** instead of choosing specific elements and addressing them well. Its high-scoring answers did the opposite — a precise form (“a six-episode podcast series”), a specific style or genre (“a narrative documentary with interview segments”), a demographically defined audience (“Australian 16–25 year olds interested in climate activism”) and explicit links to particular elements of the brief. A strong outline is specific in every box, picks its target rather than covering everything, and is unmistakably a *product that does the client's job*. The figure below works the format from a constructed client brief, at the level of specificity those high-scoring answers reached, and lists the three errors underneath.

The four-box outline: the 2025 answer format, filled specifically



Researching a media form and products to inform a production. The second key-knowledge dot is research that *informs* a production. Unit 3 Outcome 2 spells out what to research: “aspects of a media form, codes, narrative

conventions, style, genre, story and plot to inform the plan for a media production.” Two kinds of research sit inside that:

- Researching a **form** means learning the conventions, workflows and audience expectations of the form you have chosen — how a podcast episode is structured and narrated, how a photo-essay sequences its frames, how a short film establishes its world in the first minute.
- Researching **products** means **deconstructing specific existing products** in that form to see *how* experienced makers achieved effects you might use.

The crucial difference from Topic 1 is the **goal**. In Chapter 1 you deconstructed a product to *analyse* it; here you deconstruct it to **adopt and build upon** it. So when you research a product for your own production, record three things: the **specific technique** (a named code choice at a named moment — a low-angle shot, a hard cut, a sudden silence), the **effect** it creates for the audience, and **how you could adapt it** to your own idea. Keep the media language precise: name the actual code — camera, editing, sound, mise en scene, acting, lighting, typography, colour, visual composition — rather than writing “it looked good”.

Acknowledging and building upon influences. The study design frames influence as normal and legitimate: producers *collect, acknowledge and build upon* the ideas and techniques of others. Referencing an existing product’s technique is not plagiarism when you **transform** it into your own work and **acknowledge** it. Acknowledging means documenting, in your research folder, *which* product influenced you, *which* technique you took, and *what* you did with it. Copying a product wholesale, or passing off another maker’s work as your own, is a different thing — that is why VCE productions must be authenticated as the student’s own work, and why copyright and honest acknowledgement matter. Acknowledgement is both good practice and a required discipline.

From research to direction — the statement of intention. The study design says this research “contributes to the direction of their production planning”. The bridge from a folder of research into planning is a **statement of intention**: a short statement of *what* you intend to make, *why*, *for whom*, and *in what form and style* — shaped by what your research showed actually works for that audience in that form. A statement of intention that is grounded in research (“because my research showed that true-crime listeners expect a strong host narrator, I will...”) is far stronger than one asserted from nowhere. The statement of intention is the doorway into Chapter 5 (pre-production planning).

Two methods for the exam items. For a **develop-and-outline** item: (1) read the brief for its *intention* and *audience*; (2) choose ONE form from the menu; (3) invent a one-sentence idea and a working title that serve the intention; (4) fill each box specifically, pinning the audience demographically. For an **explain-your-research** item: (1) name the form and one existing product you would research; (2) name a *specific* technique in it and the effect it creates; (3) state what you would adopt and how it shapes your production and intention. In both, the assessors reward the same thing they reward everywhere else on this paper — **specifics**: a named technique from a named product, a demographically pinned audience, a one-sentence idea with cause and effect — never generalities.

Contemporary example — Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC), March 2025

The Australian International Documentary Conference is an annual industry market in Melbourne for documentary and factual screen content. AIDC 2025 ran 2–5 March 2025 at ACMI, and its centrepiece pitching event, the tenth FACTory International Pitching Showcase, selected 15 projects from ten nations to pitch to commissioning editors, broadcasters, streamers, sales agents, distributors, funders and festivals. The projects were presented across three strands — Central Showcase, New Talent Showcase and Rough Cut Showcase — with the Rough Cut session held at ACMI on 3 March 2025 and the Central and New Talent sessions at The Edge, Fed Square, on 4 March 2025.

This is the **development stage** carried out in public, and what a pitch must convey is what the four-box outline asks you for: an **audience** defined tightly enough to be recognised, ONE **media form** named with its extent, a working **title** and a one-sentence **idea**, and a **style and/or genre**. What a pitching market adds to that outline is a decision-maker with an **intention** of their own, so the idea must be shown to *do a job* rather than describe the maker’s plan — and it must be grounded in **research on the form and on existing products**, which is precisely what turns a claim into a **statement of intention**. The product itself was not finished; the idea was the thing being tested.

Source: Australian International Documentary Conference, “AIDC Reveals 15 Projects Selected for 10th Anniversary FACTory International Pitching Showcase”, 15 January 2025 — <https://www.aidc.com.au/aidc-reveals-15-projects-selected-for-10th-anniversary-factory-international-pitching-showcase/>. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Develop one idea for a media production in response to the Tarrawonga Shire Council brief below. Outline your idea using the boxes provided. (4 marks)

Brief. Tarrawonga Shire Council is concerned about the number of young drivers involved in crashes on the shire's rural roads. It wants to commission one short media product that will encourage safer driving among local young people. The product will be shown at the local cinema, on the council's social media and in secondary schools. Choose ONE media form: moving image · audio · print · digital.

This is the shape of the 2025 Q4 proforma item. The four boxes are **Audience**, **Media form**, **Media production title and idea**, and **Style and/or genre**. The table fills one box at a time.

Working	Comment
Audience: newly licensed drivers aged 18–22 who live in and around the Tarrawonga shire and drive regularly on country roads.	Step 1 — pin the audience <i>demographically</i> (age band, life-stage, location). “A lack of specific details about the ... audience profile” was one of the errors the 2025 report listed; its high-scoring example was “Australian 16–25 year olds interested in climate activism”.
Media form: moving image — a 90-second short film.	Choose ONE form from the menu and name it precisely, with a rough duration.
Media production title and idea: <i>The Long Way Home</i> — a P-plater takes a familiar back road too fast at night, has a heart-stopping near-miss with a stray animal, and realises how little control they really had.	Give a working title and a one-sentence idea that is a <i>story</i> , with a cause and an effect. It responds to the council's intention (safer driving) rather than advertising the campaign itself.
Style and/or genre: realist drama with a tense, suspenseful tone.	Name a style and/or genre so the later research and planning have a direction.
<i>Check:</i> every box is specific, and the product <i>does the council's job</i> — a short drama that makes an audience feel the danger, not an advertisement announcing that “the council has a road-safety campaign”.	Two of the errors the 2025 report listed — unspecific boxes and a product that advertises the plan — are avoided here; so is the third, because the idea targets one behaviour instead of covering everything the council does.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Explain how you would use two idea-development methods — a **brainstorm** and a **mood board** — to develop an idea for a short film about a small rural town. Use a concrete example. (4 marks)

This example shows the methods as **documentable processes** with real outputs, not as vague “thinking”.

Working	Comment
First, I would brainstorm around the starting word “town”: on one page I would quickly list every angle without judging any — the last shop closing, a football club folding, a returning local, a heatwave, a grandparent's empty house, the night the highway bypass opened.	A brainstorm's product is the list . Naming the starting word and several concrete branches shows a real, recorded process.
From that list I would select the most promising premise — <i>the night the highway bypass opened</i> — as the seed of the film.	Show the method leading to a decision , not just a spray of words; that is how a method “develops” an idea.
Next, I would build a mood board to fix the film's look: I would gather photographs of a sun-bleached main street, a harsh ochre-and-grey colour palette, a	A mood board's product is the board . Concrete inclusions (images, a named palette, a typeface) make it documentable and tie it to media codes — colour, mise

Working	Comment
weathered hand-painted shop sign, and a wide, empty horizon.	en scene, typography.
The board would settle a bleak, faded style before scripting, giving every later choice — locations, colour grade, sound — something concrete to match.	Close by stating what the method <i>produced</i> for the production: a fixed style that directs later planning.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Describe how you would research one existing product in the thriller form to inform a short thriller of your own, and how you would acknowledge that influence. (4 marks)

To inform a tense short thriller, I would deconstruct the shower sequence in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), a widely studied example of thriller editing. I would record the specific technique — the scene is built from many very short shots cut rapidly together, so that violence is *implied* by the montage rather than shown directly — and the effect it creates: a burst of shock and disorientation that is far more disturbing than a single continuous shot would be. From that, I would adopt the technique of **fast, fragmented cutting** at the climax of my own thriller, cutting between a character’s face, running feet and a slamming door to build panic without graphic content. I would **acknowledge** the influence in my research journal, noting that the editing of my climax was informed by the *Psycho* shower sequence and explaining how I adapted it to my own story — this is building on another maker’s technique honestly, not copying it. *Takeaway*: research-for-production records a *named technique*, its *effect*, and *what you would adopt*, and acknowledges the source rather than hiding it.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Explain how researching a media form and existing products in that form would inform a proposed audio production, and how that research would shape your statement of intention. (7 marks)

Suppose I am proposing a four-part **podcast** that tells the history of a local river and the community along it, for local residents aged over 30 who are interested in their district’s past. Before writing a word, I would research the **form** — the conventions of the serialised narrative podcast — and one existing **product** in it, and let both steer my plan.

Researching the form, I would establish how narrative podcasts are typically built: a strong host-narrator who guides the listener, an episode structure that ends on an unresolved question to pull the audience into the next instalment, and layered sound design — interview audio, archival recordings and atmospheric sound — rather than pictures. These are the conventions my audience will expect, so knowing them tells me what my own episodes must do.

Researching a product, I would deconstruct *S-Town* (2017), a serialised investigative podcast built as seven “chapters” by the makers of *This American Life*. The specific technique I would record is its **chaptered, novelistic structure**, in which each episode is shaped like a chapter of a book and ends by opening a new question. The effect is that listeners binge the series as they would read a novel. What I would **adopt** is that chaptered shape: I would structure my four episodes so each closes on a genuine question about the river’s past, and I would acknowledge *S-Town* as the influence in my research folder.

This research then **shapes my statement of intention**. Because the form research showed that my audience expects a guiding host and rich sound, and the product research showed the pulling power of a chaptered structure, my statement of intention becomes precise: *I intend to produce a four-part narrative podcast, hosted and narrated by me, that tells the history of the local river for residents over 30 interested in the district’s past; each chapter will close on an unresolved question and use interview and archival audio to immerse the listener*. Every clause of that intention is grounded in something the research showed. *Takeaway*: an “explain your research” answer names the form’s conventions and a specific technique from a specific product, says what it would adopt, and shows the research *feeding* a concrete statement of intention.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

- Q1.** Define each of the following idea-development methods: (a) brainstorming; (b) mind-mapping; (c) mood board; (d) production journal; (e) brief.
- Q2.** The 2025 exam introduced a four-box format for outlining a production idea. (a) Name the four boxes. (b) State how the audience box should be filled in, and give one example of a well-specified audience. (c) Explain why the “idea” box should contain a one-sentence idea and a working title rather than a full synopsis.
- Q3.** Researching a media form and products can inform a production. (a) Define what it means to “research a media form and products to inform a production”. (b) List four things Unit 3 Outcome 2 says you can research about a form to inform a plan. (c) Explain the difference between researching a *form* and researching a *product*.
- Q4.** Client-style briefs are the exam’s most common production stimulus. (a) Name the two anchors every brief contains, and state what each one tells the producer. (b) State what it means to “respond to a brief’s intention”. (c) Classify each response below as **responding to the intention** or **advertising the plan**, for a brief whose intention is to encourage recycling among households: (i) a short drama in which a family’s careless waste comes back to affect them; (ii) an advertisement announcing that “the council has launched a new recycling program”; (iii) a photo-series showing what one street’s waste looks like over a week; (iv) a poster that simply lists the dates of the council’s recycling campaign.
- Q5.** Producers build on the work of others. (a) State what “acknowledging an influence” means in media production. (b) Explain why building on another maker’s techniques is legitimate practice, and when it is not. (c) Give one way a student would document an acknowledged influence in a research folder.
- Q6.** A reliable method for a develop-and-outline item is: read the brief for its intention and audience → choose one form → invent a one-sentence idea and working title → fill each box specifically. (a) List, in order, the four steps of this method. (b) For a brief of your choice, complete the first two steps. (c) Complete the last two steps for the same brief.

Unscaffolded

Use the information provided below to answer Questions 7–9.

Brief. StreamCo, a streaming service, has issued a call for short dramas that will attract more teenage subscribers. It is looking for “authentic Australian stories that reflect the lives of young people today”. The commissioned product will sit in StreamCo’s “New Voices” collection alongside other short dramas. Choose ONE media form: moving image · audio · digital.

- Q7.** Develop one idea for a media production in response to the StreamCo brief. Outline your idea using the four boxes (Audience; Media form; Media production title and idea; Style and/or genre). (4 marks)
- Q8.** Explain how researching the conventions of your chosen media form would inform the production you outlined in Question 7. (6 marks)
- Q9.** Describe how you would use mind-mapping to develop the idea you outlined in Question 7. (3 marks)
- Q10.** (*Stimulus.*) A student made the research notes below while preparing a short thriller.

Research notes. “I watched some thrillers on the weekend. They were pretty scary and had good music. The endings were surprising. I want mine to be scary too. I will make it good and interesting for everyone.”

Discuss two ways these research notes could be improved so that they would better inform a production. (4 marks)

- Q11.** Describe how a production journal can be used to develop and record production ideas over the course of a project. (3 marks)
- Q12.** Explain the difference between brainstorming and mind-mapping as idea-development methods, and how each produces a usable record. (4 marks)

Q13. A producer may deconstruct the same media product for two quite different reasons: to analyse how it makes meaning for its audience, or to find a technique they can build upon in a production of their own. Explain how that difference in purpose changes the way the producer works with the product. (5 marks)

Q14. (Stimulus.) Read the brief below.

Brief. Ridgeline Community Radio wants to strengthen connections between older and younger residents in its listening area. It has funding for one new audio series or segment that “brings the generations into the same conversation”. The product will be broadcast on the station and offered as a podcast.

Develop one idea for an audio production in response to the brief and outline it using the four boxes. (4 marks)

Q15. Describe what a media producer should record when researching a media form and an existing product so that the research is useful for planning. (3 marks)

Q16. Discuss why collecting, acknowledging and building upon the ideas and techniques of other media makers is an accepted and important part of media production. (4 marks)

Q17. Describe how you would turn research on a media form and existing products into a clear statement of intention for a proposed production. (4 marks)

Q18. (Stimulus.) Read the brief below.

Brief. The Northgate Regional Gallery is opening an exhibition on the district’s local history. It wants to commission one short media product that will draw people under 25 into the exhibition and its stories. The product will be shared on the gallery’s social media and shown on screens in the gallery. Choose ONE media form: moving image · digital · print.

Develop one idea for a media production in response to the brief, and explain how research on the media form and existing products would shape your production and its statement of intention. (8 marks)

Q19. (Stimulus.) At the FACTory International Pitching Showcase, part of the Australian International Documentary Conference held at ACMI in Melbourne from 2 to 5 March 2025, 15 documentary and factual projects from ten nations were pitched to commissioning editors, broadcasters, streamers, distributors and funders.

Analyse what a pitch of this kind requires of a production idea, referring to the four-box outline and to the role of research in developing an idea. (5 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) Generating many ideas quickly without judging them, usually as a list/word-spray. (b) Organising ideas around a central concept with branches showing relationships. (c) A collage of reference images, colours, typography and textures that fixes the look/feel (style). (d) A dated ongoing record of ideas, research and decisions kept across a project. (e) A short statement of what a product must achieve, for whom, within what constraints.

Q2. (a) Audience; Media form; Media production title and idea; Style and/or genre. (b) Pinned demographically — age band, life-stage, location and/or interest; e.g. “P-plate drivers aged 18–22 in the shire”. (c) The box asks for a workable seed to plan from, not the finished product; a working title plus a one-sentence story-idea (with cause and effect) is enough to direct research, and a full synopsis is neither asked for nor markable in the space.

Q3. (a) Investigating the conventions of a form and deconstructing existing products in it, in order to *adopt and build upon* techniques for your own production. (b) Any four of: aspects of the media form, codes, narrative conventions, style, genre, story, plot. (c) Researching a *form* = learning its conventions, workflows and audience expectations; researching a *product* = deconstructing a specific existing example to see how a technique was achieved.

Q4. (a) The **intention** (what the client wants to achieve) and the **audience** (who the product is for); the intention tells the producer what the product must *do*, the audience tells them *who* it must work for. (b) Inventing a product that fulfils what the client wants to *achieve* for the stated audience. (c) (i) responding to the intention; (ii) advertising the plan; (iii) responding to the intention; (iv) advertising the plan.

Q5. (a) Documenting which product/technique influenced you and what you did with it. (b) Legitimate when you *transform* the technique into your own work and acknowledge it; not legitimate when you copy a product wholesale or pass off another’s work as your own. (c) A dated journal/folder entry naming the product, the technique borrowed, and how it was adapted.

Q6. (a) 1 read the brief for intention + audience; 2 choose one form; 3 invent a one-sentence idea + working title; 4 fill each box specifically. (b)–(c) Any brief, correctly worked (see solution for a model).

Q7. Develop/Outline (4). Four specific boxes: audience pinned demographically (e.g. Australian 15–18-year-olds); one form from the menu; a working title + one-sentence *story* idea that answers the “authentic teen story” intention; a style/genre. Must NOT be an advertisement for StreamCo.

Q8. Explain (6). Name the chosen form’s conventions (structure, codes, audience expectations) → how knowing each convention shapes a specific choice in *this* production → an audience-engagement link. A how/why chain tied to the Q7 idea, not a generic list.

Q9. Describe (3). A central concept named; two or three branches (e.g. character / setting / codes / sound) showing relationships; a statement of what the map produces for the idea.

Q10. Discuss (4). Two of: name a *specific* product (not “some thrillers”); record a *specific technique* at a named moment and its effect; link it to what you would *adopt* in your own production; pin a *specific* audience (not “everyone”). Develop each improvement.

Q11. Describe (3). Dated entries across the project; records ideas, research, sketches and decisions; shows how the idea *developed* over time (an account, not a how/why chain).

Q12. Explain (4). Brainstorm = unjudged generation, product is a list; mind-map = organised around a centre with branches showing relationships, product is a map. Distinguish purpose and output for each.

Q13. Explain (5). Name the two purposes (analysis: how does this make meaning? / production: what could I use?) → analysis reads the product as a whole system and stops at the effect, production isolates one transferable technique → the finding becomes an argument in one case and a production decision in the other → production must also transform and acknowledge what it takes. A how/why chain, not two definitions.

Q14. Develop/Outline (4). Audio form; audience pinned (must genuinely span generations — e.g. paired older + younger listeners); a working title + one-sentence idea that *connects generations* (not a product about “the station’s new initiative”); a style/genre (e.g. interview/oral-history).

Q15. Describe (3). For a form: its conventions/workflows/audience expectations; for a product: the specific technique (named code at a named moment), its effect, and how it could be adapted. Record media language precisely.

Q16. Discuss (4). Media practice openly references others (SD: collect, acknowledge, build upon); building on techniques advances the form and engages audiences; it is legitimate when transformed and acknowledged, distinct from copying/plagiarism. Reach a position.

Q17. Describe (4). Gather form + product research → distil what works for the audience → write a statement of what/why/for whom/in what form and style, each clause grounded in a research finding.

Q18. Develop + Explain (8). A specific four-part outline answering the “draw under-25s into local history” intention (not an ad for the gallery/exhibition) **and** an explanation of how form + product research would shape the production and a grounded statement of intention. See Fully-worked solutions for a full model with band descriptors and common errors.

Q19. Analyse (5). Break the pitch into its parts: a tightly defined **audience**; ONE **media form** named with its extent; a working **title** and a one-sentence **idea** that is a story or product, not a topic; a **style and/or genre** — the four boxes, under commercial pressure. Then the two things a market adds: the idea must answer the **decision-maker’s intention** (do a job) rather than describe the maker’s plan, and it must be backed by **research on the form and on existing products**, which is what makes a **statement of intention** grounded rather than asserted. Show the parts working together; do not retell the event.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) Brainstorming is generating **many ideas quickly without judging them**, usually as a list or a spray of words around a starting word; its product is the list. (b) **Mind-mapping** is organising ideas **around a central concept**, with branches and sub-branches that show how the parts relate; its product is the map. (c) A **mood board** is a **collage of reference images, colours, typography and textures** (and sometimes sound cues) that fixes the intended look and feel — the **style** — of a proposed product; its product is the board. (d) A **production journal** is a **dated, ongoing record** of ideas, research findings, sketches and decisions kept across a project; its product is the journal, which shows how an idea developed. (e) A **brief** is a **short statement of what a product must achieve, for whom, and within what constraints**, set by a client or written by the producer.

Q2. “Name” and “state” are teaching cues; give the terms and the rule. (a) The four boxes are **Audience, Media form, Media production title and idea, and Style and/or genre**. (b) The audience box must be pinned **demographically** — age band, life-stage, location and/or interest — for example **“P-plate drivers aged 18–22 living in the shire”** rather than “young people” or “everyone”. (c) The box asks for a **workable seed to plan from**, not a finished product: a **working title** plus a **one-sentence idea** (a story with a cause and effect) gives later research a clear direction and fits the space, whereas a full synopsis is neither asked for nor markable there. *Marker’s note:* “a lack of specific details about the title, audience profile or links to the plan” was one of the three common errors the 2025 report listed on this question — an **unspecific box** costs marks even when the idea behind it is sound.

Q3. (a) It means **investigating the conventions of a chosen media form and deconstructing existing products in that form** so that you can **adopt and build upon** techniques in your own production — research whose purpose is to *inform* planning, not to analyse for its own sake. (b) Unit 3 Outcome 2 lists **aspects of the media form, codes, narrative conventions, style, genre, story and plot** (any four). (c) Researching a **form** means learning its **conventions, workflows and audience expectations** (how a podcast episode is structured, how a photo-essay orders its frames); researching a **product** means **deconstructing a specific existing example** to see *how* a technique was achieved so you might use it yourself. *Marker’s note:* the exam rewards the production goal — “what can I adopt?” — not a Topic-1-style analysis.

Q4. (a) Every brief rests on two anchors: an **intention** — what the client wants to **achieve** — and an **audience** — who the product is **for**. The intention tells the producer what the product must *do* (encourage a behaviour, draw a group in, tell a particular story); the audience tells them *who* it must reach, and therefore which form, style and codes are likely to work. Everything else in a brief — budget, duration, where it will be shown — is a constraint on how those two anchors are met. (b) To **respond to a brief’s intention** is to invent a media product that **fulfils what the client wants to achieve** for the stated audience — the product *does the job*, rather than announcing that the job exists. (c) (i)

responding to the intention — a drama that makes an audience feel the consequences encourages the behaviour the brief wants; (ii) **advertising the plan** — it promotes the *program's existence* rather than changing behaviour; (iii) **responding to the intention** — a photo-series that makes waste visible serves the recycling aim; (iv) **advertising the plan** — a poster of campaign dates promotes the campaign, not the behaviour. *Marker's note:* this is the 2025 report's first-listed Question 4 error in miniature — a product *about the client's plan* misreads the brief; a product that *does the client's job* answers it.

Q5. (a) **Acknowledging an influence** means **documenting which existing product or maker influenced you, which technique you took, and what you did with it** — naming your sources rather than hiding them. (b) Building on another maker's techniques is **legitimate** because media practice openly references and develops earlier work: it is honest when you **transform** the technique into your own product and **acknowledge** it. It is **not** legitimate when you **copy a product wholesale** or **pass off another maker's work as your own** — that is plagiarism, and VCE productions must be authenticated as the student's own. (c) A **dated entry** in the research journal/folder that **names the product, states the technique borrowed, and explains how it was adapted**. *Marker's note:* "building upon" is the SD's own language — influence acknowledged and transformed is expected, not penalised.

Q6. (a) The four steps: **1** read the brief for its **intention and audience**; **2** choose **one form** from the menu; **3** invent a **one-sentence idea and working title** that serve the intention; **4** **fill each box specifically**, pinning the audience demographically. (b)–(c) *Model (brief: a library wants to encourage reading among primary-school children):* **Step 1** — intention: get young children excited about books; audience: local children aged 6–9 and their families. **Step 2** — form: a series of six 15-second animated clips (moving image) for the library's social media. **Step 3** — idea and title: *The Book That Ate My Homework* — a bored child opens a library book and is pulled into its story-world. **Step 4** — Audience: children aged 6–9 in the local area and their parents; Media form: six 15-second animations; Title and idea: as above; Style/genre: bright, playful comic fantasy. *Marker's note:* the steps must connect — a common error is to jump to a form and title without reading the brief's intention, so the idea drifts off-brief.

Q7. *Command term — develop/outline: generate an idea and set out its main features in the boxes. Model outline:*

Box	Response
Audience	Australian teenagers aged 15–18, especially those in outer-suburban and regional areas, who watch short drama on their phones.
Media form	Moving image — a 10-minute short drama.
Media production title and idea	<i>Last Train</i> — after missing the last train home from the city, two classmates who barely know each other spend a night walking back and, over the hours, admit the pressures each is hiding.
Style and/or genre	Naturalistic coming-of-age drama, handheld and dialogue-led.

The idea answers StreamCo's stated intention — an *authentic Australian story about young people today* — with a genuine drama, **not** a promotional clip for StreamCo. *Marker's note:* two of the errors listed in the 2025 report bite directly here — an **unspecific audience** ("teens") and a product that **advertises the platform** instead of being the drama.

Q8. *Command term — explain: make clear, as a how/why chain, tying each convention to a choice.* Researching the conventions of the **short drama** form would inform *Last Train* at several points. First, short-drama convention is to **establish character and conflict fast**, because a 10-minute product cannot build slowly; knowing this, I would open on the missed train and the two characters already stranded, rather than spend minutes on set-up — this keeps my teenage audience, used to quick openings, engaged from the first shot. Second, naturalistic teen drama typically uses **handheld camera and available light** to feel authentic; researching that convention tells me to shoot my night-walk handheld rather than on a locked-off tripod, so the style matches the "authentic" story StreamCo asked for. Third, the form relies on **dialogue and performance** more than spectacle; knowing this, I would put my research and rehearsal into the two actors and their exchanges, because that is where this form engages its audience. In each case, knowing a convention of the form turns into a **specific production choice** aimed at the target audience. *Marker's note:* six marks

need the chain completed to an **audience-engagement** effect for each convention, not a bare list of “short films are fast”.

Q9. Command term — describe: give an account of the method. To develop *Last Train*, I would draw a **mind-map** with the idea at the centre and branches for its main parts. One branch, *characters*, would sub-branch into the two classmates and the pressures each hides; a second branch, *setting*, into the stations, empty streets and a 24-hour servo they pass; a third branch, *codes*, into handheld camera, warm streetlight and low, ambient sound; a fourth, *turning points*, into the moment each drops their guard. Laid out this way, the map shows at a glance how character, setting and codes **relate**, and where the drama still needs filling in. *Marker’s note:* describe the map’s **structure and relationships**, not just “I would think about the film”.

Q10. Command term — discuss: develop each improvement, not just name it. **First, the notes name no specific product and no specific technique.** “Some thrillers” with “good music” is not researchable; the student should name **one product** and record a **specific technique at a named moment** — for example, how a particular thriller’s climax cuts rapidly between short shots to build panic — and the **effect** it creates, so there is something concrete to adopt. **Second, the notes never link the research to the student’s own production or audience.** “I want mine to be scary too” and “good and interesting for everyone” state a wish and an **unspecific audience**; the notes should say **what the student would adopt** (the fast cutting, the withheld reveal) *in their own thriller*, and pin a **specific audience** (for example, older teenagers who watch horror). Improved, the notes would name a product, a technique, its effect, the intended adoption and a defined audience. *Marker’s note:* this stimulus carries two of the faults the examiners’ reports return to again and again — **no specific evidence** and a **generic “everyone” audience**.

Q11. Command term — describe: give an account of how the journal is used. A **production journal** is a **dated record kept across the whole project**. Early on, it captures raw ideas, brainstorm pages and research findings; as the project develops, the maker adds sketches, deconstructions of products they have studied, decisions taken and reasons for changing course. Because each entry is dated, the journal shows how a single idea **developed over time** — a premise that began as one thing and shifted as research came in — and it becomes evidence of the maker’s process and of the influences they built on. *Marker’s note:* three marks reward an **account of use across time**; do not turn this into a how/why chain, and do not confuse the journal (a running record) with a one-off mood board.

Q12. Command term — explain: make the distinction clear, with the output of each. **Brainstorming** and **mind-mapping** differ in *purpose* and in *shape*. Brainstorming is about **quantity without judgement**: you generate as many ideas as possible around a starting word and do not evaluate them yet, so its product is an **unsorted list** — a page of possibilities. Mind-mapping is about **organisation**: you place a central concept in the middle and draw **branches and sub-branches** that show how the parts relate, so its product is a **structured map** rather than a flat list. In practice they work in sequence — a brainstorm throws up raw material, and a mind-map then organises the chosen idea into its parts. Each leaves a **usable record**: the brainstorm list to mine for a premise, the map to plan from. *Marker’s note:* the mark is lost if both are described as “writing down ideas” without distinguishing **unjudged generation** from **organised relationships**.

Q13. Command term — explain: make the difference in purpose clear, then follow it through to what actually changes. The close viewing may look identical from the outside, but the **question being asked** is different, and that changes everything after it. Analysing a product, the producer asks *how does this make meaning for its audience?*; the answer stays inside that product. Researching for a production of their own, they ask *what could I use?*; the product becomes a **source**, not a subject.

First, it changes what they look for. Analysing *A Quiet Place* (John Krasinski, 2018), a producer would trace how its **near-silence and precise sound design** work across the whole narrative as a system of meaning. Researching the same film for a documentary of their own, they would set most of it aside and isolate the one **transferable** move: cutting sound away so that a small sound lands enormously.

Second, it changes where the thinking stops. Analysis is finished at the **effect** — the silence forces the audience to lean in. Production research cannot stop there, because a technique is only useful once the producer has decided **what they would adopt** and **how they would adapt it** to a different form and story — here, dropping the music under a key interview so the subject’s quiet admission lands harder. The deconstruction has to end in a **production choice**, not a reading.

Third, it changes what they owe the product. Analysis cites a product as **evidence**; production **builds upon** it, so the technique must be transformed into work of the producer's own and **acknowledged** as an influence. The same film, asked a different question, yields a decision rather than an argument. *Marker's note:* five marks need the difference *worked through to consequences*; naming the two purposes and stopping there — without showing what changes in what the producer looks for and does — stalls at mid-range.

Q14. Command term — develop/outline. Model outline:

Box	Response
Audience	Two paired groups in Ridgeline's listening area — residents over 65 and secondary-school students aged 14–17 — plus a general local audience listening across both.
Media form	Audio — a six-part interview series/segment (broadcast and podcast), about 12 minutes per episode.
Media production title and idea	<i>Then and Now</i> — in each episode an older resident and a teenager interview each other about the same milestone (first job, first friendship, leaving home), and discover how much they share.
Style and/or genre	Warm, conversational oral-history/interview format with light narration linking the exchanges.

The idea **brings the generations into the same conversation** as the brief intends, rather than being a product *about* “the station's new initiative”. *Marker's note:* the audience box must genuinely span both generations; a common error is to pin only one age group, which does not serve the brief's intention.

Q15. Command term — describe: give an account of what to record. When researching a **form**, a producer should record its **conventions, workflows and audience expectations** — how products in the form are typically structured, what codes they rely on, and what the audience expects from them. When researching a **product**, they should record the **specific technique** (a named code choice at a named moment — a low-angle shot, a hard cut, a sudden silence), the **effect** it creates for the audience, and **how it could be adapted** to their own idea. Throughout, the notes should use **precise media language** so the research is usable in planning. *Marker's note:* vague notes (“it was good”) are useless for planning; three marks reward *specific, adaptable* records.

Q16. Command term — discuss: weigh the point and reach a position. Collecting, acknowledging and building upon the ideas and techniques of others is **accepted and important** because media production is, in the study design's words, “an evolving practice” in which creators “frequently reference ideas and techniques that have been developed by others”. Building on established techniques lets a maker **stand on what already works** — proven ways of structuring a story or engaging an audience — and then **develop** them into something of their own, which is how forms and genres advance. It is legitimate **provided the influence is transformed and acknowledged**: naming your sources is honest practice and, in VCE, part of authenticating the work as your own. The line is crossed only when a maker **copies wholesale or passes off another's work as theirs**. On balance, acknowledged influence is not a weakness but a normal engine of media practice. *Marker's note:* reach a **position** (influence, acknowledged and transformed, is legitimate and valuable) rather than only listing pros and cons; the SD's “build upon” language is the key.

Q17. Command term — describe: give an account of the process. To turn research into a **statement of intention**, I would first gather my research on the **form** (its conventions and audience expectations) and on **existing products** (specific techniques and their effects), then **distil what actually works** for my chosen audience in that form. From that, I would write a short statement setting out **what** I intend to make, **why**, **for whom**, and **in what form and style** — with each clause grounded in a research finding rather than asserted. For example: “*Because my research showed that my teenage audience expects fast, handheld, dialogue-led short drama, I intend to produce a 10-minute naturalistic short film about two classmates walking home overnight, to engage Australian 15–18-year-olds with an authentic local story.*” Every part of that intention is traceable to the research. *Marker's note:* the mark is in the **grounding** — a statement of intention that names *what the research showed* is far stronger than one asserted from nowhere.

Q18. Command term — *develop + explain*: generate a specific idea in the boxes **and** make clear, as a reasoned chain, how research would shape the production and its intention.

Model response.

Idea outline.

Box	Response
Audience	People aged 16–24 in the Northgate district — secondary and early-tertiary students who follow short video on social media and have little prior interest in local history.
Media form	Digital — a series of four 60-second vertical videos for the gallery’s social media, also shown on the in-gallery screens.
Media production title and idea	<i>Who Walked Here</i> — each video takes one object from the exhibition and, through a young narrator and archival images, tells the surprising story of the ordinary local person who once owned or used it.
Style and/or genre	Fast, punchy short-form documentary with a personal, first-person voice.

The product **draws under-25s into the exhibition’s stories** — the brief’s intention — rather than being an advertisement announcing that “the gallery has an exhibition”.

How research would shape it. I would research the **form** first: the conventions of **short-form vertical video** — a hook in the first two seconds, on-screen captions for silent viewing, tight pacing and a single idea per clip. Knowing these conventions would shape concrete choices: I would open each video on the object with a provocative question (“Whose shoe was this?”) to win the two-second hook, and caption throughout because my audience often watches without sound. I would then research **existing products** in the form — the kind of history-in-60-seconds accounts that circulate on social platforms — and record their key technique: **anchoring a big historical idea in one small, human object or detail**, which makes distant history feel personal and shareable. I would **adopt** that technique as the spine of my series (one object per video) and **acknowledge** the influence in my research journal.

How research shapes the statement of intention. Because the form research showed that my audience expects a fast hook, silent-friendly captions and one idea per clip, and the product research showed the pulling power of anchoring history in a single object, my statement of intention becomes precise and grounded: *I intend to produce four 60-second vertical documentaries, each built around one object from the exhibition and voiced by a young local narrator, to draw Northgate 16–24-year-olds into the district’s history by making it personal and shareable; each video will hook in its first two seconds and use captions for silent viewing.* Every clause traces back to a research finding.

Band descriptors (out of 8):

- **High (7–8):** every box specific and unmistakably a *product that does the client’s job* (not an advert for the plan); the explanation names **form conventions and a specific product technique**, states what would be **adopted**, and shows the research **feeding a grounded statement of intention**; precise media language throughout.
- **Mid (4–6):** a workable idea and mostly specific boxes; some research named but linkage partly **asserted** rather than shown, or the statement of intention **not clearly grounded** in the research; media language present but uneven.
- **Low (1–3):** boxes **unspecific** or the product **advertises the client’s plan**; research generic (“I would look at other videos”) with no specific technique; no real statement of intention; little media language.

Common errors: a product that **advertises the gallery’s plan** instead of engaging the audience; an “**everyone**” **audience**; research asserted (“I would research the form”) without a **named convention or technique**; a statement of intention **tacked on** rather than grown from the research.

Q19. Command term — analyse: *break the pitch into its parts and show how each part does its work.* A pitch at a market such as the FACTory is a **development-stage** exercise: the product is not finished, so the only things in the room are the idea and the research behind it. Broken into its parts, it asks for exactly what the four-box outline asks for, and then two things more.

First, it requires specificity in every box. A commissioning editor weighing 15 projects cannot act on “a documentary about the environment”. The pitch has to pin an **audience** tightly enough to be recognised, name ONE **media form** with its extent (a feature documentary, a six-part series), give a working **title** and a one-sentence **idea** that is a story with a cause and an effect, and state a **style and/or genre** so the listener can picture the finished product. Unspecific boxes cost a student marks; here they cost the project its hearing.

Second, it requires that the idea answer an intention that is not the maker’s own. A broadcaster, streamer or funder brings its own intention and audience, and the idea must be shown to *do that job* — the same discipline as responding to a client brief. A pitch that describes the maker’s plan, rather than the product that fulfils the intention, fails in the way an answer that advertises the client’s plan fails.

Third, it requires research to carry the weight. Because a pitch must convince rather than merely describe, it arrives with evidence: the conventions of the chosen **form**, specific techniques **deconstructed** from comparable existing **products**, and what those products show about the audience. That evidence is what makes the **statement of intention** grounded — every clause traceable to a research finding — instead of asserted from nowhere. The three parts work together: specificity makes the idea legible, the intention makes it wanted, and the research makes it credible. *Marker’s note:* five marks need the parts **connected**, not a retelling of the event; and the analysis must use this subtopic’s terms — the four boxes, intention, form and product research, statement of intention.

Chapter 4 Research, development and experimentation — 4B Researching codes, conventions and audience engagement

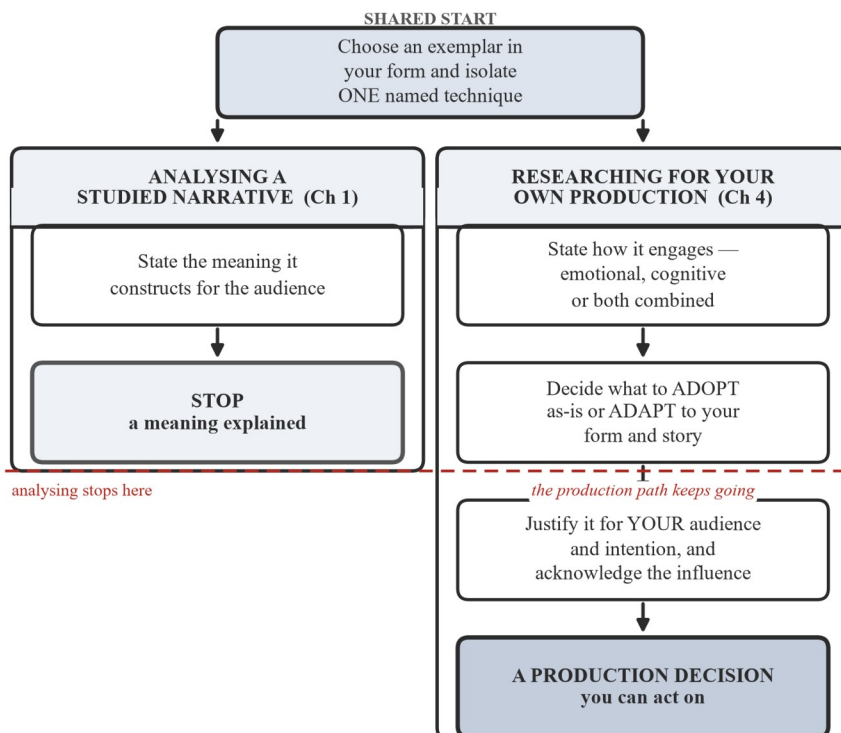
Theory

In Chapter 1 you learned to name **media codes** — the technical and symbolic tools used to construct meaning in media forms and products — and to classify **media conventions**, the rules or generally accepted ways of constructing meaning or organising media products, among them the **narrative conventions**: common narrative structures such as character, character arc, point of view and three-act structure. In Chapter 2 you learned how **audience engagement** works: how audiences are affected emotionally and cognitively by a media product, and you named the **engagement mechanisms** — suspense, identification, curiosity, humour — that particular codes and conventions generate in an audience. This subtopic turns exactly the same lens toward a different question. You are no longer an analyst asking *what does this mean?*; you are a **producer** entering your own production, asking a practical question: **what can I adopt and employ in my own work?** The study design frames Unit 3 Area of Study 2 around this shift — you research **how codes and conventions are used by media producers to convey meaning and engage audiences**, and **how audiences read and are engaged by media codes and narrative conventions**, so that your findings can direct your production choices.

This is not a re-run of Chapter 1. The taxonomies are the same, and you should not re-learn them here. What changes is the **goal**. Reading a studied narrative ends when you have explained a meaning; researching for production ends when you have a **technique you can use**. Every technique you admire in a finished product was once a **choice** a producer made; researching it means reverse-engineering that choice carefully enough that you can make your own version of it. Keep every piece of research **production-framed**: the point is always adoption, never appreciation. The figure below draws the two paths from their shared first step: analysis reaches a meaning and stops, while research for production carries the same deconstruction two moves further, to something you can act on.

Same deconstruction, two destinations

The taxonomies from Chapter 1 do not change here. Where the work stops does.



Research that ends in an explanation has not finished the job.
Keep every deconstruction pointed at your own production.

Analysis: 2 steps to a meaning. Research for production: 4 steps to a decision — the same first step, then two further moves.

The deconstruction-for-adoption method. Researching for production is a disciplined habit, not casual consumption. Work through four steps in order:

1. **Choose an exemplar in your form and isolate one technique.** Pick a real product in the form you intend to produce in, and name a single, specific code-level or convention-level choice at a named moment — not “the sound was good”, but “the layered field recording under the interview in the opening scene”.
2. **Describe how that technique engages its audience.** Say what the audience **reads** or **feels**, and through which channel — **emotional**, **cognitive**, or the two combined. This is the audience side of the study design’s key knowledge: how audiences are engaged by the code or convention.
3. **Decide what you would adopt or adapt.** State the exact technique you will carry into your own production, and whether you will take it as-is (**adopt**) or change it to fit your form and story (**adapt**).
4. **Justify it for your audience and intention.** Explain why the choice will engage *your* — possibly different — target audience and serve *your* stated intention, then record and **acknowledge** the influence.

Applied to a one-line example: (1) in a fiction podcast, the producer frames the story as a series of recorded interviews and lays dense room-tone beneath them; (2) this engages listeners by making the fiction feel like real reportage, inviting them to believe it and to piece the mystery together (cognitive) while the close, intimate voices build unease (emotional); (3) I would adopt the interview-framing device; (4) adapted to a student narrator investigating a local disappearance, because a peer-aged voice will feel authentic to my target audience of 15- to 18-year-olds — a choice I would record in my research log with *the exemplar* acknowledged as the influence.

Research is form-specific. Codes and conventions do their work differently in each media form, so what you research depends on what you plan to make. A podcast has no camera; a photographic series has no editing pace or diegetic sound; a printed zine has paper stock a screen can never have; a game can hand the audience the controls. Because the study design lets students produce in any of the listed forms, your research must target the **engagement levers** your form actually offers — the specific codes and conventions through which that form, and not another, can generate an engagement mechanism. The table below sets out the signature levers of each form and what your research should look for — deliberately weighted toward the non-film forms you are as likely to produce in as film.

Media form	Signature engagement levers	What your research targets
Audio (podcast, radio drama)	sound design, layered field recording, voice/vocal performance, silence, music, framing devices (interview, testimony, host address)	how sound alone builds place, character and suspense; how a framing convention structures the listen
Photographic series	composition, lighting/contrast, sequencing and juxtaposition, the image–caption convention	how order and framing make the viewer assemble meaning across frames rather than from one image
Print / zine	paper stock, typography, layout and visual composition, colour, image selection	how the physical page and its typography signal tone and value to a reader before a word is read
Short-form digital video	the opening hook, fast editing (jump cuts), on-screen text/captions, vertical framing, the loop	how a producer captures and holds a scrolling viewer in the first two or three seconds
Video game / interactive	game mechanics, sound and reactive/adaptive music, visual and audio feedback, level and checkpoint conventions	how interactivity and responsive feedback engage a player who is also acting on the product
Moving image (film / TV)	camera, acting, mise en scene, editing, lighting, sound; three-act and scene conventions	how several codes combine across a sequence — often the richest source of techniques to adapt to other forms

Research the audience side, not just the technique. The second half of the key knowledge asks **how audiences read and are engaged** by codes and conventions. A technique is only worth adopting if you can say what it *does to an audience*, so every deconstruction must reach the audience effect — the read, the feeling, the thinking — before you decide to borrow it. This matters most when your audience differs from the exemplar’s. A suspense device built for

adult thriller fans may need adapting before it engages a younger audience; a comic device pitched at children may fall flat with adults. Researching *how* an exemplar engages *its* audience is what lets you translate the technique for *yours*.

Document research so it feeds planning. Research that lives only in your memory cannot direct a production. The study design expects research to be **collected, acknowledged and built upon**, so record it in a form your planning can use:

- an **annotated technique table** — three columns: the *technique observed* (code/convention + the named moment), *how it engages the audience*, and *what I will adopt or adapt*;
- an **annotated timeline** — for time-based forms, a description of where in a product a technique appears and what it does at that point;
- **influence acknowledgement** — a note of which product and practitioner shaped each choice.

A worked line of such a table reads: *technique* — the reactive music in a comedy game that races when the player causes chaos and falls silent when they hide; *how it engages* — rewards mischief and makes the player feel their own actions drive the fun (emotional delight fused with the cognitive pleasure of planning a prank); *what I will adopt* — a musical sting tied to my player’s successful actions, adapted to short mobile levels. Notice that the note isolates a **specific** technique, states the **audience effect**, and ends with an **actionable** choice — which is exactly what a vague note (“the game was fun, I want mine to be fun”) can never do. A note that cannot be turned into a production decision has not finished the job.

Influence acknowledgement is professional practice, not a confession. Media creators, the study design notes, “frequently reference ideas and techniques that have been developed by others”. **Building upon** existing work is normal and expected; what distinguishes legitimate practice from copying is that you **acknowledge** your influences and **adapt** rather than reproduce them. Recording that a framing device came from a particular podcast, or a contrast style from a particular photographer, keeps your own work honest and original — and makes your research portfolio a credible account of how your ideas developed.

The exam shape. A recurring exam task (the 2024 Q5b shape) gives you a short **statement of intention** and **statement of audience** for a proposed production, and asks you to **identify** a code or convention you would employ and **describe** how it applies to the chosen **form** and why it would **appeal to that target audience**. The marks live in the last part: the appeal must be tied to the **specific** audience in the extract, in the **specific** form named — a generic answer, or one pitched at the wrong audience, is the classic error. Practise deriving a single, well-justified choice from a stated intention and audience.

The method restated. For any research-for-adoption task, work in order: **isolate** a specific technique in an exemplar of your form; state **how it engages** that audience; decide what to **adopt or adapt**; and **justify** it for your own audience and intention, acknowledging the influence. Keep every claim anchored to a named code or convention at a named moment, and keep the whole exercise pointed at your own production.

Contemporary example — Australian Children’s Television Foundation, September 2024

The Australian Children’s Television Foundation (ACTF) is a national children’s screen content organisation based in Melbourne, established in 1982. In **September 2024** it published *Australian Children’s Streaming Video Platform Habits, Fluencies and Literacies*, a report by researchers at Swinburne University of Technology and RMIT University. In the study, 37 children aged seven to nine browsed streaming platforms on a tablet at a Swinburne lab — roughly ten minutes alone, then roughly ten minutes with a parent — while researchers screen-recorded every selection and then interviewed the children about the choices they had made.

The findings are audience-side research of exactly the kind this subtopic asks for. The children chose largely from **thumbnails and cover artwork** and from algorithmically generated rows such as ‘continue watching’ and ‘more like this’; searching and scrolling were used in roughly equal measure. Around 17 per cent selected Australian content unprompted when browsing alone, and several did not recognise Australian programs they already watched — *Little Lunch* and *The InBESTigators* among them — as Australian.

For a producer, that is a documented account of how a defined **target audience** reads and is engaged by the conventions of a platform: the **engagement lever** here is not the program’s own codes but the cover image and the recommendation row that decide whether it is ever opened. Research at that specificity ends in an **actionable** choice — design the artwork for the browse screen — rather than an impression.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Deconstruct one media code in an exemplar audio product and explain what you would adopt from it for your own proposed audio production and why it would engage your target audience. Refer to *Limetown* (2015). (5 marks)

This is the full deconstruction-for-adoption method applied to an audio exemplar. The table builds the response one sentence at a time.

Working	Comment
The exemplar I researched is the fiction podcast <i>Limetown</i> (Two-Up Productions, 2015); the code I will deconstruct is sound . My proposed production is a six-part mystery audio drama for Australian 15- to 18-year-old podcast listeners.	Step 1. Name the exemplar, the specific code, and pin your own production and its precise audience — not “young people”.
<i>Limetown</i> frames its story as a radio journalist’s investigation, layering interview recordings, archival-style clips and dense field sound — room tone, distant voices — beneath the host’s narration.	Step 2. Isolate the specific technique (the interview-framing convention plus layered field sound), not “the sound was good”.
This construction engages listeners by making the fiction feel like real reportage: the documentary texture invites them to believe it and to piece the mystery together (cognitive engagement), while the close, intimate voices build unease (emotional engagement).	Step 3. Say HOW it engages, naming the audience read and the channel — the audience side of the key knowledge.
I would adopt the interview-framing convention and the layered field sound, but adapt them: my narrator will be a student podcaster investigating a disappearance at a local school, because a peer-aged voice will feel authentic to my 15- to 18-year-old audience and sustain the same believe-and-solve engagement.	Step 4. State the adopt AND the adapt, justified by YOUR specific audience — this is research feeding planning, not admiration.
I would record this in my research log, acknowledging <i>Limetown</i> as the influence on my framing device and noting the adaptation, so my work is built upon it rather than copied.	Documentation and influence acknowledgement (SD: collect, acknowledge and build upon) keep the research usable and the work original.

Example 2 — scaffolded

A student is planning the print production below. Identify one media code or convention you would employ, and describe how it applies to the print form and why it would appeal to the target audience. (4 marks)

Stimulus. Statement of intention: ‘to celebrate the second-hand and hand-made culture of my neighbourhood and encourage young people to repair rather than throw things away.’ Statement of audience: ‘environmentally minded 16- to 22-year-olds in inner-city Melbourne who value craft, thrift and authenticity.’

This is the 2024 Q5b exam shape: derive one well-justified code or convention from a stated intention and audience. The table builds the response part by part.

Working	Comment
I would employ the code of paper stock , choosing an	Identify one code or convention and name it plainly;

Working	Comment
uncoated, recycled matte stock for the zine.	paper stock is a code unique to the print form.
Paper stock is the physical material of a print product — its weight, texture and finish. A rough, recycled matte stock printed in one or two colours would give the zine a tactile, hand-made feel that a glossy magazine cannot.	Describe how the code applies in the print form specifically — the exam asks you to reference the form.
This would appeal to the environmentally minded, craft-valuing 16- to 22-year-old audience because the recycled, unpolished stock embodies the thrift-and-repair values named in the intention: the medium itself signals authenticity to readers who distrust glossy, mass-produced media.	Tie the appeal to the specific audience in the extract — the marks live here; a wrong or generic audience is the classic error.
The choice therefore serves the stated intention — the form reinforces the message that worn, reused things have value.	Close the loop to the intention: a production choice must be justified, not decorative.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Describe how one convention in an exemplar photographic series engages its audience, and state what you would adopt from it for your own photographic series. Refer to *The Americans* (Robert Frank, 1958). (4 marks)

In *The Americans* (Robert Frank, 1958), the key convention is **sequencing** — the deliberate order and juxtaposition of the eighty-three black-and-white photographs across the book. Frank arranges the images so that one frame comments on the next: a picture of a flag strung above a crowd sits near images of solitary, overlooked figures, so the pairing does work that neither photograph does alone. This sequencing engages the viewer **cognitively**: the reader assembles a cumulative portrait from the relationships between frames, becoming an active editor of the story rather than a passive looker. For my own photographic series about city commuters, I would **adopt** this juxtaposition convention — ordering my frames so that a crowded platform is followed by a single isolated face — so my audience reads a theme of loneliness-in-crowds from the **sequence**, not from any one image. *Takeaway*: to research a photographic series for adoption, name the convention (sequencing/juxtaposition), say how it makes the viewer work, and state the exact ordering you will borrow.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Analyse how the producers of an exemplar use media codes and conventions to engage their audience, and explain what you would adopt and adapt for your own proposed production and its target audience. Refer to *Untitled Goose Game* (2019). (7 marks)

In *Untitled Goose Game* (House House, 2019), the Melbourne studio engages players through the interaction of **game mechanics** (a convention of the form), **sound** and **reactive music**. The core mechanic is deliberately simple — you control a goose whose main actions are to honk and to grab things — and the sandbox convention of an open village lets players cause mischief in any order they like. Over the top, the producers lay a **reactive score**: piano phrases that spark up and race whenever the goose causes chaos and fall silent the moment it hides. Because the audio responds to the player's own actions, mechanic and sound work **together** to engage the player emotionally (mischievous delight) and cognitively (planning each prank like a small puzzle). Crucially, the comedy is **emergent** — generated by the player rather than scripted — which is what makes the engagement feel personal.

For my own proposed production, a short comedic mobile game for casual players aged 10 to 14, I would **adopt** the reactive-audio convention, tying a musical sting to each successful action so the game rewards mischief with sound. I would **adapt** the sandbox structure to my audience and platform: because mobile sessions are short and often interrupted, I would keep each level small and quickly winnable, preserving the emergent-comedy feel inside a tighter frame that suits younger players on a phone. I would document this in a technique table and acknowledge *Untitled Goose Game* as the influence on the reactive-audio choice. *Takeaway*: a strong 'analyse for adoption' answer shows how several codes and conventions work together to engage the audience, then states a specific, audience-justified adoption and adaptation — not a wish to 'make it fun'.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

- Q1.** Define each of the following terms: (a) researching codes and conventions “for adoption”; (b) an engagement mechanism; (c) influence acknowledgement.
- Q2.** The deconstruction-for-adoption method has four steps. (a) List, in order, the four steps of the method. (b) Name one media form you might produce in, and an exemplar product in that form you could research. (c) For that exemplar, complete the first two steps (isolate one technique; state how it engages its audience).
- Q3.** Research findings must be documented so they can feed production planning. (a) Name two ways of documenting research findings. (b) State the three columns a useful annotated technique table would contain. (c) Explain why a note such as “the sound was good” cannot feed planning.
- Q4.** This subtopic uses the same codes and conventions as Chapter 1, but with a different goal. (a) State the goal of analysing a code in Chapter 1 and the goal of researching a code in this subtopic. (b) Classify each of the following as a Chapter-1 (reading) task or a 4B (adoption) task: (i) explaining what a low angle means in a studied film; (ii) deciding to use a low angle in your own production so your subject reads as powerful; (iii) analysing how sound builds dread in a podcast you studied; (iv) borrowing a podcast’s sound-layering technique for your own audio drama. (c) Explain why keeping the two goals clear matters when you write up your research.
- Q5.** (*Research-note critique.*) A student’s research note reads: “I listened to three true-crime podcasts. They were all really gripping and I want mine to be gripping too.” (a) State one reason this note cannot yet guide a production choice. (b) Name one specific piece of information the note should add. (c) Rewrite the note so that it isolates a technique and states what could be adopted.
- Q6.** For a media form you intend to produce in this year: (a) Name one exemplar product and one specific technique in it that you admire. (b) Describe how that technique engages the exemplar’s audience. (c) State what you would adopt or adapt from it, and why it would suit your own audience.

Un scaffolded

Q7. Describe how one sound technique in an exemplar audio product engages its audience, and state what you would adopt from it for your own proposed audio production. (3 marks)

Q8. (*Stimulus.*) Read the production brief below.

Stimulus. Statement of intention: ‘to teach teenagers three quick, cheap ways to cut food waste at home.’
Statement of audience: ‘Australian 13- to 17-year-olds who watch short vertical videos on their phones and scroll quickly past anything slow to start.’

Identify one media code or convention you would employ in a short-form video for this brief, and describe how it applies to the short-form video form and why it would appeal to the target audience. (4 marks)

Q9. Explain how a lighting or composition choice in an exemplar photographic series engages its audience, and how you would adopt it for your own series. (4 marks)

Q10. (*Stimulus.*) Read the research entry below.

Stimulus. A student’s research portfolio contains this entry: “Watched three thrillers. They were tense. Also looked at some posters, they had good colours. I’ll make my film tense with good colours.”

Discuss two ways this research entry could be improved so that it can direct specific production choices. (4 marks)

Q11. (*Stimulus.*) Read the description of a short-form video below.

Stimulus. A short vertical video opens on a close-up of a presenter already mid-sentence; bold white captions punch in word by word; a jump cut removes every pause between phrases; a hook question — ‘You’ve been doing this wrong’ — appears in the first two seconds; the clip loops seamlessly back to its opening frame.

Describe how two of the codes or conventions in this short-form video are used to engage its audience, and state what you would adopt for your own short-form production. (4 marks)

Q12. Discuss how the codes and conventions of an exemplar video game engage the player, and what you would adopt for your own game or interactive production. (5 marks)

Q13. (*Stimulus.*) Read the production brief below.

Stimulus. Statement of intention: ‘to create a suspenseful audio drama that makes commuters feel they are inside a locked-room mystery.’ Statement of audience: ‘adult podcast listeners aged 25 to 40 who listen alone on headphones during their commute.’

Identify one media code or narrative convention you would employ in the proposed audio drama, and describe how it applies to the audio form and why it would appeal to the target audience. (4 marks)

Q14. Discuss how you would document your research into an exemplar so that the findings feed your production planning. In your response, refer to at least one method of documentation and to influence acknowledgement. (4 marks)

Q15. Explain how one media code in an exemplar film engages its audience, and how you would adapt that technique for a production in a different media form. (6 marks)

Q16. For a print or digital production you intend to make, discuss one technique you have researched in an exemplar and how it will shape a specific production choice. (5 marks)

Q17. Discuss how researching the way audiences read and are engaged by an exemplar’s codes and conventions helps you plan for your own, possibly different, target audience. (6 marks)

Q18. Analyse how two or more codes and narrative conventions work together at a named moment in an exemplar you have researched to engage its audience. Then explain which of those techniques you would carry into your own proposed production, how you would adapt each one for your target audience, and how you would record the influence. (8 marks)

Q19. (*Stimulus.*) Read the research finding below.

Stimulus. In September 2024 the Australian Children’s Television Foundation published research by Swinburne University of Technology and RMIT University in which 37 children aged seven to nine browsed streaming platforms while researchers recorded their choices. The children selected largely from thumbnails and cover artwork and from rows such as ‘continue watching’ and ‘more like this’. Around 17 per cent chose Australian content unprompted, and several did not recognise Australian programs they already watched as Australian.

Analyse what this research tells a producer about how this target audience reads and is engaged by the conventions of a streaming platform, and explain one production choice you would make in response. (5 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) Studying an existing product not to explain its meaning but to find a specific technique you can use in your own production. (b) The way a particular code or convention affects an audience emotionally and/or cognitively (e.g. suspense, identification, curiosity). (c) Recording which product or practitioner influenced a choice, so the work is built upon and adapted rather than copied. **Q2.** (a) 1 isolate a technique in an exemplar of your form; 2 describe how it engages that audience; 3 decide what to adopt or adapt; 4 justify it for your audience and intention, acknowledging the influence. (b)–(c) Any form + real exemplar, with one specific technique isolated and its audience effect named (see solution for a model). **Q3.** (a) Any two: annotated technique table; annotated timeline; research log/journal with influence acknowledgement. (b) Technique observed (code/convention + named moment); how it engages the audience; what I will adopt or adapt. (c) It names no specific technique, no audience effect and no actionable choice, so it cannot be turned into a production decision. **Q4.** (a) Chapter 1: to read/explain a meaning in a studied narrative; 4B: to find a technique to adopt in your own production. (b) (i) reading; (ii) adoption; (iii) reading; (iv) adoption. (c) A reading answer explains meaning; an adoption answer must end in a usable choice for your own work — confusing them leaves research with no production outcome. **Q5.** (a) It isolates no specific technique and no audience effect, so nothing can be adopted. (b) Any one: which show, which technique (e.g. sound layering, pacing), at what moment, engaging whom how. (c) A rewrite that names one podcast, one technique and the specific thing to adopt (e.g. “*Show X* holds three seconds of silence before a reveal to spike dread; I will adopt a held silence before my episode’s twist”). **Q6.** Own form + exemplar; a specific technique; its audience effect named; an adopt/adapt choice justified for the student’s own audience (see solution for a model). **Q7. Describe (3).** One named sound technique in a real audio product → how it engages the listener → the specific thing adopted for the student’s own audio production. Must reach an audience effect, not just name the technique. **Q8. Q5b shape (4).** One code/convention identified (e.g. the opening hook / fast cutting / on-screen captions); described in the short-form video form; appeal tied to the 13- to 17-year-old fast-scrolling audience. Wrong or generic audience loses the key marks. **Q9. Explain (4).** A named lighting or composition choice in a real photographic series → the audience effect (how it makes the viewer read) → the choice adopted for the student’s series. A full how/why chain. **Q10. Discuss (4).** Two improvements from: isolate a specific technique at a named moment; name the audience effect; name the products/practitioners; end in an actionable, adaptable choice (not “tense with good colours”). **Q11. Describe (4).** Two of the described codes/conventions (hook, captions, jump cut, loop) each given an account of how it engages a scrolling viewer, plus one adoption for the student’s own short-form work. **Q12. Discuss (5).** Real game exemplar; codes/conventions (mechanics, sound/feedback, level conventions) engaging the player; a specific, audience-justified adoption for the student’s own game or interactive. **Q13. Q5b shape (4).** One code/narrative convention identified; described in the audio form; appeal tied to the lone, headphone-listening 25- to 40-year-old commuter audience. **Q14. Discuss (4).** At least one documentation method (annotated technique table/timeline/log) described, plus why influences must be acknowledged and how doing so keeps the work original and usable. **Q15. Explain (6).** One code in a real film → how it engages the film’s audience → a considered adaptation of the technique into a different form, acknowledging what changes because the form changes. **Q16. Discuss (5).** The student’s own print/digital production; one researched technique from a real exemplar; a specific production choice it will shape, justified for the student’s audience. **Q17. Discuss (6).** Why researching the exemplar’s audience effect (the read) is what lets you translate a technique for a different audience; the risk of adopting a technique without checking who it was built to engage. **Q18. Analyse (8).** Real exemplar; two or more codes AND narrative conventions shown working together at a named moment to engage that exemplar’s audience; a selection of those techniques carried into the student’s own production, each with its own adaptation justified for a precisely named target audience; the influence recorded. See Fully-worked solutions for a model and common errors. **Q19. Analyse (5).** The finding broken into what it tells a producer: this audience’s choices are made on the browse screen, from thumbnails/cover artwork and algorithmic rows, before the product’s own codes are heard or seen; the recommendation row acts as a platform convention that decides what is ever seen; platform fluency outruns cultural literacy (confident navigation, but origin not read from the interface). Plus one specific production choice in response, justified for the seven- to nine-year-old audience. Retelling the research without reaching a production choice caps the response.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) Researching for adoption means studying an existing media product not to explain its meaning (the Chapter-1 goal) but to isolate a specific **technique you can employ** in your own production. (b) An **engagement mechanism** is the way a particular code or convention affects an audience **emotionally and/or cognitively** — for

example suspense, identification, curiosity or amusement. (c) **Influence acknowledgement** is recording which product or practitioner shaped a choice, so that your work **builds upon and adapts** existing ideas rather than copying them. *Marker's note:* (a) commonly slides back into “what it means” — the adoption goal must be explicit.

Q2. (a) The four steps: **1** isolate a specific technique in an exemplar of your form; **2** describe **how it engages** that audience; **3** decide what to **adopt or adapt**; **4** **justify** it for your own audience and intention, and acknowledge the influence. (b)–(c) *Model response:* the exemplar is the science podcast *Radiolab* (WNYC Studios), in the audio form. **Step 1 — isolate a technique:** *Radiolab* uses a dense, heavily produced **layered sound-editing** style — overlapping voices, cut-in interview fragments and sound effects that illustrate the idea being discussed. **Step 2 — how it engages:** this layering engages listeners **cognitively**, making an abstract or scientific idea vivid and easy to follow, and **emotionally**, giving the audio a lively, surprising momentum that holds attention. *Marker's note:* the model must isolate ONE technique, not summarise the whole product.

Q3. (a) Any two of: an **annotated technique table**; an **annotated timeline**; a **research log or journal** that records influences. (b) The three columns are the **technique observed** (the code or convention and the named moment), **how it engages the audience**, and **what I will adopt or adapt**. (c) “The sound was good” names **no specific technique**, states **no audience effect** and offers **no actionable choice**, so it cannot be turned into a production decision — a research note has not finished the job until it ends in something you can do. *Common errors:* listing what you liked instead of what you can use.

Q4. (a) In Chapter 1 the goal is to **read** a studied narrative — to explain what a code **means**; in 4B the goal is **production** — to find a technique you can **adopt**. (b) (i) **reading**; (ii) **adoption**; (iii) **reading**; (iv) **adoption**. (c) A reading answer ends when a meaning is explained, but an adoption answer must end in a **usable choice for your own work**. If you confuse the two, your research produces an essay about someone else's product and never reaches a decision you can build with. *Marker's note:* both goals use the same codes — the difference is entirely in where the answer **lands**.

Q5. (a) The note isolates **no specific technique** and names **no audience effect**, so there is **nothing to adopt** — “gripping” is a reaction, not a research finding. (b) It should add at least one specific: **which** podcast, **which** technique (for example sound layering, pacing, or a framing device), at **what** moment, and **how** it grips the listener. (c) *Model rewrite:* “In [*podcast*], the host holds about three seconds of silence before each major reveal, which spikes the listener's dread by making them wait; I will **adopt** a held silence just before my episode's central twist to build the same tension.” *Marker's note:* the fix is to move from a **feeling** (“gripping”) to a **named technique + audience effect + adoption** — the whole point of the subtopic.

Q6. *Model response (photographic form):* (a) The exemplar is *Humans of New York*; the technique I admire is its pairing of a plain, eye-level **portrait** with a short **first-person caption**. (b) This engages the audience by building fast intimacy — the direct gaze and confessional words make a stranger feel suddenly knowable — combining an **emotional** pull with the **cognitive** work of reading the face against the text. (c) For my own photographic series about apprentices in local trades, I would **adopt** the portrait-plus-caption convention but **adapt** it: my captions will be a single line each subject says about their work, because my audience of school leavers deciding on a career will connect with plain, first-person voices from people just ahead of them. *Marker's note:* any form is fine, but the answer must end in an adopt/adapt choice tied to **your** audience, not stop at “I like it”.

Q7. “Describe” asks for an account of how the technique works. *Model response:* In *Welcome to Night Vale* (Commonplace Books, 2012), the producers use the **sound** technique of a single, deadpan **host voice** reading community-radio bulletins over a low, droning **ambient bed**. The calm, measured vocal performance delivering absurd and sinister news engages listeners by making the strange feel ordinary — the mismatch between tone and content is what unsettles and amuses them at once. For my own proposed audio production, a satirical school-announcements podcast, I would **adopt** this deadpan-host-over-drone technique, because a flat, official-sounding voice will make my everyday-school absurdities land as comedy for my student audience. *Marker's note:* three marks still need the **audience effect** — naming the deadpan voice without saying what it does to the listener leaves the mark unearned.

Q8. “Identify” then “describe” — the 2024 Q5b shape. *Model response:* I would employ the **opening hook** convention — a punchy question or claim in the first two seconds. In the short-form video form, where viewers scroll fast, the hook is the opening frame or line that stops the thumb: my video would open on “Throwing this out? Don't.” straight to camera, before any titles. This would **appeal to the 13- to 17-year-old, fast-scrolling audience** named in

the brief because it rewards them immediately and answers the one question a scrolling teenager asks — “is this worth my next three seconds?” — so they stay for the three food-waste tips. *Marker’s note:* the marks are in the **audience-and-form** link; describing a hook in general, or pitching it at “everyone”, misses the point. Naming paper stock or a cinema-scale technique would also fail — it must suit the **short-form video** form.

Q9. “*Explain*” asks for a full how/why chain. *Model response:* In Trent Parke’s photographic series *Minutes to Midnight* (2005), the signature choice is extreme **lighting/contrast** — high-contrast black-and-white in which harsh Australian light blows out highlights and drops backgrounds into deep shadow. This engages the viewer by making familiar streets look charged and unsettling: the blinding light and heavy shadow read as heat, unease and something on the edge of visibility, so the audience feels tension in ordinary scenes. For my own series photographing late-night workers, I would **adopt** this high-contrast approach — shooting into hard, single light sources so my subjects emerge from surrounding darkness — so my audience reads isolation and endurance from the light itself. *Marker’s note:* complete the chain to the **audience’s reading**; “high contrast looks cool” is not an engagement claim.

Q10. “*Discuss*” asks you to develop each improvement. *Model response:* **First, the entry names no product, no practitioner and no moment.** “Three thrillers” and “some posters” cannot be returned to, re-watched or later acknowledged as influences; the student should record which three films, whose posters, and the exact point in each where the effect they noticed happens. Research that cannot be traced back to its source cannot be checked, extended, or credited in the influence acknowledgement the study design expects — and a technique the student cannot find again is a technique they cannot reverse-engineer. **Second, the entry stops at a feeling and never reaches an audience effect or an actionable choice.** “They were tense” and “good colours” name no construction and say nothing about **what** the tension or the colours did to a viewer; the student should name the choice that built the effect (a slow build of non-diegetic score; a steel-and-red palette on a named poster), state the read it produces, and then commit to the exact thing they will do — “I will grade my climax cold and desaturated to signal threat”. Only then can the research direct the production. *Common errors:* this entry contains the two live traps at once — a **feeling offered as a finding**, and **no usable production choice** at the end.

Q11. “*Describe*” asks for an account of how each code works. *Model response:* Two techniques engage the scrolling viewer. First, the **on-screen captions** that punch in word by word keep the video legible with the sound off — which is how a great deal of short-form video is actually watched — and their timing paces the viewer’s reading to the speaker’s delivery, so attention is renewed every few words; the **jump cuts** that remove every pause reinforce this by never letting the energy drop long enough for a thumb to move. Second, the **seamless loop** back to the opening frame gives the video no visible ending: a viewer who has just finished is already watching the beginning again before they decide to swipe, which both lifts the replay count and offers a second pass at anything missed the first time. For my own short-form production I would **adopt** the word-by-word captions and the seamless loop, because my audience also watches muted, mid-scroll and often only half-attentively on a first view. *Marker’s note:* four marks need **two** codes each with an account of what it does to the viewer — naming “captions and a loop” without the engagement effect stalls at two marks. (The **opening hook** is a further valid choice here; it is worked through in Q8.)

Q12. “*Discuss*” asks you to develop the point with evidence and reach a position. *Model response:* In *Celeste* (Maddy Makes Games, 2018), the producers engage the player through the interaction of **game mechanics**, **audiovisual feedback** and the **checkpoint** convention. The controls are extremely precise — every jump and dash responds instantly — and the game gives immediate feedback through a small screen shake, a crisp sound and a chiptune score that lifts on success, so the player feels each move land. The **checkpoint** convention places restarts a second before each failure, so death is near-instant and low-cost; this engages the player **cognitively** (each screen is a puzzle to solve by repetition) and **emotionally** (frustration is quickly converted into the satisfaction of finally clearing it). *Celeste* also offers an **assist mode**, extending that engagement to less-skilled players. For my own short platformer I would **adopt** the instant-restart checkpoint convention and the crisp success feedback, because my casual audience will keep playing only if failure is cheap and progress feels good. *Marker’s note:* the strongest answers show the codes/conventions **working together** on the player, then land on a specific, audience-justified adoption — not “the game felt smooth so I’ll make mine smooth”.

Q13. “*Identify*” then “*describe*” — the 2024 Q5b shape. *Model response:* I would employ the **sound** code of **spatial, close-mic’d audio and near-silence** (a binaural, headphone-first mix). In the audio form, this means recording and mixing so that footsteps, breath and a turning lock seem to happen just beside the listener, with long silences between. This would **appeal to the lone, headphone-listening 25- to 40-year-old commuter** in the brief because headphones on a crowded train already isolate the listener: placing the drama’s small, close sounds right against their ears makes

them feel sealed inside the locked room, exactly the intention. *Marker's note:* the appeal must be tied to **how this audience consumes** the product (alone, on headphones) — that is what turns a generic “use scary sound” into a Q5b answer.

Q14. “Discuss” asks you to develop the point. *Model response:* I would document my research in an **annotated technique table** with three columns — the technique observed (the code or convention and the named moment), how it engages the audience, and what I will adopt or adapt — so that each row ends in an **actionable** production choice rather than an impression. For a time-based form I would add an **annotated timeline**, noting where in the product a technique appears and what it does at that point. Alongside this I would keep **influence acknowledgement**: a note of which product and practitioner shaped each choice. This matters because building upon others’ ideas is normal, expected practice — but it stays legitimate only when influences are acknowledged and **adapted** rather than copied, and a documented trail also lets me and my assessor see exactly how my ideas developed. *Marker's note:* reward a **usable** documentation method plus a clear reason acknowledgement keeps the work original — not a general “I’d take notes”.

Q15. “Explain” asks for a full how/why chain, then a considered adaptation. *Model response:* In *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006), the producers use the **camera** in extended, unbroken **long takes** — most famously a continuous shot through a chaotic ambush — that refuse to cut away. This engages the audience by trapping them in real, unrelieved time: with no edit to grant relief, tension accumulates and the danger feels inescapable and immediate. To **adapt** this to a different form — a first-person video game — I would translate the long take into an **unbroken, uncut player-controlled sequence** with no loading screens or cutaways through a dangerous level, so the player, like the film’s viewer, is denied any release of tension. The technique changes because the form changes: in the game the continuity is **interactive** and sustained by the player’s own movement rather than by the camera operator, but the engagement principle — unbroken time builds inescapable tension — carries across. *Marker's note:* six marks reward both a real how/why chain for the film **and** a genuine reckoning with what must change in the new form; simply saying “I’d use a long take in my game” without adapting it caps the response.

Q16. “Discuss” — the student’s own production. *Model response (digital form):* For a digital long-form feature I intend to make about the small live-music rooms in my suburb, I researched *Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek* (John Branch, *The New York Times*, 2012), the feature that established the **scroll-driven layout** convention: the story is cut into titled chapters, and full-bleed photographs, maps and short video clips are triggered as the reader scrolls, so an image takes over the whole screen before the text resumes. My research finding is that this hands the **pacing** of the story to the reader’s own thumb — the reader must keep scrolling to clear each image, which slows them at exactly the moments the producers chose, and turns a very long read into a staged descent rather than a wall of text. This will **shape a specific production choice**: I will open each venue’s chapter with one full-screen photograph of the empty room, held until the reader scrolls past it, before the interview text resumes in a narrow column — rather than running all six venues as one continuous article with thumbnails beside the text. My audience of young gig-goers reads on a phone in short bursts between other things, so a chaptered, image-paced structure gives them obvious places to stop and return to, and makes each venue land as a place rather than as an entry in a list. *Marker's note:* the answer must connect a **researched** technique to a **specific** choice in the student’s own product, justified for their audience — not just describe the exemplar.

Q17. “Discuss” asks you to develop the argument. *Model response:* Researching **how audiences read and are engaged** by an exemplar’s codes and conventions — not just what the codes are — is what lets you plan for a different audience of your own. A technique is only worth adopting once you know **what it does to an audience** and **which** audience it was built for, because the same choice can engage one audience and lose another. A suspense device tuned for adult thriller fans (long silences, withheld reveals) may bore or confuse a younger audience unless you speed it up or signpost it; a broad comic device pitched at children may read as childish to adults. So the research step of naming the **read** the exemplar produces is what allows the **translation**: you keep the underlying engagement principle but adapt its execution to your audience’s tastes, experience and context. Skipping this — copying a technique without checking who it was built to engage — is why borrowed techniques so often fall flat. *Marker's note:* the point is the **audience-side** of the research (how it engages) as the bridge to a different audience; an answer that only lists codes misses the question.

Q18. “Analyse” asks you to break the exemplar into its constructed elements and show how they work together to engage an audience, with specific evidence — then explain the adoption. *Model response (exemplar: The Babadook, 2014):* In *The Babadook* (Jennifer Kent, 2014), the producers engage the audience through the interaction of two

media codes — **mise en scene** and **sound** — with two **narrative conventions**: **point of view** and the **character arc** of a grieving mother. The family house is dressed and graded almost monochrome — cold blue-greys, dim lamplight, doorways that read as flat black rectangles — so an ordinary suburban home carries threat before anything happens in it. Underneath the dialogue the **sound** design works low and physical: deep rumbles and the guttural, clicking vocalisation the storybook gives the creature, so the audience hears the threat arrive before the frame ever confirms it.

Those codes only frighten because of the **point of view**. The film restricts us almost entirely to Amelia's perception, and her **arc** runs from exhausted grief into sleepless breakdown; because we are locked to a character whose judgement is visibly failing, we cannot settle the question the codes keep raising — is the Babadook in the house, or in her? The **named moment** where all four work at once is the bedtime reading of the *Mister Babadook* pop-up book: a nursery convention (a parent reading a picture book aloud) is staged in that cold palette, under a low sound bed, from the viewpoint of a mother who is herself becoming frightened of the text in her hands. The engagement is **emotional** — dread, and pity for both characters — fused with the **cognitive** work of testing every later event against a perception we have been shown not to trust.

For my own proposed production — a ten-minute suspense short film about a teenager who is the sole carer for an unwell parent, made for the adult audience of local short-film festivals — I would carry across three of these techniques. I would **adopt** the restricted **point of view** almost unchanged, shooting no scene my protagonist is not present for, because the ambiguity I want (is the parent worsening, or is the carer's exhaustion distorting what they see?) is only available if the audience knows exactly what my protagonist knows and no more. I would **adapt** the **sound**: Kent can accumulate a low bed across ninety minutes and ten minutes cannot, so I would establish one specific recurring sound — a particular door on a particular hinge — inside the first minute and let its *recurrence*, rather than its slow build, carry the dread. I would **adapt** the **mise en scene** too, confining the film to a single room and a hallway rather than a whole house, because a festival audience watching in one sitting reads a small, over-familiar space as a trap much faster than it reads an unfamiliar large one. I would record all three as separate rows in my annotated technique table and **acknowledge** *The Babadook* and Jennifer Kent as the influence on the point-of-view restriction. *Marker's note*: an 8-mark "analyse for adoption" needs **multiple** codes and narrative conventions shown **interacting** at a named moment (not listed separately), then a **per-technique** adapt justified for a **precisely named** audience — the common failure is to describe the exemplar well and then bolt on a vague "I'd do something similar".

Q19. "Analyse" asks you to break the finding into its parts, say what each part does, then reach a production decision. *Model response*: This is **audience-side research**: it records how a precisely defined audience — Australian children aged seven to nine — actually **reads and is engaged by** the conventions of a streaming platform, and three things follow for a producer. First, the engagement that matters most happens **before the product starts**. The children chose from **thumbnails and cover artwork**, so it is the visual codes of the browse screen — image, framing, colour, title typography — that generate the **curiosity** to open a program, not its sound or editing. Second, the **algorithmic recommendation row** ('continue watching', 'more like this') works as a **convention of the platform** that organises what a child ever sees; a product that never appears in those rows is effectively invisible, however well it is constructed. Third, that around 17 per cent chose Australian content unprompted, and that several did not recognise programs they already watched as Australian, shows **platform fluency outrunning cultural literacy** — these viewers navigate confidently but cannot read a product's origin from the interface.

The production choice I would make in response: for a short web series for this age group, I would design the **cover artwork** to be legible at thumbnail size — one large character face, high contrast, a title of two or three words — and place a recognisable local marker in that image rather than saving it for episode one, so the audience reads "Australian" at the moment of choosing. *Marker's note*: the marks are in the **analysis** of what the finding says about this audience's reading, then **one specific** choice that follows from it; retelling the research, or ending at "I'd make good artwork", caps the response.

Chapter 4 Research, development and experimentation — 4C Experimentation and documentation

Theory

Research tells you *what* is possible in a media form; experimentation tells you *whether you can do it*. Before committing to a production, a media creator tests the equipment, technologies and processes they intend to use, develops the specific skills the product will demand, and keeps a record of what they learned. That is the work of this subtopic. In **Unit 3, Outcome 2** you complete **two production experiments, accompanied by documentation of skill development** — a body of work that becomes part of the research and development you carry into your own production. The exam does not ask you to shoot anything; it works in writing. So far it has set one shape — in 2025 a 4-mark **describe an experiment you would conduct to develop one specific skill**, applied to a production idea invented on the spot. This subtopic drills that shape, and adds two more that the same key knowledge supports: **documenting** and **evaluating** an experiment, and repairing a weak plan. The study design examines the whole recording, documenting and evaluating cycle, not the design step alone, so all three are worth preparing. Every task in this subtopic is answerable under exam conditions with a pen.

A production experiment is a controlled, purposeful trial that develops one specific skill. It is not “having a go” or making a rough first draft of the product. It is a deliberate test — run to answer a question such as “*what fill-light level keeps detail in the shadow side of a face?*” — from which you learn a technique and record the result. The study design frames the purpose precisely: you conduct **research to inform the development of skills in a selected media form**, using **media equipment, technologies and processes appropriate to a selected media form and proposed product**, and you carry out **the process of recording, documenting and evaluating** that work, using **media language to evaluate and document research of a selected media form**. Those four dot points are the backbone of everything below.

The experiment-design template. Experiments fail in predictable ways: the aim is a vague wish, nothing is held steady, and there is no way of telling whether it worked. The 2025 report found exactly those three failings in this task, and they are set out below. The cure is a fixed template. A well-designed production experiment has **seven parts**, and a strong response names them:

1. **Aim** — the *one specific skill* you set out to develop, in one form, named precisely. “Develop a smooth rack focus between two subjects at a fixed distance”, not “get better at using the camera”.
2. **Equipment, technology and process** — the *specific* gear and workflow, appropriate to the form and the proposed product: a camera with manual focus and a follow-focus unit; a cardioid microphone, a recorder and headphones; a three-light kit; layout software and two chosen typefaces.
3. **Variable to isolate** — the *one thing you deliberately change* while holding everything else constant, so that any difference in the result can be attributed to that one change.
4. **Steps** — the ordered procedure: the set-ups you will run (for example, three takes at three different fill levels), what you keep constant across them, and how many trials.
5. **Success criteria** — the *observable*, stated-in-advance signs that the skill has developed — something you can see, hear or measure — not “it looks good”.
6. **Evaluation method** — *how you will judge* the results against those criteria: side-by-side review of the trials, frame-by-frame checking, measurement, or structured peer or mentor feedback.
7. **Documented reflection** — what you *recorded*, in precise media language, about which set-up worked and why, and what you will carry into your production.

Parts 1–4 are the *design*; parts 5–6 are what make the design a genuine *test* rather than an activity; part 7 is the *documentation* the study design demands. A four-mark exam “describe an experiment” answer compresses this to four moves — the **aim** (one named skill), the **equipment and process**, the **isolated variable**, and an **observable success criterion with the method for judging it** — but every strong short answer is a compression of the full template, so learn the whole thing.

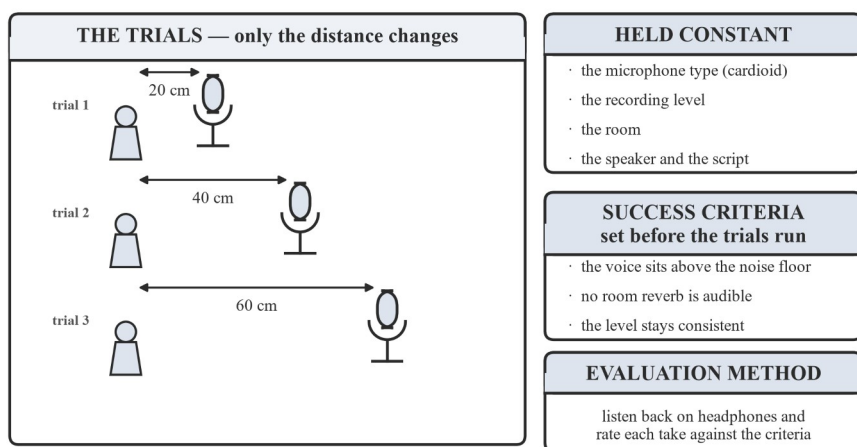
The three weaknesses to design out (from the 2025 report). When students were asked to *describe an experiment to develop one specific skill*, the low-scoring answers failed in three predictable ways, and you should treat each as a checkpoint:

- **A vague aim.** “I will get better at using the camera” names no single skill and no form-specific technique, so nothing can be built or measured. Fix: name *one* skill (“hold focus on a subject walking towards the lens”).
- **No variable isolated.** If you change three things at once — the shot size, the lens and where you stand — you cannot tell which change produced the result. Fix: change *one* variable and hold the rest constant.
- **No evaluation method.** “I’ll watch it back and see if it’s better” is not evaluation, because “better” was never defined. Fix: set observable **success criteria** in advance and state **how** you will judge the trials against them.

Isolating a variable. This is the idea students most often miss, so it is worth stating plainly. A production experiment is only useful if a difference in the outcome can be traced to a single, deliberate change. To test microphone placement, you change the **distance** from the speaker (say 20 cm, 40 cm and 60 cm) and hold the microphone type, the recording level, the room and the speaker constant. Now any difference in clarity is caused by distance, and you have learned something you can reuse. Change the distance *and* the level *and* the room at once and the trial teaches you nothing, because you cannot attribute the result. The variable you isolate is usually the *creative* choice you are trying to master; the things you hold constant are the “controls”. The figure below sets out that microphone trial with the three distances drawn to scale, and with the controls, the success criteria and the evaluation method beside it.

Isolating one variable: three trials, one thing changed

If more than one thing changes between trials, no result can be attributed to any of them.



Drawn to scale at 20 : 40 : 60 cm — the trial-3 gap is 3 times the trial-1 gap on the page because it is three times the distance in the room.

Success criteria and evaluation method — the difference. *Success criteria* are the target: the observable outcomes, decided **before** you run the trials, that would show the skill has developed (“the subject’s voice sits clearly above the background hiss; no room echo is audible”). *Evaluation method* is the **process** by which you check the trials against those criteria: listening back on headphones and rating each take, viewing the shots side by side, measuring, or asking a peer to identify the clearest take blind. A criterion is a *what*; an evaluation method is a *how*. Weak experiments have neither; strong ones state both.

Documentation: recording, reflecting and evaluating. The study design pairs experimentation with **documentation of skill development**. Three textual documents do this work, and you should be able to distinguish them:

- **Annotated activity log** — a running, dated record of *what you did* as you did it: the set-ups you tried, the settings used, what you observed at each step, kept in specific media language. It captures the process while it is fresh.
- **Reflection entry** — a considered, personal account written *after* an experiment: what you learned, what surprised you, what you would change, and how the skill now feels. Reflection is about *you and the learning*.
- **Evaluation write-up** — a judgement of the *results against the success criteria*: which set-up met the target, by how much, with the evidence, and the decision you will carry into production. Evaluation is about *the work and the outcome*.

A log records; a reflection considers; an evaluation judges. A complete piece of documentation usually contains all three.

Media language in documentation. The study design's own dot point requires **media language to evaluate and document research**. Vague documentation is nearly worthless: “moved the lights around and it looked better” cannot be repeated or checked. Precise media language names the equipment, the setting, the code and the effect, so that the record is repeatable and analysable. Compare:

Vague (avoid)	Precise media language (use)
“Filmed a person and it looked good.”	“Recorded a mid-shot lit with a three-point setup; a 2:1 key-to-fill ratio kept detail on the shadow side of the face.”
“The sound was bad, so I moved the mic.”	“At 60 cm the cardioid microphone picked up audible room reverb and a raised noise floor; at 20 cm the voice sat clearly above the background.”
“Made the photo blurry on purpose.”	“A shutter speed of 1/15 s rendered the cyclist as directional motion blur while the static background stayed sharp.”
“The heading stood out.”	“A 30 pt bold sans-serif headline over 11 pt regular body text created a clear type hierarchy, so the eye landed on the headline first.”

Experiments run across all media forms. The template is the same in every form; only the equipment, the variable and the observable criteria change. The table below models one experiment per form — use it as a bank of the variations you must be able to design.

Form	Skill to develop	Equipment / technology / process	Variable to isolate (holding the rest constant)	Success criteria (observable)
Moving image	Balanced three-point lighting on a face	Three-light kit (key, fill, back), camera on a tripod	Fill-light intensity, with the key light fixed	Shadow side keeps visible detail with no harsh dividing line; even, controlled exposure across the face
Audio	Clean dialogue capture	Cardioid microphone, recorder, headphones	Microphone distance from the speaker	Voice sits clearly above the noise floor; minimal room reverb; consistent level
Photography	Conveying motion	Camera with manual shutter control, tripod	Shutter speed, with aperture and ISO compensated to hold exposure	Moving subject shows directional motion blur; the intended sharp areas stay sharp
Print / digital	A legible type hierarchy	Layout software, two chosen typefaces	Headline-to-body size ratio	A reader locates the key information quickly; headline, subheading and body are read in the intended order

The method — apply the template every time. For any experiment task, work the template in order: (1) name **one specific skill** as the aim; (2) name the **equipment, technology and process** for that form; (3) isolate **one variable** and state what you hold constant; (4) set out the **steps**; (5) fix **observable success criteria** in advance; (6) state an **evaluation method**; (7) plan the **documented reflection** in media language. In a short exam answer, lead with the

aim and the variable, and never leave out how you would judge the result: a vague aim, an unisolated variable and an absent evaluation method are the three failings the 2025 report identified in this task.

Contemporary example — Team Cherry, September 2025

Team Cherry is a small independent games studio in Adelaide, South Australia. On **4 September 2025** it released *Hollow Knight: Silksong* across all platforms, confirming the launch in a post on its own site that day.

The product began as something else. It was first planned as downloadable content for the studio's 2017 game *Hollow Knight*, in which players would switch to a second character, Hornet, whose wider range of movement and different abilities would open parts of the existing world. The studio has described why that plan was dropped: there was no natural way to fit an area built in the existing style to a character of her height and lithe movement. Its reveal post of 14 February 2019 recorded that, as work progressed, Hornet's adventure had grown too large and too distinct to remain downloadable content, and the project was rebuilt as a standalone game with a new world designed around its main character.

Read against this subtopic, the useful part is the **result**, not the release. One **variable** was under test — the playable character's movement — with the existing world **held constant**, and the finding was **observable**: the existing areas could not accommodate it. A checkable result of that kind is what makes a trial usable. Because the finding and the decision that followed were **documented**, they informed the later planning rather than being lost. A trial whose result contradicts the plan has not failed; it has produced the finding the plan needed.

Source: ACMI, Jini Maxwell, "From Ludum Dare to Pharloom", 5 September 2025 — <https://www.acmi.net.au/stories-and-ideas/from-ludum-dare-to-pharloom/>; Team Cherry, "Hollow Knight: Silksong Revealed!", 14 February 2019 — <https://www.teamcherry.com.au/blog/hollow-knight-silksong-revealed>; Team Cherry, "The Hunt Is On!", 4 September 2025 — <https://www.teamcherry.com.au/blog/silksong-available-now>. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Design a production experiment to develop one specific skill for a moving-image production. Set it out under the experiment-design template.

This is the full research-folder plan — the master version of the experiment. Example 3 shows how a plan of this kind compresses into the 4-mark exam "describe an experiment" (the 2025 Q5 shape), there in a different form. The table builds the plan one part at a time.

Working	Comment
Aim. To develop the skill of setting a controlled three-point lighting set-up on a face, specifically finding the fill-light level that keeps detail on the shadow side without flattening the face.	Part 1. One skill, one form, named as a technique — not "get better at lighting". Vague aims of exactly that kind ("get better at using the camera") are what the 2025 report criticised.
Equipment, technology and process. A three-light kit (a key light, a fill light and a back light), the camera on a tripod at a fixed mid-shot, a subject seated at a marked position, and a grey card to check exposure.	Part 2. Name the specific gear and workflow <i>appropriate to the form and product</i> — the study design's wording. Generic and precise beats brand names.
Variable to isolate. The intensity of the fill light. The key light, the back light, the camera position, the framing, the subject and the room light are all held constant.	Part 3. Change one thing. Everything else is a "control". Now any change in the shadow detail can be attributed to the fill level alone.
Steps. Set the key light at 45° to the subject and lock it. Record three ten-second takes: take A with no fill, take B with a low fill (roughly a 4:1 key-to-fill ratio), take C with a stronger fill (roughly a 2:1 ratio). Keep every	Part 4. The ordered procedure, with the trials named and the controls stated. Three set-ups, one variable — this is what makes it a test, not a shoot.

Working	Comment
other setting identical and label each take.	
Success criteria. The chosen take should keep visible detail on the shadow side of the face, show no harsh dividing line down the centre, and hold an even exposure — checked against the grey card.	Part 5. Observable, decided in advance . “Detail retained on the shadow side” can be seen and judged; “looks good” cannot.
Evaluation method. View the three takes side by side on a calibrated monitor, rate each against the three criteria, and confirm the choice with structured peer feedback (“which take keeps the most shadow detail?”).	Part 6. A stated process for judging the trials against the criteria — a move the 2025 report found missing from many experiment answers.
Documented reflection. Record, in a dated log, which ratio met the criteria and why, in media language (“the 2:1 fill kept catch-light and cheek detail on the shadow side; the 4:1 lost the cheek to shadow”), and note the setting to reuse in the production.	Part 7. The documentation the study design demands — precise, repeatable, and pointed at the production decision.

Reading the plan back: it names one skill, isolates one variable, sets criteria you can see, states how you would judge them, and ends in a usable production decision. That is the standard every experiment task is measured against.

Example 2 — scaffolded

A student has written the vague activity-log entry below after a lighting experiment. Rewrite it so it documents the skill development in precise media language.

Log (as written). “Tried the lights today. Moved them around for a while. In the end the face looked heaps better than at the start. Going to use that setup for the film.”

Documentation is assessed on media language and repeatability, not effort. The table rebuilds the entry line by line.

Working	Comment
14 May — three-point lighting test, fill-light level.	Date and name the experiment. A log is a <i>record</i> , so it must be locatable and specific from the first line.
Ran three takes of a static mid-shot with the key light fixed at 45°, changing only the fill-light intensity: no fill, a 4:1 key-to-fill ratio, and a 2:1 ratio.	State the variable isolated and the controls, in media language — “changing only the fill” shows the experiment was controlled.
At no fill, the shadow side of the face lost all cheek detail; at 4:1 a hard line remained down the centre; at 2:1 the shadow side kept visible detail with a soft transition.	Record the <i>observation</i> at each set-up against the criteria, in code-level terms (shadow detail, transition), not “looked better”.
Chose the 2:1 set-up: it met the criterion of retaining shadow-side detail with no harsh dividing line, confirmed against the grey card and by a peer viewing the takes blind.	Record the <i>decision</i> , the criterion it met, and the evaluation method — this turns a log into usable evidence of skill development.
Next: test the same fill level with a subject who moves, to check the setting holds when the head turns.	End with the next step. Documentation should feed forward into the production and the second experiment.

Reading it back: the rewrite could be handed to another crew member and repeated exactly, and it shows *what* was learned and *why* the setting was chosen — the two things vague documentation always loses.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Describe an experiment you would conduct to develop one specific skill in the use of equipment, media technologies or processes appropriate to an audio production. (4 marks)

To develop the skill of capturing clean, intimate dialogue, I would run a microphone-distance experiment. Using a cardioid microphone, a recorder and headphones, I would record the same speaker reading the same line three times,

changing only the microphone distance — 20 cm, 40 cm and 60 cm — while holding the recording level, the microphone and the room constant. My success criterion, set in advance, would be that the voice sits clearly above the background noise floor with minimal room reverb. To evaluate, I would listen back on headphones, rate each take against that criterion, and confirm the clearest take by asking a peer to pick it blind, then log the chosen distance in media language for the production. *Takeaway:* a four-mark answer still makes the same four moves — one named skill, the equipment and process, one isolated variable, and an observable success criterion with the method for judging it.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Read the experiment plan below, then explain two changes that would make it more likely to develop the intended skill. (4 marks)

Stimulus. “I want to get better at using the camera. I’ll film my friends around school for the afternoon and see how it goes. Then I’ll watch it back, and if it looks better than before, the experiment worked.”

This plan repeats the three weaknesses the 2025 report flags, and fixing any two would strengthen it. **First, the aim is too vague to develop a skill.** “Get better at using the camera” names no single technique, so nothing can be practised or measured; it should name *one* skill in the form — for example, “hold focus on a subject walking towards the lens” — so the trial has a target. **Second, nothing is isolated and there is no evaluation method.** Filming friends “around school for the afternoon” changes the shot, the light and the subject all at once, so no result can be attributed to a deliberate choice, and “see how it goes ... if it looks better” defines no success criterion. The plan should isolate **one** variable (say, the focus-pull speed), hold the rest constant, set an observable criterion (“focus lands cleanly on the subject’s eyes with no visible hunting”), and evaluate by reviewing the takes side by side against that criterion. *Takeaway:* a weak experiment is almost always a vague aim, an uncontrolled variable and an undefined evaluation — name the fix for each.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

- Q1.** Define each of the following terms: (a) production experiment; (b) success criteria; (c) evaluation method.
- Q2.** A production experiment is designed using the experiment-design template. (a) List, in order, the seven parts of the experiment-design template. (b) Name the two parts a weak experiment most often leaves out. (c) Explain why isolating a single variable makes an experiment’s results useful.
- Q3.** Skill development must be documented. (a) Name three textual documents used to document skill development during experimentation. (b) State which of the three is written while the trials are being run, and why its timing matters. (c) Explain why precise media language matters in experiment documentation.
- Q4.** Isolating a variable is central to a useful experiment. (a) Define what “isolating a variable” means in a production experiment. (b) For a microphone-placement experiment, name one variable to isolate and two things to hold constant. (c) Explain how you would decide which variable to isolate, once you have named the skill to develop.
- Q5.** An aim must name one specific skill. (a) State why “I will get better at using the camera” is a weak aim. (b) Rewrite it as a precise, single-skill aim for a moving-image production. (c) Classify each of the following as vague or precise: (i) “improve my lighting”; (ii) “achieve a 2:1 key-to-fill ratio that keeps shadow-side detail”; (iii) “make it look professional”; (iv) “hold focus while panning with a moving subject”.
- Q6.** For a media form you are working in this year, sketch a production experiment. (a) State one specific skill you would develop. (b) Name the equipment, technology or process, and the one variable you would isolate. (c) State your success criteria and your evaluation method.

Unscaffolded

- Q7.** Outline the purpose of conducting production experiments as part of preparing for a media production. (3 marks)
- Q8.** Describe an experiment you would conduct to develop one specific skill in the use of equipment, media technologies or processes appropriate to a photographic production. (4 marks)

Q9. Describe what an effective annotated activity log records while a production experiment is being carried out. (4 marks)

Q10. (*Stimulus.*) A student has written the log entry below after a photography experiment.

Log (as written). “Did the photo test indoors. The pictures came out too orange, so I changed a setting and they looked normal. Happy with it now.”

Explain why this entry fails to document the skill development, and how it should be recorded in precise media language. (4 marks)

Q11. Outline a production experiment you would conduct to develop one specific skill for a print or digital production. Set your response out under all seven parts of the experiment-design template (aim; equipment, technology and process; variable; steps; success criteria; evaluation method; documented reflection). (6 marks)

Q12. (*Stimulus.*) Read the photography experiment plan below.

Stimulus. “Aim: improve my photography. I’ll photograph the skate park after school. For each shot I’ll change the shutter speed, the aperture and where I’m standing, and keep the ones I like best. Success: the photos look good.”

Discuss two changes that would make this experiment more likely to develop a specific skill. (5 marks)

Q13. Explain how the results of a production experiment inform a student’s later production planning. (5 marks)

Q14. Outline a production experiment you would conduct to develop one specific skill for an audio production, different from any experiment described elsewhere on this handout. Set your response out under all seven parts of the experiment-design template. (6 marks)

Q15. Discuss why an experiment that is completed but never evaluated against stated success criteria has limited value. (4 marks)

Q16. Describe the difference between a reflection entry and an evaluation write-up, and state what each contributes to documenting skill development. (4 marks)

Q17. Discuss how completing and documenting two production experiments would prepare you to begin your own production. In your response, refer to a media form you are working in this year. (6 marks)

Q18. (*Stimulus — extended response.*) Read the documented experiment cycle below.

Stimulus. Experiment log — rack focus (moving image). *Aim:* develop a smooth rack focus that shifts sharpness from a foreground subject to a background subject at a fixed distance. *Equipment/process:* camera with manual focus and a follow-focus unit, tripod, two subjects at marked positions 1 m and 3 m from the lens, aperture and framing fixed. *Variable:* the duration of the focus pull — 1 second, 2 seconds and 3 seconds — with everything else held constant. *Steps:* three takes at each duration, marked on the follow-focus, subjects and framing unchanged. *Success criteria:* focus lands cleanly on the second subject’s eyes with no overshoot or visible hunting, and the pull feels smooth. *Evaluation:* reviewed the takes frame by frame and had a peer identify the smoothest pull blind. *Reflection:* “The 1 s pulls overshoot and hunted; the 3 s pulls dragged; the 2 s pulls landed cleanly and looked smooth. Will use a 2 s pull for the reveal shot in my production.”

Analyse how effectively this experiment was designed and documented to develop the intended skill, and explain how well it informs the student’s production. (8 marks)

Q19. (*Contemporary example.*) Adelaide games studio Team Cherry released *Hollow Knight: Silksong* on 4 September 2025. The project had first been planned as downloadable content for the studio’s earlier game, in which players would switch to a second character with a wider range of movement. The studio has said there was no natural way to fit an area built in the existing style to that character’s height and movement, and the project was rebuilt as a standalone game with a new world designed around her.

Analyse this as an example of experimentation informing production planning. In your response, refer to the variable under test and to the value of documenting a result that contradicts the plan. (5 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) A controlled, purposeful trial run to develop one specific skill in a media form, from which the result is documented. (b) The observable outcomes, stated in advance, that show the skill has developed. (c) The stated process for judging the trials against the success criteria. **Q2.** (a) Aim; equipment, technology and process; variable to isolate; steps; success criteria; evaluation method; documented reflection. (b) The isolated variable and the evaluation method (also accept vague/absent success criteria). (c) Only if one variable changes (the rest held constant) can a difference in the result be attributed to that change, so the finding is reliable and reusable. **Q3.** (a) Annotated activity log; reflection entry; evaluation write-up. (b) The annotated activity log; it is written as the work happens, so set-ups, settings and observations are recorded accurately while they are fresh rather than reconstructed from memory afterwards. (c) It makes the record repeatable and analysable; vague wording cannot be reproduced, checked or reused. **Q4.** (a) Deliberately changing one thing while holding everything else constant. (b) Variable: mic distance; hold constant any two of — mic type, recording level, room, speaker, line. (c) Isolate the setting that directly produces the outcome the named skill depends on — the creative or technical choice being mastered; everything else that could affect that outcome becomes a control. **Q5.** (a) It names no single skill or form-specific technique, so nothing can be practised or measured. (b) Any one-skill aim, e.g. “hold focus on a subject walking towards the lens”. (c) (i) vague; (ii) precise; (iii) vague; (iv) precise. **Q6.** Own form. (a) One specific skill (not a broad wish). (b) Specific equipment/process + one isolated variable. (c) Observable criteria set in advance + a stated method for judging the trials. **Q7. Outline (3).** Experiments develop the specific skills a production needs, test that the chosen equipment/technologies/processes work in the form, and produce documented evidence that informs production choices — reducing risk before committing to the production. (3 features, briefly.) **Q8. Describe (4).** One skill (e.g. conveying motion); the equipment/process (camera with manual shutter control, tripod); one isolated variable (shutter speed, exposure held constant); an observable success criterion; and an evaluation method. Must isolate a variable and state evaluation. **Q9. Describe (4).** A dated, running record of what was done as it was done: the set-ups and settings tried, the variable changed and controls held, observations at each step, in precise media language. **Q10. Explain (4).** Why it fails: no date or named test, no variable identified, no controls, no criterion, and vague words (“too orange”, “normal”, “happy”) that cannot be reproduced or checked. How it should read: date/name the test; name the variable isolated (the white-balance setting) with a before/after; state the controls held (subject, light, exposure); give a code-level observation (a warm orange colour cast under indoor tungsten light, then neutral); record the decision and the criterion met (skin tones read neutral). **Q11. Outline — full template (6).** Print/digital skill (e.g. legible type hierarchy); layout software + typefaces; one variable (headline-to-body size ratio) with controls; steps (mock-ups at set ratios); observable criteria (reader finds key info fast; intended reading order); evaluation (timed find-the-info task / peer check); documented reflection in media language. All seven parts. **Q12. Discuss (5).** Two of: narrow the aim to one skill (e.g. freezing motion); isolate one variable (shutter speed) and hold aperture, ISO and position constant — the plan changes three at once; replace “look good” with an observable criterion (subject rendered sharp with no motion blur); add an evaluation method (side-by-side review against the criterion). Develop each fix. **Q13. Explain (5).** Chain: the evaluated result gives a tested, specific setting/technique → which is recorded as a production decision → which shapes equipment choices, the shot/shoot plan, the schedule and the second experiment → so planning rests on evidence, not guesswork. **Q14. Outline — full template (6).** Audio skill different from Ex3/Q4 (e.g. capturing usable room tone, or controlling plosives with mic angle) across all seven parts, one variable isolated, observable criteria, evaluation, documented reflection. **Q15. Discuss (4).** Without evaluation against stated criteria there is no way to know whether the skill developed or which set-up worked; the activity produces footage/audio but no *finding*, cannot be reused or justified in the folder, and repeats the 2025 weakness. Completion is not evaluation. **Q16. Describe (4).** Reflection = personal, after the event, about the learning and what to change; evaluation = judgement of results against success criteria, with evidence and a decision. Reflection builds the learner; evaluation justifies the production choice. **Q17. Discuss (6).** Own form. Two experiments build the specific skills the product needs; documentation makes each tested setting reproducible on set and defensible to a teacher, client or crew; two of them cover the product’s hardest demands and expose what is still untested — so you begin knowing what you can do and where the risk sits. **Q18. Analyse (8).** See solution: strengths (single skill, one variable isolated with controls, observable criteria, real evaluation method, decision carried to production) and any gap (e.g. depth of field not noted; lighting/aperture interaction untested), then how well it informs the production. **Q19. Analyse (5).** One variable under test — the playable character’s movement — with the existing world held constant, so the result can be attributed to it; the finding is observable (no area in the existing style suits that movement), not an impression; a result that contradicts the plan is a finding, not a failure; documenting it converts the finding into a production decision (rebuild as a standalone game with a world designed around the character); and it arrives before the build, so later planning rests on tested evidence rather than guesswork.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A **production experiment** is a **controlled, purposeful trial** run to develop **one specific skill** in a selected media form, using equipment, technologies and processes appropriate to that form, from which the result is **documented and evaluated**. It is not a rough first draft of the product. (b) **Success criteria** are the **observable outcomes, stated in advance**, that would show the skill has developed — something you can see, hear or measure. (c) An **evaluation method** is the **stated process** by which you judge the trials **against the success criteria** — for example a side-by-side review, frame-by-frame checking, or structured peer feedback.

Q2. (a) In order: **aim; equipment, technology and process; variable to isolate; steps; success criteria; evaluation method; documented reflection**. (b) A weak experiment most often omits the **isolated variable** and the **evaluation method** (frequently with vague or absent success criteria too). (c) *“Explain” asks for a how/why chain.* An experiment is only useful if a change in the outcome can be **attributed** to a deliberate choice. If you change **one** variable and hold everything else constant, any difference in the result must be caused by that variable — so the finding is **reliable and reusable** in the production. Change several things at once and you cannot say which one produced the result, so nothing is learned. *Marker’s note:* the key idea is *attribution* — say why holding the rest constant is what makes the result mean something.

Q3. (a) An **annotated activity log**, a **reflection entry** and an **evaluation write-up**. (b) The **annotated activity log** is the one written **while the trials are being run** — the other two are written after the experiment. Its timing is what makes it reliable: the set-ups, the settings used and the observation at each step are recorded **as they happen**, in media language, rather than reconstructed from memory once the gear is packed away, so nothing that made a take work is lost. (c) *“Explain” asks how/why.* Precise **media language** names the equipment, setting, code and effect, so the record can be **repeated and checked** by you or another crew member and can be **analysed** later. Vague wording (“moved the lights and it looked better”) records effort but no usable information, so the documentation fails its purpose. *Common errors:* writing the log up afterwards from memory, and recording effort instead of the settings and observations another person could act on.

Q4. (a) **Isolating a variable** means **deliberately changing one thing** in the experiment while **holding everything else constant**. (b) For a microphone-placement experiment, isolate the **microphone distance** from the speaker; hold constant any two of — the **microphone type**, the **recording level**, the **room**, the **speaker** and the **line spoken**. (c) *“Explain” asks how/why.* The variable follows from the aim. Once the skill is named, ask **which single setting actually produces the outcome that skill depends on** — that is the creative or technical choice you are trying to master, and it becomes the variable. If the skill is a smooth rack focus, the outcome is a clean, unhurried landing on the second subject, so the variable is the **pull duration**, not the lens or the subject. Everything else that could change that outcome — the marked subject positions, the aperture, the framing — becomes a **control**, because leaving any of them free would let it, rather than your chosen setting, explain the result. *Marker’s note:* the reward is for reasoning **from the aim to the variable**, with a worked instance — not for repeating “only change one thing”.

Q5. (a) “Get better at using the camera” names **no single skill** and **no form-specific technique**, so there is nothing precise to practise, isolate or measure — it is a wish, not an aim. (b) Any precise, single-skill aim, for example: **“develop the skill of holding focus on a subject as they walk towards the lens”**. (c) (i) **vague**; (ii) **precise**; (iii) **vague**; (iv) **precise**. *Common errors:* a “precise” aim must name the skill *and* be checkable — (ii) and (iv) name a measurable technique, (i) and (iii) do not.

Q6. (*Model, own form — moving image.*) (a) Skill: **develop a controlled slow push-in on a tripod head so the move stays smooth and steady**. (b) Equipment/process: **a camera on a fluid-head tripod, a marked start and end framing**; the one variable isolated is the **speed of the push-in**, with the framing, focal length, subject and lighting held constant. (c) Success criteria: **the move is smooth with no jerk or drift, and arrives on the end framing on a count of five**; evaluation method: **review the three speeds side by side and rate smoothness, confirmed by a peer picking the steadiest take**. *Marker’s note:* Q6 is a scaffold — the marks (in a test) would reward one skill, one isolated variable and a stated evaluation, exactly as the unscaffolded items demand.

Q7. *“Outline” asks for the main features, briefly.* Production experiments are conducted to **develop the specific skills** a proposed production will require, to **test that the chosen equipment, technologies and processes** actually work in the selected form, and to produce **documented evidence** of skill development that **informs later production choices**.

In Unit 3 you complete **two** such experiments accompanied by documentation. Their purpose is to **reduce risk** — you learn the technique and settle the technique settings *before* committing to the production, rather than discovering problems during it. *Marker's note:* three marks want three distinct features (develop skills / test equipment-and-process / produce documentation that informs the production) — outline them, do not write an essay.

Q8. “Describe” asks for an account with features. To develop the skill of **conveying motion in a still image**, I would run a **shutter-speed experiment**. Using a **camera with manual shutter control on a tripod**, I would photograph the same moving subject — a cyclist passing a fixed point — three times, changing **only the shutter speed** (1/500 s, 1/60 s and 1/15 s) and **compensating aperture and ISO** to hold the exposure constant, with the framing and the subject's path unchanged. My **success criterion**, set in advance, would be that the moving cyclist shows **directional motion blur** while the static background stays **sharp**. To **evaluate**, I would view the three frames **side by side**, judge each against that criterion, and record the chosen shutter speed in media language for the production. *Common errors:* changing several settings at once, or stopping at “the photo shows movement” without a criterion or an evaluation — four marks need the isolated variable *and* the evaluation.

Q9. “Describe” asks for an account. An effective **annotated activity log** is a **dated, running record made while the experiment is carried out**. It records **what was done as it was done**: the **set-ups and settings** tried (for example, the three fill-light levels), the **variable that was changed and the controls held constant**, and the **observation at each step**, all in **precise media language** (shadow detail, noise floor, reverb, ratio). It notes the **take chosen** and the **criterion it met**, and it ends with the **next step**. The test of a good log is that another crew member could **repeat the experiment exactly** from it. *Marker's note:* a log *records the process*; do not describe it as a personal reflection (that is a different document) — four marks reward the “as you go”, specific, repeatable qualities.

Q10. “Explain” asks *how/why* — *here, why the entry fails and how it should read*. The entry records that something was done and that the student was pleased, but **nothing that could be repeated or checked**. It does not date or name the test, so it cannot be located; “changed a setting” **names no variable**, so the one thing that produced the improvement is lost; nothing states what was held constant, so the change cannot be **attributed**; and “too orange”, “normal” and “happy with it” are judgements against **no stated criterion**, in everyday rather than media language. As documentation of skill development it therefore evidences no skill.

Recorded properly, in precise media language, it would read: “**3 June — white-balance test, indoor portrait. Photographed the same subject under the same indoor tungsten light at a fixed exposure, changing only the white-balance setting: auto, then a fixed tungsten/indoor preset. On auto the image held a warm orange colour cast and the subject's skin read too warm; on the tungsten preset the cast was neutralised and the skin tones read natural. Chose the tungsten preset — it met the criterion that skin tones read neutral under the indoor light, confirmed by comparing the two frames against a white reference. Next: re-check the preset if the room mixes light sources (window plus lamp).**” *Marker's note:* four marks reward **diagnosis and repair** — name what is missing (the variable, the controls, the criterion), then show the **media language and repeatability** that replace it: a named variable (the white-balance setting), a before/after, controls (subject, light, exposure), code-level observations (colour cast/temperature) and a decision against a criterion. *Common error:* rewording the entry politely — a neater sentence with still no setting named, no controls and no criterion documents nothing.

Q11. “Outline” asks for the key parts set out briefly — *here, all seven. Model (print/digital — type hierarchy). Aim:* develop the skill of building a **legible type hierarchy** on a magazine feature spread so a reader takes in the headline, standfirst and body in the intended order. **Equipment, technology and process:** layout software, one serif and one sans-serif typeface, a fixed A4 page grid and the same body copy throughout. **Variable to isolate:** the **headline-to-body point-size ratio**, holding the typefaces, column width, leading and colour constant. **Steps:** produce three mock-ups of the same spread — headline at roughly 2×, 3× and 4× the 11 pt body size — labelling each. **Success criteria:** readers identify the article's topic within about three seconds, and, asked what they read first, name the headline, then the standfirst, then the body — with no two elements competing for first place. **Evaluation method:** a timed **find-the-topic task** with several peers across the three mock-ups, plus their stated reading order, judged against the criteria. **Documented reflection:** log which ratio met the criteria and why, in media language (“the 3× headline led the eye cleanly; at 2× the standfirst competed with the headline”), and record the ratio to reuse. *Marker's note:* six marks reward **all seven parts present**, one variable genuinely isolated, and **observable** criteria — a type test can be measured (time-to-find, reading order), so do not fall back on “it looks clean”.

Q12. “Discuss” asks you to develop each point and reach a position. This plan will not develop a specific skill in its current form, and two changes would fix it. **First, narrow the aim and isolate one variable.** “Improve my

photography” names no skill, and the plan changes the **shutter speed, the aperture and the shooting position all at once**, so no result could be attributed to any one choice. It should name **one skill** — say **freezing fast motion** — and isolate a **single variable, the shutter speed**, holding the aperture, ISO and position constant, so the effect can be traced to that change. **Second, replace “look good” with observable criteria and an evaluation method.** “Keep the ones I like best” is subjective preference, not evaluation. The plan should set a criterion in advance — **the skater is rendered sharp with no motion blur at the peak of the trick** — and evaluate by **reviewing the frames side by side against that criterion**, ideally with a peer confirming the sharpest frame. With one isolated variable and a defined evaluation, the trial becomes a genuine test that develops the skill. *Marker’s note:* five marks reward **developing** each fix (why it matters), not just listing “be more specific”; the plan contains all three classic weaknesses at once — a **vague aim, uncontrolled variables and no evaluation** — so any two of them, developed, will do.

Q13. “Explain” asks for a how/why chain. A production experiment informs later planning because its **evaluated result is a tested, specific decision** that planning can be built on. The chain runs like this: the experiment isolates a variable and judges the trials against criteria, which yields a **settled technique setting** — a specific, tested configuration (an exposure, a level, a distance, a size ratio) that reliably produced the intended result. That finding is **recorded as a production decision**, which then **shapes the equipment list** (the lights and modifiers you know you need), the **shot or shoot plan** (set-ups you know will work), the **schedule** (time budgeted for a technique you can now do) and the **design of the second experiment** (building on what the first settled). Because each planning choice now rests on **evidence you generated and evaluated** rather than a guess, the production is **lower-risk and better justified**. *Marker’s note:* five marks want the **causal links** — result → recorded decision → specific planning choices — not a general statement that “experiments help you plan”.

Q14. “Outline” asks for the key parts set out briefly — here, all seven. Model (audio — capturing usable room tone, distinct from the mic-distance experiments elsewhere). **Aim:** develop the skill of **recording clean room tone** (the ambient sound of a location with no dialogue) so it can be laid under edits to smooth sound gaps. **Equipment, technology and process:** a cardioid microphone, a recorder, headphones and a quiet marked position in the room. **Variable to isolate:** the **recording level (gain)** — low, medium and high — with the microphone, position, room and duration (30 seconds each) held constant. **Steps:** record three 30-second takes of the empty room at the three gain settings, labelling each, with all doors and devices unchanged. **Success criteria:** a take with a **steady, even ambient bed, no clipping and no intrusive intermittent noise**, at a level that sits **just under the dialogue**. **Evaluation method:** listen back on headphones, check the level meter for clipping, and rate each take against the criteria, confirmed by a peer identifying the cleanest bed. **Documented reflection:** log which gain met the criteria and why, in media language (“the medium gain gave a steady bed with headroom; the high gain clipped on the passing traffic”), and note the setting for the edit. *Marker’s note:* six marks reward **all seven parts**, a variable genuinely isolated (gain, not “record some room tone”), and **observable** audio criteria (steady bed, no clipping). *Common error:* repeating the mic-distance experiment — the question requires a **different** audio skill.

Q15. “Discuss” asks you to develop the point and reach a position. An experiment that is **completed but never evaluated** against stated criteria has limited value because completion and evaluation are different things. Running the takes produces **footage or audio**, but without success criteria decided in advance and a method for judging the trials against them, there is **no finding** — you cannot say which set-up worked, by how much, or whether the skill actually developed. The result **cannot be reused or justified** in the research folder, because there is no recorded, criterion-based decision to carry into production; and it **repeats the exact weakness** the 2025 examiners identified in this task — experiments offered with no evaluation method at all. A genuine experiment therefore must **close the loop:** set criteria, judge the trials against them, and record the outcome. On balance, an unevaluated experiment is an *activity*, not a *test* — it consumes time without producing knowledge. *Marker’s note:* four marks reward the distinction between **doing** and **evaluating**, and the consequence (no reusable finding) — reach the position that completion alone is insufficient.

Q16. “Describe” asks for an account of each and what it contributes. A **reflection entry** is a **personal, considered account written after an experiment:** what you learned, what surprised you, how the skill now feels and what you would do differently. It contributes the **learner’s growth** — it shows skill development over the two experiments and guides your next attempt. An **evaluation write-up** is a **judgement of the results against the success criteria:** which set-up met the target, by how much, with the evidence and the decision taken. It contributes the **justified production choice** — the tested finding you carry forward. In short, a reflection develops *you*; an evaluation justifies *the work*. *Common error:* writing two reflections — the evaluation must be **tied to the stated criteria and end in a decision**, not to feelings.

Q17. “Discuss” asks you to develop the point with reference to your form and reach a position. *Model (own form — moving image).* Completing and documenting **two production experiments** would prepare me to begin my short film in several linked ways. First, the experiments **develop the specific skills** the film needs — say a controlled three-point lighting set-up in the first experiment and a smooth focus pull in the second — so I can **execute the planned shots** rather than hoping they work on the day. Second, the **documentation** is what makes that skill **reproducible and defensible**: the annotated logs, reflections and criterion-based evaluations fix each tested setting in writing (the fill ratio that holds shadow detail; the pull duration that lands cleanly), so I can repeat it exactly under pressure on set, hand it to a crew member, and **justify** the choice to a teacher or client instead of asserting it. Third, two experiments let me aim the preparation at the **two hardest demands** of the film and then judge what is still untested — so I begin knowing both what I can do and where the remaining risk sits, rather than discovering it mid-shoot. Together the two experiments turn general research into **practised skill and documented decisions**, so I begin the production from evidence rather than from a blank page. *Marker’s note:* six marks reward the **link from experiment → documentation → specific planning readiness**, grounded in a **named form** — a generic “experiments are useful” answer will not reach the top of the band.

Q18. *Command term — analyse:* identify the components of the experiment and the relationships between them, and judge how well they work together to develop the skill and inform the production, with specific evidence from the log.

Model response. This experiment is **well designed and documented**, and it develops the intended skill with only a minor gap. Its **aim** is precise and single: a **smooth rack focus between two subjects at a fixed distance** — one skill in one form, not “get better at focusing”. The **equipment and process** are appropriate and specified (manual focus with a follow-focus unit, subjects marked at 1 m and 3 m, aperture and framing fixed), which matters because it is the **fixed aperture and framing** that make the trial a controlled test. Crucially, the design **isolates a single variable** — the **pull duration** (1 s, 2 s, 3 s) — and holds everything else constant, so the difference in the result can be **attributed to duration alone**. The **success criteria are observable** and set in advance (focus lands on the second subject’s eyes with **no overshoot or hunting**, and the pull **feels smooth**), and the **evaluation method is genuine: frame-by-frame review** plus a **blind peer judgement** of the smoothest pull, judged against those criteria. The **documented reflection** closes the loop in media language — the 1 s pulls **overshot and hunted**, the 3 s pulls **dragged**, the 2 s pulls **landed cleanly** — and ends in a **decision carried into the production** (“a 2 s pull for the reveal shot”). This is exactly the loop a strong experiment completes: aim, one isolated variable, observable criteria, a real evaluation, and a recorded production decision.

The **one gap** worth naming is that the log fixes the **aperture** to hold depth of field constant but does not record **what that aperture was**, and a rack focus reads very differently at a shallow versus a deep depth of field — so the finding (“a 2 s pull”) is only reliable **at that untested aperture**. Noting the aperture, and ideally testing the pull at a second depth of field, would make the result fully transferable to the production shot.

Overall the experiment **informs the production well**: because the variable was isolated and the trials were evaluated against clear criteria, the student leaves with a **tested, specific setting** (a 2 s pull) and a **justified decision** for a named shot, rather than a vague sense that they are “better at focusing”. That is the difference between an activity and an experiment. *Marker’s note:* an 8-mark “analyse” must **break the design into its parts** (aim, variable, controls, criteria, evaluation, reflection) and **judge how they work together**, cite **specific evidence from the log**, and reach a supported verdict — ideally naming both a strength and a limitation. *Common errors:* merely retelling the log (“first they did 1 s, then 2 s...”) instead of judging the design; or praising it in general terms without pointing to the isolated variable and the evaluation method as the reasons it works.

Q19. *Command term — analyse:* break the example into its parts — what was tested, what was held constant, what the result was, what was recorded and what followed — show how those parts relate, and judge how well the result served the planning.

Model response. The Team Cherry example is a production experiment in miniature, and its value lies in what the trial **isolated**. The **aim** was not to finish a product but to settle one question: whether a second playable character, with a wider range of movement than the original, could be carried by the world that already existed. That makes the character’s **movement** the **variable**, with the existing world and its style **held constant** — so the outcome could be **attributed** to the movement rather than to several simultaneous changes.

The **result was observable**, which is what separates a test from an activity: there was no natural way to build an area in the existing style around that character’s height and movement. That is a finding another person can check against

the work, not a report that something “felt wrong”. Measured against the original plan the result was negative — the downloadable content could not be made as intended — but a negative result is still a **finding**. The experiment did its job precisely by showing that the plan would not hold.

What makes the finding usable is that it was **documented and acted on**. The studio recorded the change in its own reveal post in February 2019 and has since described the reasoning publicly, so the decision that followed — rebuild the project as a standalone game with a new world designed around the character — rests on a **stated reason** rather than a preference. That is the chain this subtopic teaches: **isolated variable** → **observable result** → **documented reflection** → **production decision**. The release of *Hollow Knight: Silksong* on 4 September 2025 is only the endpoint; the part that informs planning is that the plan changed **early, on evidence**, rather than late, on discovery. *Marker’s note*: five marks reward naming the **variable** and what was **held constant**, the **observable** result, and the **documented decision** that followed, then judging how well that result informed the planning. *Common errors*: retelling the release story instead of analysing the experiment logic; or treating “the plan changed” as a failure rather than as the finding the trial was run to produce.