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TOP SCHOLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship 2023 Media Studies

Time allowed: Three hours
Total score: 24

ANSWER BOOKLET

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

Answer all THREE questions from Question Booklet 93303Q, and write your answers in this booklet.

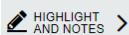
Begin your answer to Question One on page 3, your answer to Question Two on page 11, and your answer to Question Three on page 19.

If you need more room for any answer, use the extra space provided at the back of this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–28 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (☒). This area may be cut off when the booklet is marked.

YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.



Page 1

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer all THREE questions. Plan and write your answers below.

For EACH question:

- You should refer to a wide range of specific evidence to support your analysis.
- You may respond by agreeing or disagreeing with your chosen quotation or statement, OR by considering a variety of points of view.

Do NOT use the same material to answer more than one question.

QUESTION ONE: The relationship(s) between media and wider society

With reference to ONE of the quotations or statements below, **analyse the development** of a medium / media industry and / or the factors that shape it.

Quotations / statements (Choose ONE)

1. “... reaching an audience with the right content in a personalised way is the challenge for media companies.” *Esther Westra*
2. There should be regulation of social media because of its negative influence on the public good.
3. “New Zealand is a country full of storytellers with rich, diverse stories waiting to be told, so we must act now to ensure that the entire industry is able and ready to tell them.” *Glen Kyne*
4. “Streaming was built for yesterday’s music business.” *Mark Mulligan*

SELECTED QUOTATION

Copy and paste the quotation you have chosen into the space below.

2. There should be regulation of social media because of its negative influence on the public good.

PLANNING



1. Introduction
2. What is the negative influence on the public good?
 1. Radicalisation & Terrorism
 2. Misinformation
3. What regulations are already imposed
4. What further regulation should be imposed?
5. Conclusion

ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question One** in the space below.

B I U | | |

Social media is an industry that has become ingrained in the very framework of society itself within its short lifespan. Whether this integration is, overall, for better or for worse is a heavily debated topic, but there are some effects of social media, predominantly negative, on society as a whole that cannot be denied. The anonymous quote "*There should be regulation of social media because of its negative influence on the public good.*" expresses a sentiment that is clearly aware of the negative impacts of social media on public good, with an awareness to the point that they wish for regulation on the social media industry as a whole. I understand this sentiment, and believe that, to a degree, regulations need to be imposed on social media *companies* (not users), however I also believe that significant regulations are already imposed on social media companies, albeit reactive ones. I define the anonymous statement as a wish for the implementation of *proactive* regulations on *companies* for the public good.

To judge the rationality of this statement, the question must first be asked - what is the "*negative influence on the public good*" being mentioned here? Society has been vastly impacted by the advent of social media in recent years, growing up from a nascent industry with dwindling popularity 20 years ago to a staple of societal culture in the present day. This has led to various societal effects, some of which are even threatening to human life and wellbeing. The first of these alarmingly negative effects is the process of radicalisation, defined as the amplification of views, political or social, within their respective spectrums, sometimes even to the extreme regions of those spectrums. Social media has allowed for the creation of what are called "*echo chambers*", digital communities that harbour a large amount of people sharing common view(s) on one or more matters. By surrounding a person with points of views that align with their own, the person will typically begin to feel validated and reinforced in that certain view, allowing for an increase in the intensity of those views. This can be harmless, like in a community about an activity or type of media, but oftentimes this amplification and subsequent radicalisation occurs in communities with harmful or hateful views.

Another example of negative influence on the public good as a result of social media is the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation that occurs on social media platforms. With an increased access to information in the internet era, many take it upon themselves to "do their own research" on topics typically left to professionals. This leads to complications due to confirmation bias, where if an individual has a pre-conceived notion on what they wish the outcome of their research to be, they will search for sources that reaffirm their pre-conceived ideas. This is made worse by social media, where often people will be in communities already designed to reaffirm their ideas (like the aforementioned echo chambers) where misinforming news and information is shared, with the validity of the sources not cared for due to their biases. An example of this is American Republicans during the Covid-19 Crisis, where it was the belief of members of the Republican Party, as well as their leader Donald Trump, that Covid-19 was a hoax designed for the government to control the masses, and any enforced action taken by the government (like mask mandates and lockdowns) were a breach of their rights. Many of these American republicans would congregate in Facebook groups (creating an echo chamber), where untrustworthy information sources could be shared, which would be believed by members of the group so long as it affirmed their prior beliefs of the hoax status

of Covid-19. This was made worse by the Dunning-Krueger effect, where those of less intelligence and critical thinking ability perceive themselves as having a higher intelligence and critical thinking ability than they actually do. This led to many effects, one of which was the usage of a Horse Dewormer, Ivermectin, as an alternative medicine to remedy the Covid-19 virus, instead of the government-approved vaccines which were perceived to be dangerous and/or containing microchips. The negative influence to public good in this scenario is evidently clear; a group of people ingesting a potentially toxic horse dewormer, untried on humans, because of a misinformation rampage spread on social media platforms (mainly facebook). With this spread of misinformation, combined with the previously mentioned radicalisation, that occurs on social media, it's clear that "*regulation of social media*" as termed in the statement, is definitely necessary.

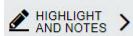
Both the spread of misinformation and the radicalisation of users can be traced to one point - content being shared on the platform by users. Misinformation originates from misinforming content posted by users, and radicalisation, in the relevant context, originates from hateful content posted by users, both of which reaffirm the pre-existing beliefs of other users and lead to the mentioned societal consequences. This makes the solution of what regulations to enforce evident - placing on social media corporations the burden of seeking, monitoring, and potentially censoring the spread of misinformation or hateful content. Social media corporations have access to the content being posted on their platforms, so to lessen the negative societal impacts all that must be done is control of the content being posted. This is a complex process which should not be trivialised as a simple solution - but it's a necessary solution. If hate speech and misinformation can be removed by companies before it achieves widespread recognition by users in platforms, the harmful effects can be lessened. This may also involve the deletion of entire communities, like the aforementioned /pol/ 4chan group, which serve no purpose *but* to spread hate speech and foster radicalisation. So the statement of "*There should be regulation of social media because of its negative influence on the public good*" is not only agreeable, but its goal of regulation is achievable to great effect.

This is not to say that regulation does not already exist, but regulation is typically a *consequence* that occurs *after* an incident, an example of *reactive* regulation. This occurs very often. A recent supreme court investigation into the social media platform "TikTok" was launched in the United States, with the government accusing TikTok of being Chinese Spyware and threatening an outright ban of its usage in the United States. Additionally, financial sanctions, both direct and indirect, are greatly effective against the profit-seeking social media companies. *Direct* sanctions can be classified as fines, whereas *indirect* financial sanctions can be classified as the loss of market value due to reputational or financial damage. Both of these sanctions occurred in the Cambridge-Analytica Scandal during the 2010s, where a third-party data company, Cambridge-Analytica, was found to be using Facebook to harvest user data illegally to sell to political parties, in particular the Republican Party of the United States, in order to assist with targeted political advertising. This breach of privacy is another example of negative influence on society, with targeted political advertising possibly contributing to small-scale political radicalisation. Regardless, the implication of the social media company Facebook in the scandal led to heavy consequences being imposed on them. This included a 500,000 pound fine from the United Kingdom and a \$5 billion USD fine from the United States, one of the largest fines ever issued by the United States. Additionally, Facebook's market value dropped by 24%, equivalent to around \$150 billion USD. Social media corporations, being publicly traded companies, are always fearful of their reputation, as scandals can severely damage their market value, meaning they have a responsibility to their shareholders to *not* be implicated in any scandals or evident harms to public good. The consequences don't even need to come from official government bodies.

However, all of these mentioned regulations occur *after* the harm has been done, which is not a sustainable regulation scheme for the prevention of the negative influence that social media has on society. Mentioned in the introduction, my classification of the statement was that it calls for *proactive* regulations, something that is not common in social media corporations, but would be greatly effective. If financial regulations were to be codified into national legislatures, it could serve as a massive deterrence to social media corporations to be involved in harmful actions. And if this regulation was to also mandate the persistent monitoring of social media platforms for misinformation or hate speech, and the subsequent removal of said content wherever possible, this could lead to reform in the effects of social media on society, at least partially remedying its negative influence by threatening corporations with financial sanctions.

However, this could have downsides for society as well. As with any occurrence of censorship or banning, the affected activity always has a tendency to migrate further out of public spotlight. This is particularly possible with groups that foster hate speech, like the 4chan /pol/ group, who already have criminal associations. If hate speech groups are banned on well-known and highly used social media corporations, the users can just as easily set up a new site specifically dedicated to their ideas, furthering the effect of the echo chamber by creating an even larger echo chamber with less possibility of regulation and more possibility of radicalisation. There is no readily accessible example of this exactly occurring, but one similar occurrence was when former U.S President Donald Trump was banned off of Twitter for spreading misinformation. Trump, following his ban, created his own social media platform, TRUTH Social. This lead to a mass migration of his followers, almost all U.S Republicans that share his political and ideological views, to his own social media app. This meant that these Republicans went from Twitter, a social media platform with a diverse range of users of all political views, to TRUTH Social, which became a large homogenised echo chamber of people that shared Republican views, making the issue of misinformation and radicalisation even worse, despite Twitter's attempt to stop the spread of misinformation.

Overall, the statement "*There should be regulation of social media because of its negative influence on the public good*" is absolutely true. The spread of misinformation and the intensity of radicalisation occurring on social media platforms is extremely detrimental to society and has a negative influence on public good. This calls for regulation, and this regulation is complex to integrate. The best possible course is to institute regulations mandating a control of misinformation and hate speech, but this too has its downsides. Overall, the benefits of the scheme seem to outweigh the negative effects, so I would agree with the established regulation scheme.



Page 2

QUESTION TWO: Media production

With reference to ONE of the quotations or statements below, **demonstrate critical understanding of one medium and its production context**, including reference to your own production experience.

Quotations / statements (Choose ONE)

1. "Learn from mistakes. Yours and other people's." *Joko Anwar*
2. "The success of a production depends on the attention paid to detail." *David O. Selznick*
3. "Lean into your unique perspective, not away from it." *Catherine Gund*
4. "It's not where you take things from. It's where you take them to." *Jean-Luc Godard*

SELECTED QUOTATION

Copy and paste the quotation or statement you have chosen into the space below.

1. "Learn from mistakes. Yours and other people's." Joko Anwar

PLANNING

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ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question Two** in the space below.

B I U |

Short films differ greatly from feature films in terms of their conventions and features. This was something that our group was not very aware of when creating our short film "A Solo Job". *A Solo Job* followed the story of three hitmen that encounter each other on what they each believed was a solo hit, only to turn out to be a set-up by the police. We prefaced our short film creation by watching the short film "*Day Trip*", a 10-minute long short film following a gang member that spontaneously takes a boat trip to escape his mob life. The statement "*Learn from mistakes. Yours and other people's.*" from Joko Anwar is absolutely relevant to our short film, especially in terms of learning from our own mistakes, of which there were many.

To begin with, our viewing of the short film "*Day Trip*" was almost completely ignored. The short film was intended to be our inspiration text to inform us of short film conventions, but during our production, we did not consider it at all. This was the first major mistake we learnt from eventually. *Day Trip* is an excellent exemplar of short film conventions. The film uses barely any dialogue at all, and what small amount of dialogue is present is merely background noise and doesn't contribute to the narrative. Short film conventions typically involve little dialogue, as a fully-fleshed narrative is hard to create with dialogue in such a short timeframe that a short film gives the creator. Meaning is supposed to be created with visuals, in a show-not-tell way. This was not implemented into our short film, *A Solo Job*. The script, which was around 4 and 1/2 pages long for 5 minutes of content, had a large amount of dialogue, and lead to the film being cluttered, with every scene containing fast talking and a dense narrative. This failure can even be traced back to our concept. *Day Trip*'s concept allows for barely any dialogue in its simplicity, - one man goes on a trip. No establishment of the characters or background is necessary here except on the visual plane (established by shots of his messy and chaotic lifestyle, and closeups of the Mongrel Mob patch on the main character's back). Our concept involved interactions between three characters, whom we wanted to flesh out a lot, while also continuing a complex narrative (complex at least for a 5-minute short film.) The reflections of this in the final product made us learn, from our own mistakes, about the necessity of a simple concept and a small amount of dialogue being used in short films. I think another root of this failure can be traced back to our misunderstanding of the medium of short films, where we were inspired by Quentin Tarantino and Edgar Wright *films*, films being extremely different in their form to short films.

After our script was written we storyboarded the film. Storyboarding was more successfully reflected in the final product than our script was. In this case, in regards to the statement, we did learn from "*other people's mistakes*". After creating our storyboard we found ourselves researching low-budget short films by other students on the OnScreen YouTube account, and we noticed inherent flaws in their cinematographical staging and compositions. In some cases shots were staged in random ways that did not reflect any sort of cause or reason. We wished for our short film production to contain well thought-out shots, which ended up occurring to some degree, so we made changes to multiple shots in our storyboard to try and add some meaning to our cinematographical choices. An example of us learning from these 'mistakes' and improving our storyboard is the staging of two of our three hitmen in a two-shot and the other, less experienced hitman, by himself during some dialogue scenes, to emphasise the distance between the hitmen in terms of experience, and to reflect the view of the more experienced hitmen of the less experienced hitman. We also implemented a lot of free-form camerawork to create a fast-paced and suspenseful feel, like a scene where the camera rapidly swivels between the conversing hitmen as they talk, as well as two shots where the camera circles the hitmen as they discuss. We used '*other people's mistakes*' to attempt to learn from and to improve our own cinematography in the storyboarding process, which worked to some degree.

The most uncoordinated and complex part of our production was the logistical phase of securing a film location, as well as organising times where actors were ready to shoot. The location scouting phase was hard because of our complex criteria for a filming location. The location had to be -

1. Well lit, since we wanted the film to be set at night time
2. Secluded and not popular - for the reasons that we did not want people walking through our shoot, and because the film involved threatening props like a fake gun and a metal crowbar, and we did not want anybody seeing us and calling the police
3. Easy to obtain permission to use, since we wanted to occupy the filming location legally.

Our final location, a parking garage under a library, was not decided on until the day before our first shoot, and it was a place where we had never scouted before. This resulted in the audio from our shoot being drowned out by noise from the air vents in the carpark, which would not have occurred if we had not made the mistake of not scouting our filming location. We learnt two lessons from these mistakes - one was to lower our standards for a filming location, as it is better to sacrifice one of our criteria for the sake of actually finding a filming location (in this case the first criterion would be the first to be sacrificed). The second lesson was to ensure locations are scouted properly, as we didn't realise the inadequacy of the filming location due to the audio issues until after we arrived there.

After our shoot came post-production, which was relatively successful and little mistakes were made during the process itself, but we were greatly disadvantaged by mistakes we made during shooting. First, which has already been mentioned, was the audio issues caused by the poor choice of location. This greatly disadvantaged us in many ways. We had to spend large amounts of time editing the sound levels, cutting out frequencies and adjusting panning in order to lessen the presence of the noise from the air vents. This process only had a minor effect on the audibility, and dialogue was still for the most part inaudible. Another impact this had was on the score. I had liked the score of our inspiration film *Day Trip*, and thought it had contributed to the tone of the film in a great manner. So I spent hours composing a score in MuseScore to try and contribute to the tone of *our* film, by composing a laid-back slow-tempo jazz song to use at the start, and then a fast paced piece with strings arpeggios as the tensions rise towards the end. All of the effort was wasted, as when the score was imported we realised that the noise from the vents also drowned out the score, and the volume couldn't be raised on the score or it would drown out what little dialogue was still audible. What we learnt from this mistake has already been mentioned - better location scouting is necessary. But another issue arose in post-production which was a lack of coverage for editing. The number of takes we took were fairly scarce, only having 1-2 usable takes for each shot. Additionally, the takes often ended immediately after the respective action was done, leaving no room at the end or the beginning of the take to allow our editing to sew the shots together in a way that doesn't look jarring. Also, despite our efforts on set, we were unable to capture any master shots due to our actors' lack of familiarity with the script. A master shot, running through the entire script from start to finish, would've provided us with sufficient coverage for our editing problems, but we had none. These mistakes taught us lessons about taking coverage shots whilst filming, to make the post-production process far easier. These mistakes were not the fault of our ignorance of the inspiration texts but rather our unfamiliarity with the production process as a whole.

Anwar's statement is definitely applicable to our short film. We made a large number of mistakes during our production due to a lack of familiarity with short film productions and an ignorance of our inspiration text, which lead the outcome of the production to not be what we wanted. We also learnt from the mistakes of others in our storyboarding process by studying the short films of other students on Youtube. These mistakes were both detrimental and invaluable to us. Our mistakes compromised the quality of our production, but we also learn a lot of skills from the mistakes that we made to be applied to future projects. Since the creation of our production *A Solo Job*, we have made another short film, which went far more smoothly due to the mistakes we learnt from. The scheduling and set location was much more planned out and overall the quality was far better, as a result of the mistakes we learnt from. In future productions, more logistical planning needs to be done and closer attention needs to be paid to the inspiration texts and short film conventions as a whole. I am only aware of these needs because of the mistakes we made, which taught us invaluable lessons on the process of short film production.



Page 3

QUESTION THREE: The close reading of media texts

With reference to ONE of the quotations or statements below, **analyse media texts (from any medium)** that you have read closely.

Quotations / statements (Choose ONE)

1. "I think it is very important that films [or other mediums] make people look at what they've forgotten." *Spike Lee*
2. "Film provides an opportunity to marry the power of ideas with the power of images." *Steven Bochco*
3. "I just want to tell good stories in ways that will shine a light on lives rarely seen on screen [or other mediums], because stories can push humanity forward." *Nia DaCosta*
4. "Truly creative things happen when one thinks differently, yet nobody wants to think differently." *Shonda Rhimes*

SELECTED QUOTATION

Copy and paste the quotation or statement you have chosen into the space below.

4. "Truly creative things happen when one thinks differently, yet nobody wants to think differently." Shonda Rhimes

PLANNING

B I U |

"Truly creative things happen when one thinks differently, yet nobody wants to think differently."

Genette's narrative theory

Tense

- Order

- Duration

- Frequency

Mood

Voice

1. Intro
2. How can one think differently
3. When have people thought differently
4. Why might Rhimes think nobody is thinking differently?
5. Conclusion

ANSWER

Type your answer to **Question Three** in the space below.

B I U | | |

A ubiquitous quality of the art of film is its everchanging standards and styles and the endless ability for growth within its form. Film has practically no rules that inhibit creative innovation from its creators, leading to the diverse history of content in its lifetime in the last 2 centuries. No part of the film art is more malleable than the narrative, which is the core of any film no matter its content. Shonda Rhimes' statement "Truly creative things happen when one thinks differently, yet nobody wants to think differently." can absolutely be applied to film narrative. The malleability of its form promotes film directors to "think differently" about its usage, a point which has been exemplified throughout history, however this makes evident an issue with Rhimes' second point, which states that "nobody wants to think differently." This is historically untrue, but can be founded in some basis based on recent examples.

Narrative can be defined as the story and form of a film, the core thread that provides progression and development. Film theorist Gerard Genette identifies three main internal functions of 'narrative discourse' that allow the construction of a narrative - Tense, Mood, and Voice. Tense, referring to the structure of the narrative itself can be divided into three further categories - Order, the chronological sequencing of narrative beats, Duration, the lengthening or shortening of narrative beats, and Frequency, which allows multiple retellings of the same narrative. Mood refers to the control of the access of information within the narrative, often to align the narrative to a certain point of view, and Voice refers to the existence of a point or message within the narrative addressing a certain audience. These functions of narrative can be utilised in virtually endless combinations to create infinitely unique narratives in film, but throughout film history the usage of these functions has become homogenised into narrative precedents followed by the large majority of films. The predominant narrative styles will have a linear tense following a chronological order, a mood that revolves around a selection of main characters, and voice that is a communication of a basic idea to the audience. This homogeneity and narrative monotony found in the film industry is likely what leads Rhimes to make her statement regarding the fact that "nobody wants to think differently." All the functions provided to the constructors of film narrative allow for innovative new possibilities with every story being told, but Rhimes expresses her disappointment at the lack of utilisation of the tools provided to these constructors. She attributes creativity as an outcome of thinking differently, a statement which I agree with. New and original creations in a predominantly monotonous industry *are* inherently creative, as breaking established precedents requires traits of creativity, but it must not be misconstrued as an attribution of negativity towards narratives that *follow* the common narrative. Rhimes' statement that creativity is an outcome of thinking differently does not mean that those following established precedents cannot be creative. One of the most vastly common narrative structures - the three act structure of equilibrium, disequilibrium, equilibrium, established in Todorov's narrative theory, is home to a large number of creative stories, but these stories just aren't inherently creative on the narrative front. For example, Sidney Lumet's 1957 film *Twelve Angry Men* has an extremely basic narrative - 12 jurors deciding on the verdict of a prosecuted criminal are seemingly all in agreement of the criminal's guilt (equilibrium) until one juror expresses his view that the criminal is *not* guilty as arguments ensue when he tries to convince the other jurors (disequilibrium) until finally, he manages to convince all the jurors that the criminal is not guilty and they leave the courtroom with their prejudices reassessed and as changed men (equilibrium). An extremely basic narrative structure in what is an extremely creative film *by other means*, with its unique single-setting and massively dialogue-reliant and uneventful story. This is to say that a reinvention of the narrative is not necessary for creativity to ensue, despite the state of basic and non-inventive film narrative precedents being dominant within the industry.

However, one objection I have to Rhimes' statement in terms of narrative is her assertion that *nobody wants to think differently*. It's entirely likely that Rhimes is hyperbolizing with this assertion, but the fact remains that a large number of films throughout history defy narrative precedents (*thinking differently*) to form an innovative and creative narrative within itself, simultaneously proving the first part of her statement, that creativity ensues when one thinks differently, and disproving the second part, that nobody thinks differently. Film narrative Tense is innovated in the forms of non-linear narrative structure like Kurosawa's *Rashomon* or Tarkovsky's *Mirror*, narrative Mood is innovated when information is limited around a certain perspective like in Nolan's *Oppenheimer*, and narrative Voicing is innovated with unreliable narrators (like in *Rashomon* again) or purposefully incompetent narrators that the audience should ignore the messages of (as in Fincher's *The Killer*). Taking *Rashomon* as an example, Kurosawa thinks differently about the usage of narrative tense, including the employment of the rarely-utilised "frequency" section of Genette's classification of Tense, by having a story retold to the audience through multiple characters, with those character narrators being clearly unreliable, again thinking differently about narrative voicing. There are six retellings of the same event [REDACTED] in *Rashomon*, and Kurosawa structures the film narrative as if a court case where the audience are the interrogators. Confessing characters are shown to the audience in a front-on full shot, as they

are interviewed by a disembodied voice asking questions to the characters, as if a meta-commentary on narrative itself, where we are the disembodied voice from behind the camera wishing to hear the details of the event. Further supported is the frequent use of long shots where characters will rush from the background to the foreground to present information to the audience. Kurosawa implicates us into the narrative structuring by forcing us to reassess our presumptions on the validity of narratives in the first place, which, especially in a 1952 film, is absolutely an example of somebody "thinking differently" about narrative. Clearly, the second part of Rhimes' hyperbolised statement does not fully apply to narrative, as there are thousands of examples of people thinking differently, with *Rashomon* being one of many examples. The sentiment is understandable, where, as mentioned, the large majority of narrative structuring revolves around a linear and three-act narrative, but to say that nobody is thinking differently about the usage of the various functions of film narrative is incorrect.

Shonda Rhimes' statement "*Truly creative things happen when one thinks differently, yet nobody wants to think differently.*" may not be explicitly referring to film narrative, but it can certainly be applied in some capacity, especially in regards to the first section of the statement. And given that film narrative is an integral part of film as a type of media, any massive innovation of the film medium likely involves innovation of film narrative, as it is ubiquitous and ingrained into the threads of the medium itself. Many people do perceive a predominant homogeneity in the film industry, and this perception *can* be improved with *more* film creators thinking differently about how narratives are created, but the fact remains that many people *do* think differently, and many creative things *are* happening or have happened in the film medium throughout history and to this day.



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New Zealand Qualifications Authority

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