# FILM

## Overall grade boundaries

### Higher level

| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mark range:** | 0 – 16 | 17 – 33 | 34 – 46 | 47 – 58 | 59 – 67 | 68 – 79 | 80 – 100 |

### Standard level

| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mark range:** | 0 – 16 | 17 – 35 | 36 – 48 | 49 – 57 | 58 – 68 | 69 – 77 | 78 – 100 |

## Introductory comments on the overall performance of this group of candidates

The first administration of examinations in the pilot of the Film course clearly showed that the syllabus succeeded in eliciting from candidates a full range of responses including an encouraging proportion at the higher levels of performance. Candidates had clearly engaged in their tasks with enthusiasm, and schools had clearly set realistically high expectations for candidates' performance. Some candidates produced work that showed flair and imagination.

There were 39 candidates at SL and 32 at HL. While equal numbers (but not an equal proportion) of SL and HL candidates achieved the highest level, it is notable that in HL the most common level achieved was Leve1 5, "Good", whereas in SL the most common level was Leve1 3, "Mediocre". It was most encouraging to see that this set of examinations had no "candidates at risk". This one outcome is perhaps the biggest endorsement of both the robustness of the syllabus and the understanding and expertise of the teachers.

The tendency for some candidates to perform less well on some of the tasks may well be diminished by future clarifications and modifications to the syllabus or to the assessment criteria.

The candidates who performed at the higher levels consistently demonstrated that they not only knew the material they were expected to have been exposed to, but that they understood it fully, were able to place it in context, to integrate it into a broader personal framework of knowledge and connect it to other learning. These candidates frequently went beyond the mandate of the set tasks, using the requirements of the tasks as a minimum beyond which they could give full reign to their own knowledge, enthusiasm, understanding, talent or creativity. On the other hand, there is likelihood that some candidates who achieved at the lower levels viewed the syllabus and assessment descriptions as the maximum requirement, concluding that they could aim lower and still "get by".

# EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

## Independent study higher level

## Higher level

| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mark range: | 0 – 4 | 5 – 8 | 9 – 11 | 12 – 14 | 15 – 17 | 18 – 20 | 21 – 25 |

## Standard level

| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mark range: | 0 – 4 | 5 – 8 | 9 – 11 | 12 – 14 | 15 –17 | 18 – 20 | 21 – 25 |

The Independent Study asks candidates to produce a script for a short documentary film on a topic of film history or film theory for an audience of their peers. A requirement of the task is that it should make close reference to films from more than one culture. The work presented clearly demonstrated that the task allowed candidates to display both their knowledge and understanding of film history and film theory, and their sensitivity to films from different cultures, while giving opportunities also for them to exercise their creativity and display genuine enthusiasm for their topic. While there were some outstanding pieces of work in this component, it was unfortunate that some candidates selected topics for their Independent Study that did not encourage – or in some cases allow – them to engage in a discussion related to film theory or film history with reference to more than one culture.

## The areas of the course and assessment in which candidates' strengths were apparent

There were some outstanding pieces of work presented by candidates at both SL and HL. In these cases the candidates had selected a realistically limited subject that was clearly rooted in film history and/or film theory. These candidates had explored their subject thoroughly and in depth, using examples from and insightful commentary on films from broadly different cultures.

The best work in Independent Study avoided the easier structure of treating each film separately and, in turn, in favour of an organization rooted in issues of theory, history, culture, comparison and contrast. These works also avoided the trap of spending time and energy on character description and plot summary. Candidates paid close attention to the relationship between picture and sound in their composition. Carefully chosen and meticulously cited scenes from films accompanied by "value-added" commentary on the sound track led the audience logically through well structured, properly supported and carefully worded argument, well suited to the target audience. These same examples tended to reveal a broad base of properly acknowledged research on behalf of their authors, who had used academic as well as popular sources, both print and non-print.

## The areas of the course and assessment where candidates performed less well

Where the Independent Study work was weaker it tended to show different characteristics. Chief among these was the flawed selection of a subject. A disappointing number of candidates presented work that was of good quality except that it was not focused on a topic related to film history or film theory, and was not significantly relevant for a discussion of cultural differences. Many of these pieces had chosen to focus on the treatment of a theme in film content, and then had not related the

treatment of the theme to any discussion of film history, theory or different cultures. Some pieces appeared to be little more than an essay accompanied by pictures, when the ideal situation would have been to present a carefully compiled series of pictures elucidated by the language on the voice-over. Some Independent Study pieces relied entirely on popular web sites for their sources, repeating information that was more related to marketing and promotion of films than to their serious, critical consideration. In structure, the weaker Independent Study pieces often treated each film under discussion in turn, rather than focusing on the comparative points to be made and drawing from each film for illustration. These pieces sometimes fell into the trap of summarizing the plot of the films under discussion. Overall, the weaker pieces appeared more to be exercises in fulfilling an expectation of the examiners, as opposed to enthusiastic engagements with topics of importance to the authors.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Focus on topic selection to make sure that it offers the opportunity to engage in a discussion related to film theory/film history in the light of films from more than one culture

- Help candidates understand differences in film culture by encouraging them to "step into" the other culture and attempt to understand it "from within", rather than assessing it only from the standpoint of their own culture, or of a dominant culture

- Re-emphasize the importance of writing with an eye and an ear on the audience

- Re-emphasize that the IS is intended to stress the *treatment* of subjects in film rather than the subjects themselves

- Use exemplar pieces of work to show the best practice

- Try to spend more time analyzing good examples of short documentary film emphasizing particularly the relationship between visuals and sound in the composition

- Where possible, practice the structuring of argumentation around topics and issues, drawing examples for illustration from different sources, rather than addressing each source in turn and separately

- Focus some instruction on the appropriate selection of source materials (both print and non-print) and on a suitable way of listing them as references. (An Internet address alone is not sufficient.)

## Presentation Higher Level

## Higher level

| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mark range: | 0 – 4 | 5 – 9 | 10 – 11 | 12 – 14 | 15 – 16 | 17 –19 | 20 – 25 |

## Standard level

| Grade: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mark range: | 0 – 4 | 5 – 9 | 10 – 13 | 14 – 15 | 16 – 17 | 18- 19 | 20 – 25 |

The Presentation assessment requires candidates to deliver an audio tape-recorded critical analysis of an extract from a given film "relating its features to the film as a whole and to the wider sociocultural context." The title(s) of the film(s) selected are revealed to the candidates four weeks prior to the Presentation examination. Candidates make their own selection of material from the film(s), and are

expected to use the intervening weeks for close study of their selection and for research into the broader context of the film, its genre, sociocultural context, the film-maker, and the film maker's oeuvre. This task demonstrated, through the excellent work that it elicited from some candidates, that it is a good instrument for assessing critical analysis.

## The areas of the course and assessment in which candidates' strengths were apparent

Candidates who performed best in this task submitted work that was characterized by their own enthusiasm and confident display of knowledge of the text, the film, its context, genre and director. Candidates who appeared to be speaking from notes generally seemed to perform better than those who gave the impression that they were reading verbatim from a prepared text. The best work in the Presentation eschewed a shot-by-shot approach to the chosen segment, selecting an approach that connected comments about individual aspects of the selected sequence to their significance in terms of the director, the director's oeuvre, the genre, the film as a whole and its socio-cultural-political relevance. It was the integration of these aspects of the presentations that set them apart as excellent. Clearly, the candidates who had submitted this work had spent their time wisely, researching the film itself, its genre, its director and the other works of the director. They had consulted some academic sources and integrated what they had learned from them into a personal critique of the given selection. For instance, some candidates were able to point out variations between the 1982 release of *Blade Runner* and the 1992 *Director's Cut* version, using this knowledge to add weight to their own analysis. Other candidates were able to analyze *Raise the Red Lantern* as a cross-cultural film, pointing out how its Chinese style had been modified to appeal to western audiences.

## The areas of the course and assessment where candidates performed less well

Candidates who performed less well in this task appeared to have done less in-depth preparation than those who performed well. Too often the analysis was restricted completely to the few minutes of the film that had been selected for comment, omitting or only skimming over any meaningful reference to the context of the piece within the film, or the context of the film within its genre, culture, period or within the director's oeuvre. Other candidates tended to be too general in their discussion of the film overall, with too little detailed reference to the chosen sequence. Sometimes films were misunderstood, as when the colour red in *Raise the Red Lantern* was interpreted as a symbol of passion or rage, when in Chinese culture it stands for luck; or when the landscape of Monument Valley in *The Searchers* was referred to as "Texas". Some candidates gave a literary analysis of the selected piece, spending their time talking about foreshadowing, symbolism, character development and conflict, instead of rooting their commentary in references to the filmic aspects of camera, lighting, framing, sound, music, colour, movement, editing, mise-en-scene etc. Some others provided a promotional commentary similar to what one would expect from a press release from the film's producers. Some candidates gave the impression that they had not rehearsed or practiced their presentation. Candidates who did less well in this task often seemed to view the suggested outline for planning the Presentation that was circulated to all pilot schools as a required format rather than an aid. Some candidates seemed to be paying more attention to following the format exactly than to the content of their presentation.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Use exemplar pieces of work to show the best practice
- Clarify the rules for teacher prompting during the recording of the Presentation
- Where reading a prepared text is the preferred option for a candidate who

may have difficulty making a more impromptu presentation from notes, the candidate should be sure of their personal knowledge and understanding that is independent of the written text

- Re-emphasize the requirement for the Presentation to focus on commentary of *filmic* qualities, and to use terminology accurately. Avoid talking about what happens and focus on how things are presented to the eye and the ear.

- Re-emphasize the importance of building and presenting connected and supported arguments rather than just assertions.

- Help candidates understand differences in film culture by encouraging them to "step into" the other culture and attempt to understand it "from within", rather than assessing it only from the standpoint of their own culture, or of a dominant culture

- Make it clear that candidates are expected to spend the time between the release of the title(s) of the film(s) for the Presentation and the Presentation examination doing some research on the film, the director, the genre, the era, academic and critical writing to establish a fuller context for their personal analysis of the selected sequence.

- Establish what are seen to be acceptable sources and what are seen to be less useful (e.g. Cinema Journal articles versus promotional Web sites, or fan sites)

- Practice using sources in a way that avoids plagiarism or appropriation of the ideas of a source as one's own. Credit must be given to all sources. Explore the meaning of socio-cultural-political context in film

- Drive home the point that the analysis is to be principally of the filmic aspects of the selection and that thematic or literary discussion is not sufficient.

## INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

## Production Portfolio

## Higher level

| **Grade**: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mark range**: | 0 – 4 | 5 – 8 | 9 – 12 | 13 – 15 | 16 – 17 | 18 – 20 | 21 – 25 |

## Standard level

| **Grade**: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mark range**: | 0 – 4 | 5 – 9 | 10 – 12 | 13 – 14 | 15 – 17 | 18 – 19 | 20 – 25 |

The Production Portfolio is internally assessed and externally moderated. At HL candidates make two completed film projects of approximately 5 minutes in length, and at SL only one such piece. Each production piece is accompanied by a portfolio of written support material consisting of a rationale of 200-400 words, a written commentary or journal of approximately 1000 words, and some 20 pages of photocopied material from production files. The standard of work produced by candidates was encouraging. Candidate enthusiasm and imagination was clearly apparent in the work submitted, with some examples of very high quality work indeed. The assessment of work at HL was somewhat problematic because of the two pieces of work to be assessed as one, and some modification to the task and/or the assessment criteria seems to be called for.

## The areas of the course and assessment in which candidates' strengths were apparent

Many candidates showed that they were at home both with the camera and with the editing process, submitting some pieces of work that were technically sophisticated and imaginatively original. The best pieces of production work were not always supported by the best-written portfolio material, however. Alternatively, some pieces of work that were less successful as productions gained higher marks because of their thorough documentation including self-assessment comments acknowledging areas where improvements could be made in the production. The best pieces of work invariably were the ones that showed evidence of long and careful planning. Story boards and scripts were meticulously developed and closely followed. Departures from the planned path of the production were covered in the documentation with clear rationales. The moderators were impressed with the technical abilities of many candidates especially as demonstrated in their manipulation of editing software. These pieces of work were generally characterized by steady (tripod-mounted) camera work, careful framing of shots, good selection of camera distance or lens length, imaginative lighting, selective, restrained and significant use of editing effects and meaningful selection of music or sound effects.

## The areas of the course and assessment where candidates performed less well

In general, the less well-produced pieces of production work appeared to be those in which the candidates showed least investment. In these cases the production itself was often unoriginal or derivative, being not only a work within an established genre, but a poor copy of some other work within that genre. It appeared that one school strongly encouraged the candidates to focus their productions around an upcoming school function, with the result that some of the work submitted seemed to lack motivation and commitment. Some of the pieces appeared to be the result of an improvisational approach to film-making: They either had no script or story-boards, or decided at the last minute to discard them and follow some other instinct. Written portfolio material was sometimes missing or poorly completed. At times the teacher was able to alert the moderator to the fact that an individual candidate in a group had not done a fair share of the total work of the project. Sometimes a candidate at HL produced a commendable piece of work for the first project and then lost overall marks because the second piece was not of the same quality. Some pieces of work were characterized by unsteady (hand-held) camera work, poor framing of shots, poor selection of camera distance or lens length, poor lighting, overuse or unmotivated use of editing effects, poor selection of music or sound effects.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- The existence and use of sample exemplars in all areas should help teachers understand the kind of candidate work which warrants marks at the very highest levels – marks which some may have been reluctant to award in this round of examinations.

- Teachers should be encouraged to give candidates free choice for their production topics, rather than assigning topics that fit into another school agenda.

## Conclusions

The first and most important conclusion to be drawn from this round of pilot examinations is that the syllabus and assessment for the Film course have been successful. Teachers and candidates alike have demonstrated that the syllabus is capable of eliciting work that is characterized by depth, scope and commitment, and the assessment criteria have been validated in their ability to discriminate fairly among the different levels of performance. It is clear that the most committed and serious candidates

were able to achieve at the highest level, and that the syllabus does not reward candidates who come to the subject without a strong and serious commitment.

Some modification to the existing syllabus will no doubt be needed, particularly in developing some variation in the assessment criteria to allow for better differentiation between the expectations for candidates at SL and HL. As the course is still in pilot stage, the need for any modification will be looked at and, where necessary, applied.

The fact that every component of the course was successful in eliciting some work of outstanding quality, characterized by sometimes-amazing insight and creativity must be attributed not only to the syllabus and the candidates themselves, but to dedicated and sound teaching. It is the teacher who provides that vital component between the intended curriculum of the syllabus and the achieved curriculum of the candidates' performance – the delivered curriculum.