

May 2017 subject reports

FILM

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 13	14 – 29	30 – 42	43 – 54	55 – 67	68 – 79	80 – 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 13	14 – 28	29 – 40	41 – 53	54 – 67	68 – 80	81 – 100

Production portfolio

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 7	8 – 15	16 – 23	24 – 29	30 – 34	35 – 40	41 – 50

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 7	8 – 14	15 – 21	22 – 28	29 – 34	35 – 41	42 – 50

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The films showed a wide range of understanding and skill in terms of expression in film language, just as the commentaries showed a wide range of understanding of the artistic and logistic requirements of the individual production roles. For the most part, the commentaries presented a solid picture of both the production process and the individual work in the chosen role. It is important for students to remember that the assessment task is to create the best 4 to 5 or 6 to 7 minute movie possible. Many students, in their desire to create the best movie possible (instead of the best movie for assessment), conceive of a project which does not meet the descriptors of the criteria, requires inappropriate sound or visual design work, or is simply too long. It is important to support the commentary with graphic and photographic evidence, and many students did a good job of this, though many did not - particularly when it came to selecting specific evidence supporting their chosen role for assessment. One problem that occurred at times for students who did a good job of selecting evidence was when they used captions with the evidence to the degree that the word limit was exceeded. Captions should contain the minimum information possible to ensure the examiner understands the significance of the illustration and must not include commentary, as this will be considered part of the commentary and therefore included in the word count. To some degree, for some students and schools, the requirement of discussing 'inspirations' in the preliminary planning or pre-production sections are being focused on to such a degree that they are overshadowing the students' original work. While it is good to have an idea of films, ideas, and issues which were pivotal in the creation of the film, in some cases there are so many filmic 'inspirations' mentioned that the work begins to seem inauthentic. It is more important to talk about the student's personal creative process in their role, than spend too much time discussing work from other filmmakers. Though this can provide insight into the student's work if used wisely, it frequently seemed to be a distraction from focusing on what the student actually did, and occasionally leads to the suspicion that the student did more imitation than creation.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The most common problem in terms in attaining the highest descriptor levels here was failure to present graphic or pictorial evidence supporting the work in the individual chosen production role. Focus should be on work done in the role at each production stage - and the best work did this clearly with good use of supporting evidence. At higher level, the failure to address the creation of the trailer in the body of the commentary was sometimes problematic here. (Films that were too short or too long also sometimes negatively affected this criterion because of poor planning.)

Criterion B

As in criterion A, the failure to use graphic or pictorial evidence to support the logistic or artistic decisions made in the student's chosen role was frequently problematic. As well, many students did not present a 'clear-eyed' critical evaluation of the final film, presenting instead a piece about how satisfied they were, or a simple consideration of the project in general terms and not specifically focused on the completed film. At higher level, as in criterion A, the failure

to address the creation of the trailer in the body of the commentary was sometimes problematic here.

Criterion C

When the commentary was focused on the artistic and logistic decisions a student made in their role, the student's clear understanding of their professional and technical skills sometimes raised this mark higher than the mark awarded for criterion D (communication in film language, which also provides evidence for this criterion). Commentaries that lacked focus on role were unlikely to raise this mark above the mark awarded for criterion D.

Criterion D

Many students showed the ability to communicate competently in film language, even when their ability to explain and support their chosen role was limited. Frequently this was the highest scoring category for students.

Criterion E

At both higher level and standard level, the most common problem here was the use of visual or audio material created without the involvement of the student filmmakers (i.e. Copyright materials, stock footage, freeplay music, unaltered loops from music creation programs). This limited the mark for creativity. At the same time, frequently, students showed real creativity and originality in all areas of film creation, from planning and writing, to soundtrack and score, and to visual image.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should be careful to present the task as an assessment and help the student film makers focus on meeting the assessment criteria. That is, students should plan from the outset to make a 6 to 7 minute film at higher level and a 4 to 5 minute film at standard level, which can be accomplished competently with resources at hand. Throughout the course, teachers should build in experiences in which the students use evidence collected from production work (for short films used to teach skills for example) in order to practice gathering graphic and photographic evidence to support the artistic and logistic work in film production roles. If this has been practiced over the two years of the course, it will be much more natural when the student comes to final assessment. Further, students should practice at least one short film in which they created their own composition as a background and have some experience creating foley.

Further comments

The film guide requires that students have had significant creative input in all audio and visual materials present in their work. Students (and teachers) continue to confuse this idea with the idea of 'copyright' in general. Students should focus on the creation of their music and soundtrack, whether created by themselves or as a collaboration with local musicians using input from the group. Each student must briefly describe the creation of the music, or the

interaction between the group and the musicians. (That is, “George created our music,” is not enough detail about how the input was managed.) Students who do not do this are unlikely to be awarded higher marks in criterion E. Each student is individually responsible for a brief description of music creation.

It is also important that the student be free to structure the commentary in such a way that they can focus on their individual role (probably the most practical template here would be to discuss the pre-production, production, post-production, critical evaluation of the completed film, and at higher level, the trailer. In some cases, a template had been developed that was more general, which led to students spending a long time discussing production elements that were not related to their role. Acting was an example. In practical terms, the only role in which acting or role authorship is a focus is directing. Others - like semiotics - are of questionable value to some roles.

Work from some schools was so generalized that it was hard to understand what role the student had chosen, and too much time was spent going over other roles. When the assessment is based on work in a chosen role, this is extremely problematic. Finally, all schools should include the opportunity for students to watch short films and not just feature films as part of the course. The structure of the short film is fundamentally different from the feature film, and ultimately it is a short film which the students will make. Understanding the structural differences will avoid many problems.

Independent study

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 – 10	11 – 13	14 – 17	18 – 20	21 – 25

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 – 10	11 – 13	14 – 17	18 – 20	21 – 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The key aspect of this task is to engage with a question of cinematic theory or history. Therefore, students should have had a thorough grounding in both areas so they can make informed choices about topics. A significant number of students choose naturally self-limiting topics, such as car chases, fight movies, crime and romance; or sometimes a technical focus like music or colour. It is vital that these choices be linked to larger film movements, theories or genres, such as film noir or gaze theory to name but two. In a similar manner, if a student chooses a more thematic topic, like “coming of age”, it is vital the study is done through the prism of film and not merely plot and character. So, aspects like lighting, colour, mise en scene, framing, editing, proxemics (to name a few) are all part of film language that need to be considered.

This approach of focusing on filmic depictions or linking with theory or history will give students the opportunity to achieve higher marks by enhancing the scope and depth of the argument. The choice of films or film cultures is also critical, particularly the engagement with non-Western film cultures. Comparing British and American film cultures is not an expansive range. Students should also be aware that it is permissible to do “well worn” topics, such as the Western, German Expressionism, Horror and Animation. There is no descriptor for originality of topic or thought or insight. So, try a familiar topic with a fresh and in-depth approach.

The strengths and weaknesses of candidates in the treatment of individual areas

The focus needs to be deepened on audience engagement. Remember that the viewer is a film literate peer so the commentary should not be “dumbed down” by an overly colloquial and generalised approach. It is strongly recommended that students read aloud their commentary which should sound like an informed and passionate conversation. Specific film terms should be used often and with precision. Students need to be mindful of the following oversights or errors, which limit audience engagement:

- A misalignment, or even worse, neglect of providing a balance between the audio and visual columns.
- An unstructured or incoherent structure which makes it difficult to follow the thread and spine of the argument.
- Merely giving a history lesson or technical instruction about cinema without relating knowledge to the development of the proposition unveiled in the rationale. Text analysis of clips or scenes from the chosen films should feature prominently as proof of the developing thesis.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

The independent study needs to be planned for over the two years duration of studying the film course. It should be viewed as the culmination of a thorough examination of film theory and history, as outlined in the film guide. Teachers need to ensure that students have been prepared by scaffolding tasks which develop a deep understanding of content and skills in using the required format. This task should not come as a surprise to a student any more than the

expectation of just giving students a camera will mean they can make a short film. Unfortunately, some students are ill-prepared by poor teaching. Students should not fail to adhere to the formal requirements, but a significant number do. Students should receive informed feedback on their choice of topic, selection of films and a detailed evaluation of their draft; it appears that a significant number do not. It is also strongly recommended that teachers put students in touch with academic sources of a more scholarly nature to enrich the depth of argument. The best students are capable of interrogating the worth and relevance of sources in the annotations of their bibliography in light of the skills developed in Theory of Knowledge. Standard level students in particular should realise that examiners do not expect inferior or weaker argument compared with higher level.

Overall, the cohort of both higher level and standard level students in 2017 registered a good improvement in managing both the form and content of the independent study. Those teachers who have read and acted on the advice in these reports deserve praise for helping their students successfully negotiate the complexities of this demanding but rewarding task.

Film presentation

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 16	17 – 19	20 – 25

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 16	17 – 19	20 – 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

While there was a wide range in the quality of presentations this year, fewer candidates scored in the lowest markband. The *Social Network* and *Spirited Away* were the most popular choices. The most successful candidates clearly practiced in advance and spent time honing their organization and structure. They also ensured that the content of their presentations included all the assessed elements. Failure to include all the elements was the most common factor that prevented many excellent presentations from scoring in the top markband. Many strong students delivered good presentations but failed to make pertinent links between their extract and the film as a whole or failed to discuss reactions to the film (at higher level). Others dealt with the sociocultural context by simply giving detailed information but without linking it to the film. It is good to see that the majority of candidates focused on the extract rather than on the film as a whole.

The strengths and weaknesses of candidates in the treatment of individual areas

Candidates should examine the sociocultural context of the time period depicted in the film as well as the time of the film's release, where appropriate. With certain films, this may also include reactions to the film in the years after its release. This requires research on the student's part and all material from other sources, whether quoted or paraphrased, must be cited on the cover sheet. Citing by reference in the presentation is recommended. This can be done in the following manner: "In his video essay, Tony Zhao pointed out that...". Tony Zhao's online video essay would then be cited on the cover sheet.

Too many of the weaker presentations still begin with the delivery of plot summaries, long lists of facts, information, quotes, Rotten Tomato ratings, box office earnings and other statistics.

None of this content is rewarded in the marking. Weaker candidates simply described the use of film language (often in great detail) without any evaluative analysis. While most candidates concentrated on how film language created meaning and on the director's intended effect, the poorer presentations devoted too little time to the evaluation of film language.

Better students used their allotted time to focus on the extract with pertinent links to other parts of the film. Stronger candidates used more academic resources in their research and discussed the comments of critics and experts, rather than simply providing quotes and moving on. The top candidates often used quotes from their research as jumping-off points to agree with or to challenge the views of experts and critics.

Selecting the right extract is an important part of the successful presentation and teachers should teach strategies for selecting extracts that work to the students' advantage. Well-chosen extracts give students opportunities to discuss all the areas assessed in the criteria. Stronger candidates often selected an extract that included more than one scene, thus allowing for comparison and contrast between the scenes.

The Social Network and Spirited Away were the most popular choices; however, the quality of presentations varied widely. Weaker presentations on The Social Network focused on character conflict, plot and the history of Facebook while paying limited attention to how Fincher used film language to create meaning in the extract and how these choices linked to the choices made in other parts of the film.

Weaker presentations on Spirited Away tended to concentrate on symbolism and colour while ignoring most other elements of film language. The composition, camera movement, camera angles, blocking and depth of field that are found in live-action films are also present in Spirited Away and should be discussed in a film presentation.

Stronger presentations avoided treating the historical and socio-cultural context as a separate category but integrated it into their presentations and made specific links to the film under discussion. Depending on the film selection, the historical and sociocultural context may include the time depicted in the film, the time of the film's release or both.

When discussing genre, weaker students tended to simply identify the genre and its characteristics while stronger students discussed how the film changed, conformed to, or subverted the genre. They integrated this throughout the presentation rather than treating it in a separate section.

Candidates should be reminded that that they must include the film's genre or the sociocultural context or both. The film a candidate selects should determine which of these options are best suited for inclusion. A significant number of candidates omitted a rationale for selecting the extract. Weaker candidates often dealt with it in a single sentence. Better candidates used this as an opportunity to introduce the presentation.

There are still too many instances of teachers allowing candidates to read from a prepared script. This is academically dishonest.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Focus on the extract.

Get to the analysis as quickly as possible. Weaker students waste too much time in giving background facts and information that will not be rewarding in marking.

Use "What were the intended effects of the director's choices?" as the overall guiding question for an evaluative analysis of film language rather than addressing "director's intent" in a single sentence.

Avoid retelling the plot and being overly descriptive.

Pay special attention to the following words in the rubric: "coherent", "evaluative" and "detailed". Teachers should ensure that students understand the expectations connoted by these words and phrases.

"Coherent" relates of structure, planning and how convincing the conclusions are; it does not refer to fluency of delivery. Weaker presentations tended to plod through a checklist of "director's intentions", "genre". This hinders the coherence of the presentation.

"Director's intention" should be embedded throughout the presentation rather than be dealt with as a separate section.

In discussing reactions to the film (at higher level), citing the Rotten Tomatoes score, the IMDB ranking and the box-office earnings is of little value. Better candidates used quotes from experts as a launching point for their own opinions, comments and analysis. Some standard level students included a section devoted to reactions to the film. This is not required at this level and used up valuable time that could be spent on analysis. Discussing the film's "target audience" is not required though many students include this.

Some candidates find it difficult to make links to the rest of the film in terms of anything other than plot. Genre conventions may be a useful way to do this, as well as directorial intent, foreshadowing, repetition of stylistic features, and script structure.

Students are expected to research their film. The strongest candidates could integrate research on either genre or sociocultural context smoothly with the interpretation of the scene. Weaker students' presentations showed no evidence of research or used sources that could not be considered scholarly or academic. Targeting university sites and academic film magazines will yield good quality resources.