

November 2012 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

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 work submitted for the November 2012 session covered a wide range at both levels, from films nearly professional in execution to films where candidates struggled with basic narrative and basic technical skills.

In most cases the teachers and candidates seemed aware of the requirements of the guide and the specific criteria for assessment of this task. (A teacher should share the guide and marking criteria with the candidates.)

At higher level, many of the commentaries were quite good, using pictorial and graphic evidence, as well as prose, to clarify both the production process and the candidate's work in the chosen role. For the most part, instructions about content and treatment of subjects in film were followed, and for the most part there was little use of materials that did not originate with the candidates. The best films at this level were imaginatively planned and shot, and frequently the acting was also strong. For higher level candidates, the most common omission seems to be the treatment of the trailers within the body of the candidate's commentary. Frequently, the trailer is dealt with in only a line or two, and in the worst cases it is ignored entirely.

There was also an appropriate range of work across the standard level films, though overall the marks were somewhat lower than the higher level marks. Often, the films showed imagination and creativity, as well as skill in the chosen role. However, there were problems in some cases with the way work was submitted, which impacted on the marks awarded. Some problems included submitting work which was not within the time limit guidelines, submitting portfolio commentaries that included appendices (which is specifically forbidden by the guide), and submitting commentaries that included no supporting pictorial, graphic, or photographic evidence to support the prose describing the group's production process and the candidate's work in their individual role.

At both levels, films that cluster in the lower range of marks seem to have been completed quickly. Time is an important factor in this assessment, as it should be in any assessment that accounts for 50% of a candidate's final grade. The best work has clearly benefited from time taken to do careful planning and careful work in pre-production, production, and post-production periods.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The biggest problem with this criterion continues to be the presentation of work unsupported by graphic or pictorial evidence. The best work uses prose, photographs, and graphic evidence to illustrate the production process. At higher level, as noted, a common problem is not dealing with the development of the trailer in enough detail. At standard level, as noted, portfolio commentaries with no supporting evidence, or with evidence unorganized (as an appendix or otherwise) was an occasional problem. The best portfolios include evidence (whether screen captures, plans and documents, set photos, or other materials) that have been chosen with great imagination and clear focus to convey the production process and the candidate's role.

Criterion B

Since criterion B is also based on the portfolio commentaries, many of the same problems such as lack of evidence, or inappropriate form, apply. As in criterion A, some higher level candidates also forget to present enough detail about their work on their trailer. For this criterion, the candidate must present their work in their chosen role, and the best work does this clearly by once again using prose, photographs, and other evidence. At both standard

and higher level, there is sometimes a problem with the criterion requirement to present “a satisfactory artistic and logistical analysis of relevant production processes, with good critical evaluation of the project as a whole.” Often, while logistical analysis has been dealt with thoroughly, artistic analysis is missing or incomplete. In some commentaries no critical evaluation of the project is present beyond a statement like, “we learned a lot about film and are happy with our work.” This is not a good analysis of finished work that cites both the positive and negative elements contained therein. The best portfolios feature critical analyses of the entire production coupled with astute comments on the candidate’s chosen production role.

Criterion C and Criterion D

Both criterion C and criterion D look at the candidate’s work in their role, as evidenced by the film. When candidates are well prepared and familiar with the requirements of their role, and with the technical skills necessary, results in C and D tended to be high. Overall, candidates seem to have access to better equipment and are learning how to use it. Cinematography and editing were very strong, and at higher level those candidates who chose the role of Director frequently demonstrated an ability to help actors author their roles. It is important to remember that criterion C allows awarding marks for work supported by the portfolio commentary, so candidates should note the importance of presenting the artistic and logistic decisions about their work in their role.

Criterion E

At both levels, creative work was strong for the most part and frequently films showed real originality. The weakest films tend to fall back on copying common genre clichés. Candidates should be encouraged to look for subjects from their own lives and not to try to copy feature film techniques without adequate resources. Particularly at standard level, some films seemed to have been rushed with short planning and short shooting schedules.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Both higher level and standard level candidates should be exposed to a great variety of short films. Since too many candidates misapply what they have learned about feature-length films to their much shorter practical work, the final product tends to feel like an unfinished longer piece rather than a short in its own right. A short film is more like a poem than a novel, and the curriculum should help candidates to recognize this fact.

The production portfolio commentary and the collection of evidence must be practiced before this final assessment. Many short film assignments where candidates learn both the skills of documenting their work and the skills required by the various production roles, should precede the final assessment.

The creation of music for films continues to be somewhat haphazard, with candidates frequently stringing together loops of royalty free material as a fallback for actual creativity. At some point in the course, sound and music should be studied with at least some time spent on foley, sound design, and creative solutions to music composition.

Emphasize the fact that this is an assessment with specific requirements, not simply a film. In their portfolio commentary candidates sometimes complain about conditions of the assessment - especially the restriction on length. Candidates must recognize that they have to plan a 4-5 minute film at standard level, and a 6 – 7 minute film at higher level. This must be undertaken within the specific role that they have chosen. A ten-minute cut that they feel is superior is irrelevant, just as is too much description of problems solved in roles other than their chosen role.

Discussing the criteria and re-visiting them with the candidates, focusing on all the descriptors, will help candidates see this as an assessment and not just “my I.B. Film”.

Particularly at standard level, teachers need to take a firmer hand in terms of groups breaking apart at the last minute and individuals joining a production late, only to find no way to make a meaningful contribution. Candidates should also be encouraged to spend time researching their chosen role, studying the masters of the field. This will also alleviate one of the main problems in criterion A, where a candidate claims they did not have anything to do on their role until the appropriate production phase arrived; there is always research and planning to be done.

Candidates may only present themselves in one role for assessment. The specific role must be made clear throughout the written supporting material. Therefore, candidates need to be carefully guided in selecting the role for which they choose to be assessed in their production, and in constructing their portfolio to make it clear how they have fulfilled this role. As well, candidates should choose roles that they are familiar with when choosing their assessment role - so that they are not learning new skills when working on their film.

Candidate responses to this creative assessment are stronger when there are more short production experiences over the entire length of the course. It is important for candidates to be very comfortable with equipment used and the creative possibilities of production.

Further comments

It is important for candidates to remember that this assessment is a summation of two years work, and expectations are high. It should be representative of their very best work, with time allotted accordingly. At the same time, this is not meant to be the best film they could ever make, but the film that best meets the terms of the assessment. Therefore, they should be well aware of the criteria for film and trailer and try to plan a production that meets the assessment criteria.

At this time, frequently, films are received that do not play in a standard DVD player. Please remember when creating the DVDs that .mov files, .avi files, divx files, and many others will not play on a regular DVD player. Record on your best equipment and play back on your worst . . . The examiner should be able to play the DVD in a standard player.

The best choice from an examiner’s perspective is to put all the films from one center onto a single DVD, with clear navigation options.

Independent Study

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

At higher level, responses ranged from 'little understanding' to 'excellent understanding'. At higher level, there seems to be a stronger response than at standard level to this assessment. As a summative task for part 2 of the guide, the assessment is a very complex task from its form as a script to its scope in terms of candidate understanding - so perhaps it is not surprising that there is such a wide range in quality. For a number of reasons, some candidates are unclear about the exact meaning of 'film theory'. This tends to result in meandering work with a vague focus, with the result that the candidate often achieves low or middle grades in the markbands; this is even more damaging for standard level candidates. Clearly those candidates whose teachers have had some input on the selection of topics, and whose teachers have taught a number of theoretical approaches in their classroom, do much better and often achieve marks in the highest ranges. At worst, the work is simply a collection of observations about plot or description of images, without any use of film language or any insight derived from the candidate's own engagement with the films, and their historical or theoretical approach. At best, candidates have clearly spent time watching and understanding their chosen films, and chosen an appropriate topic, and developed an engaging and interested argument.

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

For higher level candidates, especially in the case of the weakest candidates, the first requirement that "there is an excellent understanding of, and engagement with, the film history/film theory topic" is problematic. When a candidate does not clearly understand, in particular, what is meant by 'film theory', they often produce incoherent work which mainly describes images and plot events. In terms of the second requirement, most candidates attempt to 'engage with the target audience', though sometimes they are misled into aiming

too low and producing work that is too casual and not academic in nature. As noted, scope and depth of argument are affected by a lack of understanding of film history/film theory. The structure of the script is, for the most part, coped with at this point by the candidates, but there are still many instances of weaker candidates failing to completely list sources or provide an annotated bibliography. Though in the case of weaker candidates there may be too much in the audio column (an essay without visual references), or inconsistent use of both the visual and audio column, most candidates do a good job of linking visual and audio materials - and in fact this is a particular strength of this assessment. If the topic has been suitably chosen, then film choice and points of comparison are usually not a problem.

There is little difference between the higher level and standard level candidates, where work presented by the weakest candidates varies little. Standard level candidates may choose only two films; there are problems when their sample is not sufficient to support conclusions, or sweeping generalizations are made.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It is absolutely necessary that the candidates have had many opportunities to explore different film history and film theory topics before they come to this assignment. The teacher must choose a variety of topics that go beyond the analysis of film language and which illuminated the kind of knowledge that a particular theoretical approach will yield. A candidate should be able to tell the teacher what their historical or theoretical approach will be when they discuss their chosen topic with the teacher. As well, candidates must understand the necessity for primary research as well as secondary research. In the case of this script, this means the candidate's own engagement and interaction with their chosen film. It is clear from the weaker papers that in many cases the candidate has viewed this exercise as an academic scavenger hunt . . . simply looking for references to their chosen film and trying to concoct an argument out of these bits and pieces. The candidates' engagement with the films chosen should drive the scope and depth of the script's argument.

It is especially important that great care be taken in selecting a topic at standard level. Since the candidate may opt to choose only two films, it is much more important which two films they choose. Often a weakness of SL work is sweeping generalizations and vague argument. Choosing an appropriate theory or history topic, and approaching it from an angle that can still be illuminated by only two films, is essential. (It should be pointed out that two films is not a restriction, and often candidates choose more.)

Film presentation

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

There was a relatively small entry for this session and there appears to have been a slight improvement overall. Too much time was again wasted by many candidates who considered merely listing awards, actors and characters names as an integral part of analysis or a substitute for discussing the socio-cultural context. Very often this was due to a lack of careful preparation and lack of detail. It was quite common for weaker candidates to attribute critical responses to “some people” or “some critics” without full and clear referencing. Whilst stronger candidates undertook careful and appropriate research, weaker candidates relied far too heavily upon one or two websites such as IMDB and Wikipedia and then presented additional lists or plot summaries that did not fulfil the requirements of the presentation. Many of the presentations became descriptions of themes and character studies without analyzing how these are explored in filmic terms.

A significant number of the candidates failed to focus their presentation on an interpretation of the chosen extract and found problems with analysing and interpreting meaning. There was a tendency to describe or discuss the whole film. The better candidates coped competently with how film creates meaning and discussed this in appropriate film language. However, weaker candidates made general observations about film language, for example shot type, framing, lighting or editing without discussing the intended effects of specific choices made by the director or cinematographer. Some candidates seem to be challenged by the requirement to provide a “detailed, evaluative interpretation” of the extract. Too many presentations also contained traditional literary analysis of characters and theme. While this contributes to the overall understanding of the film it does not show an understanding of how meaning is constructed in filmic terms. Candidates should be encouraged to use film language at all times when discussing film in class.

A number of candidates ignored specific sections entirely, for instance making no references at all, or at best tangential references, to socio-cultural context or at higher level references to “responses from audiences and reviewers, critics or scholars at the time of [the film’s] original release and/or subsequently.”

The timing of the presentations has become more of a problem with too many candidates not using their full time allowed effectively. Many higher level candidates are offering presentations at less than ten minutes and at standard level less than six.

Some candidates select scenes that do not offer sufficient scope for analysis.

Most candidates have a genuine sense of engagement with the films chosen. Some seemed reasonably well prepared in the use of basic film language and terminology and an increasing number of candidates were able to use this knowledge as part of an in-depth analysis.

However, too often the presentations became a mere listing of shot types and very simple reference to what they might suggest. Some of the better candidates were able to understand and explore theoretical approaches to their analysis in an impressive manner. Many weaker candidates struggled to use even the most rudimentary film language and did not move beyond simple plot description and describing what is seen and heard on screen but without analysis. The better candidates showed good awareness of their film's place in cinema history and were generally articulate and organised. In places the actual understanding of how film communicates through the different micro-elements was inconsistent.

Candidates often did well when describing and analysing mise-en-scene and competently addressed cinematography but did less well when analysing editing and/or sound.

Some candidates still limit their socio-cultural context and "responses" to lists of awards and box office receipts.

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

In spite of difficulties shown during this session, the significant strength of some of the candidates was their good understanding of the underlying themes the films that they had studied. Some had clearly handled their research and preparation well. The principal weakness was candidates ignoring significant sections that they are required to cover such as the socio-cultural context. All too often, this was either ignored entirely or given the most perfunctory of treatments. Far too many of the candidates are coming to their recording of their presentation ill-prepared. Too many candidates in this session were finishing their presentation in significantly less time than allowed. The timing of the presentation commences after the candidate has given the centre and candidate numbers and has identified the film that they are going to address.

Although it is possible to follow the extract through shot by shot this is rarely the most efficient or effective method. It is better to identify key elements in the extract and explore how meaning is constructed. Even if they do not simply describe the extract shot by shot too many candidates show lack of planning and preparation by jumping from thought to unrelated thought. Occasionally this may be as a result of nerves but more commonly because their presentation has not been fully prepared. At their best, however, candidates are able to integrate coherently a thorough and perceptive insight into the themes, issues and socio-cultural contexts of their films with a close, detailed analysis of their chosen extract.

Some candidates fail to offer a persuasive rationale for selecting their sequence. Many simply stated that it was "a turning point" and moved on.

The best candidates offered presentations that reflected genuine personal engagement supported by clear knowledge and understanding.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- The current Film guide must be read fully and carefully.
- Candidates should be shown the markbands, the subject reports and the current guide so that they are fully aware of what is required of them.
- It should be made clear to candidates that they must make best use of their time allotted. Ten minutes at standard level and fifteen at higher level.
- Candidates must be given ample opportunities to practice textual analysis before embarking upon their examination piece. Many candidates appear to be undertaking this task for the very first time in the actual assessment.
- Candidates should be given opportunities to rehearse recording presentation on films other than those set for the assessment. Such practice will enable candidates to plan and organise their examination pieces effectively and eliminate issues regarding the timing of their presentations.
- Teachers must check the sound levels on the CDs to be sent to the examiner sufficient to be heard. Some presentations for this session were inaudible.
- Once recordings have started they must not be paused or stopped and restarted. Should a candidate wish to watch the extract through before the presentation this must be done before recording begins.
- Teachers must not allow candidates to read their presentations. Brief notes are acceptable but teachers should check these before commencing recording. Should it be suspected that a candidate is reading their presentation this will be considered to be a possible case of malpractice.
- Recordings must be made in a private, quiet place. Make sure, as far as possible that the candidates will not be interrupted by outside noise such as loud tannoy announcements.
- Teachers must not intervene during the candidates' presentations. Teachers may not prompt candidates. Anything said in response to an inappropriate intervention by the teacher will not be rewarded.
- In regard to film selections at a centre level, teachers should be encouraged to choose both well-known and lesser-known films from the list. In addition, candidates should be encouraged to choose a variety of different extracts from the chosen film.
- Teachers need to be very sure they review the purpose of the film presentation with candidates. The main focus of the presentation is a close analysis of the selected extract, using this close analysis to discuss aspects of the film as a whole. They should try to cover every cinematic aspect of the sequence.
- Candidates should be given practice with films other than those listed for the assessment consistently to try to link the analysis of cinematic features of a film extract to the stated themes and/or director's intent, or even socio-cultural aspects or genre. This gives presentations a clear focus and allows for very specific and unique analysis.

- Candidates, through their specific analysis, should try to say something unique and original. Too many presentations rely on the same internet databases, select the “easy” film to analyse (i.e. the well known).
- Teachers should dissuade their candidates from offering redundant material in their presentations. Narrative summaries and lists of actors, characters and technicians waste valuable time.