Film

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0-6	7-13	14-20	21-26	27-34

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The best work resulted when students undertook an in-depth investigation into a Film topic they were passionate about and about which they had real interest. At the other end of the spectrum, weaker work resulted when the student had little connection to the films other than as a focus for research. The weakest responses included broad survey investigations, essays that focused more on other factors (such as literary, sociological, political, historical, *etc*), and those that were based mainly on plot description with little focus on analysis of the individual films or on film language. Many papers did an excellent job of defining the area of research, choosing at least two films, and combining primary research and analysis from the viewing of the films with relevant secondary research which presented ideas that both supported the student's research, and which presented a counter-argument.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: focus and method

When a student's research question was sharply focused, then often half the battle was won. At times, the research seemed to be based on a model or sample (such as "Is Wes Anderson an Auteur?" from the EE Guide) and at times this leant to a weak paper because the student was not connected enough to the question to produce a personal piece of research. In the best work, diligent research was conducted into print, internet, and documentary/visual sources driven by real interest. When balanced with authentic primary research, this produced excellent results. Weaker work was represented by research that primarily involved viewing the films without delving into research, or conversely, work that displayed a wide range of secondary research but little, if any, recognizable primary research by the student.

Criterion B: knowledge and understanding

For students who come without the background of the film course, using subject-specific language was frequently a problem, as a good essay on film often requires both the critical language demanded in terms of understanding movements, genres, and theoretical approaches to film, as well as the technical language of film and the ability to discuss cinematography, editing, sound design, directing and the basics of film language. In terms of general knowledge, some students showed a passionate involvement with the focus of their essay and a strategy that allowed them to present a clear and coherent investigation. Weaker essays discussed narrative or listed facts gleaned from secondary research with no real personal engagement or perspective.

Criterion C: critical thinking

The best work presented a clear engagement with film history or theory from the student's personal perspective, which referenced more than one film or major television work. This work did not take for granted the views from secondary research, and often used contrasting views to develop the student's own point-of-view. If there was an area that was weak overall, it was the evaluation of sources. This should be fully integrated into the body of the argument itself, but frequently even the best work failed to fully address this requirement. Weaker papers frequently seemed like work better presented for other subjects, exploring character and theme - for example - with no analysis of how these elements are created in cinematic terms. In other words, a simple exploration of narrative with the evidence being only description of story. Stronger work carefully analysed film elements, often with screen grabs from the films and/or diagrams in order to determine filmmakers' intent.

Criterion D: presentation

Strong essays used accepted academic presentation, referencing all audio-visual materials, screenshots, graphics, and data from both print and electronic sources. Many essays did a very good job of using materials such as storyboard frames, movie posters, or screenshots in such a way that ideas could be expressed more economically with the use of these visuals. Besides proper citation, the best work used images that were directly relevant to the research question which appeared as close as possible to their mention in the text. Weaker work sometimes used images primarily as decorative material with little regard to why they had been presented. If this is the case, it would be better to avoid them altogether. (Teachers should be reminded when uploading that the colour of visuals is usually significant and they should capture and upload the student's original work, and not a black and white xerox of the work.) Title page, table of contents, page numbers, and bibliography were sometimes missing but are essential. A word count should be presented. At times, students exceeded 4,000 words. (Titles for photographs, graphics, and other visual content is not included in the word count - but students should be advised that titles should be simply descriptive and relate to the description of the image in the text of the essay. Titles which develop the commentary will be included in the word count.)

Criterion E: engagement

If there was one area of weakness for many candidates, it was the reflection on the RPPF form. Frequently, the material there was simply descriptive of process with little discussion of conceptual engagement, or significant reflection on the approach used.   The best work showed evidence of critical and reflective thinking that went far beyond describing the procedures that had been followed to chart how their understanding changed as a result of their research and how they overcame challenges. The most common reflection on what 'they would do differently if they were to undertake the research again' was to plan better and take more time. As this understanding is applicable in all cases of research, it really did not show much significant engagement with the chosen area of research and the student's reflection on the approaches and strategies of their investigation, or of their newly developed understanding of their chosen area of research. More focus on this requirement for the EE will help students achieve better in this criterion.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

In the case of students who do not have a Film studies background, a clear understanding that knowledge in film is not simply an understanding of narrative and story content of a film, is essential.   Students should be guided into filmic analysis, and an understanding that meaning in film is achieved through a complex relationship between many elements. Some analysis of sequences with regard to understanding filmmakers' intents is almost always necessary whether the focus of the essay is film history or theory, movements or genres. Understanding plot does not represent an understanding of Film. As well, students should have been exposed to a variety of critical approaches to film - books about film, academic journals, documentary films, and other analytical sources. As in all the arts, the most familiar form of writing about Film (and the other arts) that students are exposed to is the review. This leads them to the idea that the natural expression of ideas about the arts is to determine a works value rather than analysing its creation, structure, and intent. This frequently leads to an essay in which the work examined is evaluated in terms of the student's own opinions and prejudices.

Further comments

Finally, nothing is more important than the student's engagement with the film. This is the driving force behind research. Frequently lacklustre work seems to have been inspired by a suggested model the student has found or what seems to be a 'good idea' based on a secondary source search. In these cases, with little engagement with the focus of research, the student struggles with both research and with finding anything significant to say which has not been said before. In the worst cases, the student's writing is full of inconsistencies which lead the examiner to wonder about the student's knowledge and understanding about the film - with the student's reflections on the film coming from secondary sources or from viewing incomplete clips of the film on sources like Youtube.   Additionally, overall depth of research is sometimes lacking. As mentioned previously, much is made of Film reviews.

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