

May 2015 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

There was a wide range of work submitted. Overall, it seemed that this session many candidates did a good job of finding film topics that were achievable in the 5 minutes (at standard level) or the 7 minutes (at higher level). This meant that instead of trying to make a film that duplicated elements of a summer blockbuster, the candidates found a focus or theme that was more personal.

Many of the films dealt with issues that were of particular interest to young people, from bullying at school to coping with family problems. For many candidates, working this way meant that the end results were less clichéd and more focused on what they knew and could convey in film language about their actual lives. This was good to see.

As usual, there were films that did attempt to duplicate genre films, from action to horror to romantic comedy. Often the problem here was the lack of resources to convincingly portray these genres, but even so some films were very successful and engaging. There continue to be some reoccurring problems with weaker films, at both levels. Often films are rushed, with very little time being given to creation and production, the weakest of all looking as if they were shot in a day or two. Candidates and teachers should make sure ample time is available in the course to spend time on this assessment, which is - after all - worth fifty percent of the course.

Of course, in contrast to this, much of the best work is clearly the result of solid planning, well-planned production and post-production, including time for reshoots and revisions. This work is frequently close to professional in nature. There continue to be candidates who explain in their commentary that they are performing the work in their role for the first time. This is worrying, as the production portfolio is a final assessment and a candidate should approach it with confidence in the role they have chosen. It is important that there has been time in the class to experience working in the five roles so that the candidate can choose a role that they have developed technical skill in, and for which they are passionate.

At higher level, some candidates have problems with the individual trailer part of the assessment. The most common problem is a failure to discuss the creation of the trailer in their commentary, a mistake that will limit marks significantly in criteria A and B. Occasionally, a portfolio is submitted with no trailer. The teacher should insist a trailer is provided before the work is marked and submitted for moderation. At both higher level and standard level, candidates should remember that their commentary is to be supported with photographic and graphic evidence, woven into the body of the commentary (not as an appendix). Frequently, candidates forget to collect this material or present it. (Possibilities are screen grabs, photographs taken on set to illustrate camera or lighting set-ups, set diagrams, call sheets, script excerpts (no complete scripts), story-boards and any other evidence that supports the written picture of the production process and the candidate's work in their chosen role.) The strongest work featured a film that was well-planned and well-executed, as well as a commentary that clearly explored the production process and the candidate's work in their chosen role, and which also presented a clear artistic and logistic reflection on the final film.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A Planning and research

As noted, the most frequent problem with this criterion is that no visual or graphic evidence is presented to support the overall picture of the production process, and the candidate's part in it. Often the commentary is set-up in the form of pre-production, production, and post-production, which is helpful for the requirement of this criterion (though there are other elements to be covered in the commentary). A common problem is that the candidate relates production problems without discussing how they were solved. In this case, the commentary reads more

like an excuse than an explanation of how problems were overcome. As well, the commentary sometimes resembles a production journal, simply a description of what happened and when. While a production journal is a good idea, it should be used to create a commentary that meets the criteria descriptors. Candidates frequently try to show how much work they did, which is a mistake. How and why they did the work they did - that is reflection and analysis - is much more important than a simple description of the quantity of work they did. Higher level candidates should not forget to discuss the trailer.

B Reflection and evaluation

Candidates, particularly those who took on more than one role in the production of the film, frequently forgot that their commentary should be approached from the single role chosen for assessment: screenwriter, director, cinematographer, editor or sound designer/sound editor. Often a candidate will discuss work in multiple roles, or even devote more time to a role other than their chosen role. It is important to remember that the artistic and logistic analysis required by this criterion is focused on that single chosen role. This is probably the greatest single problem with both criteria A and B. As well, criterion B requires a 'critical evaluation of project as a whole'. There is a requirement here for an artistic and critical reflection on the final film. Again, higher level candidates should not forget to discuss the trailer.

C Professional and technical skills

When marking, teachers should remember that evidence for this criterion can come from either the written commentary or the finished film (not necessarily both materials). Candidates who have done a solid job of discussing the logistical problems of their role, and how they solved them, will do very well here. However, a candidate who is clearly working thoroughly and creatively in terms of visuals has also satisfied the requirement for evidence in this criterion. Again, the focus of this criterion is the work the candidate does in their chosen role, so it is important they choose a role in which they have both experience and technical skill. (Teachers should make sure that only one role is chosen on the cover sheet.)

D Effective use of film language

This criterion is evaluated entirely in terms of film language in terms of the film presented without reference to the written commentary, with a focus on the candidate's chosen role. When looking at these roles, for a writer, dialogue will be an important element of the production process, as well as helping to set the scene. If a group is planning a silent movie a candidate should probably think twice before assessing as the writer, as a major element of the role will not be featured. Cinematographers will focus on lighting and image creation, collaborating with the director on camera blocking and composition. The Director's primary focus will be on the authorship of roles and camera blocking, working with mise en scène and composition in collaboration with the cinematographer. The editor will focus on narrative and pacing, creating meaning with the cut. In the small groups common in IB film projects, the editor will probably also work with the image in terms of colour correction and other post-production opticals. Finally, the sound designer should be working with the recording of dialogue, the creation of sound effects and foley, as well as working with the soundtrack.

E Originality and creativity

It is important that all candidates should mention in their commentary any music, video inserts, or other materials that might be mistaken for copyright material, briefly noting how they have been created, as marks are limited in criterion E if work originates from a source other than the candidates being assessed. The most common area affected is soundtrack and the use of music which was not created specifically for the film, and it is important to remember that this is not just the responsibility of the sound designer/sound editor - as marks reduced will be limited for all candidates in all roles. As noted, this year many films were focused on themes and stories which came from the candidate's lives, which meant that there was real passion and insight into the problems they were based on. Weak work in this criterion frequently is based on copying genre films, although this can be a successful strategy for candidates. A major problem is that ideas must work in the short film format, as there is not the time to copy structure from feature films.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

At both higher level and standard level, providing sufficient practice time for the five roles is most important. Short assignments, possibly focused on the individual roles of screenwriter, director, cinematographer, editor, and sound designer, can help build confidence and technical skill. It is also important to remember that candidates must assemble evidence of their work in their roles, and that requires practice. Short commentaries should be written for every film that is made. Taking an SLR camera along to the shoot, saving paperwork from scripts to storyboards to shot lists, keeping a production journal that can serve as an aid to reflection when writing a commentary are all important. As well, it is important to practice the skills of reflection on the chosen role.

Critical analysis of completed films is also important - and this can be practiced with the films made in class. The more chances candidates have to practice these skills in short assignments, the more confident they will be when approaching the final assessment. While the diploma programme film course must look at feature films as a basis for textual analysis, as well as theory and history issues, the use of features is limited when approaching this component. It is most important that candidates at both higher level and standard level look at short films and their stories, themes, and structure as it is a short film which will serve as the basis for this assessment. At higher level, it is most important that candidates also view trailers from a variety of historical periods, so that they can approach the trailer creation section of the portfolio with a variety of choices and not just the 'fade to black' style that is so common at this time. It is important to remember that, for the higher level candidate, the ability to make the individual trailer shows an understanding of editing, pacing, story-telling, and audience. Again, building short trailers for a number of in-class assignments will build confidence and encourage the candidates to be more experimental when they come to the final assignment.

Further comments

Assessment design and academic honesty

In terms of assessment, it is important that the film work by the candidates be a level playing field in terms of resources available. The original intention for this component was that candidates are fully the authors of all audio and video materials used in the assessment. This has the added benefit of putting the candidates in a situation where they literally ‘own’ all materials created for the project. No one has to write for a release before they put the film in a film festival.

For more information, please see the Film assessment clarification document, released on the OCC in September 2015.

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

Candidates submitted a pleasing range of films and topics with more capable candidates showing how earnestly and deeply they had engaged with examining aspects of cinema theory or history required for this component. Many also took the opportunity to pursue personal film passions in some depth.

Some confusion over different film cultures persists. The best advice is that candidates base their judgement on the country where the predominant production company (in the case of co-productions) for the films originate. Candidates are increasingly more comfortable with the two column format and the formal requirements for this component. Candidates should be reminded that no time column is necessary, that references to YouTube or web URLs in the visual column are also unnecessary for an examiner and that portrait, not landscape, is the required page format. Teachers who do not pass on the mandated formal requirements to their candidates are excluding them from scoring in the top two markbands.

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

Rationales are often a poorly understood and executed aspect of the independent study. It is essential that candidates get their rationales "right" in context of framing the spine and direction of the argument in the script. It is very rare to find a great script that has a poor rationale. The names of films are on the coversheet and do not need to be repeated in the rationale which is only supposed to be 100 words. Therefore every word should be meaningful in posing and clarifying the argument. A good rationale is one that is anchored in cinema history or theory, is expressed in film language and is clear and achievable. It is essential that teachers spend a lot of time in helping candidates frame rationales that achieve these aims.

The best independent studies were those that explored three to four sub-points in examining and expanding on a topic. An example would be a topic on gender representation of the femme fatale in noir films which then analysed the use of lighting, framing and angles and the cinematic depiction of the "fate" of these characters. When this is done across a number of films, there is more than enough depth and scope for a reasonable independent study. It also provides variation and complexity to the argument which will help the candidate to score well in the "scope and depth" aspects of the markbands.

Candidates should also be highly mindful of establishing links between audio and visual aspects through text analysis. The visuals are not there as a kind of "visual wallpaper", but act as cinematic proof of the argument being developed. This is probably the biggest failure with regards to format. The best candidates provided rich detail in both columns so that it was easy for the reader to "visualise" the documentary.

Weaker candidates tended to fill both columns with extended descriptions of plot or character, lacking foundation in film language, rather than analysing how these scenes unveil the central thesis being developed. A really good example of how the task is meant to flow is Martin Scorsese's *Journey through American Film* or *My Voyage to Italy*. He speaks in an engaging accessible manner, but always firmly rooted in film and the camera moves judiciously from talking head in a studio to the scene being analysed, highlighting relevant details at precisely the right moment.

Candidates should be reminded that the annotated bibliography, while part of the formal requirements, is also key to developing the research base for the argument. Even poor sources can be criticised here in light of what a candidate has discovered. Too many candidates either ignore this completely, use it as a kind of tick box shopping list or write the most cursory of comments like "read this to understand more about the French New Wave". Candidates have a lot of sources at their disposal to complete this task and a more judicious and thorough use of them will have a strong effect on improving the quality of analysis.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers need to allocate enough time for this task to be completed. The independent study is an extremely worthwhile but complex and time consuming task. It is recommended to allocate the same number of hours to it as the production portfolio. The independent study is really the

focus of parts one and two of the Film guide and needs to be given such weight in the planning and teaching of the curriculum. So, in a sense, teachers are teaching the independent study from day one of the course. As mentioned above, teachers should spend a lot of time and energy in helping candidates get their rationales right and in ensuring the potential for scope and depth of argument has been met.

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

It is encouraging to record that the numbers of candidates choosing to take Film continues to grow with a 22.22% increase in candidature at HL and 30.66% increase at SL. More schools are also taking Film – an increase of 21 at HL and 46 at SL. In this session there were encouraging signs of improvement in some areas over previous sessions.

However, there are still areas where more improvement is essential. The principal elements of the presentation, to analyse a specific film extract and to show how meaning is constructed filmically still appears difficult for some candidates. Some still concentrate on offering an interpretation of the whole film, making only brief references to the extract. Candidates frequently offer solely interpretations of characters and discussions of broad themes and the presentations become almost literary or sociological in focus.

There were fewer instances of candidates describing their extract rather than analysing it but this remains an issue. Whilst many descriptions are detailed this only constitutes describing what they see or hear rather than how or why specific techniques are used to represent elements such as major themes, ideas and character. Much time is wasted, even by more able candidates, by presenting a simple plot summary.

Basic preparation and organisation is, for some candidates, an issue. Too many candidates are not achieving their full potential as they finish their presentations significantly well short of the time allowed. At standard level, some candidates finish in less than six minutes whilst at higher level some finish in less than ten minutes. The timing of the presentation itself commences after

the candidate or teacher has given school and candidate numbers. A suitable 'script' for the introduction of the presentation by the supervising teacher is given at the end of this report. The candidate need not repeat any of the information given in the introduction. Far too much time is also wasted by candidates providing unnecessary detail such as lists of characters and actors.

Although it is possible to follow the extract through shot-by-shot, this is not the most efficient or effective method. This method often leads to unnecessary repetition. It is better to identify key elements in the extract and the relationship to the film as a whole and explore how the meaning is constructed in the chosen extract. Many candidates, even if they do not follow shot-by-shot, simply jump from thought to unrelated thought. Occasionally this is a result of nerves but more commonly because their notes are not coherently organised.

Some candidates find it difficult to meet the challenge of finding complex meanings in their chosen extracts. There is a tendency to rely too heavily on simple analysis such as "black shadows signify something bad" or "high angle camera shows power". Candidates are often able to identify elements of the grammar of filming but all too frequently simply list them and do not continue to suggest why they are used in this particular context. On the other hand, some candidates do not use the appropriate filmic terms and offer comments that are more a basis of general knowledge rather than language specific to film.

Of more concern is that a small but significant number of candidates are not fulfilling the requirements as set out in the criteria. Some candidates present a detailed analysis of the extract but nothing more. At standard level, candidates must address the film's genre, the place of the extract within the film as a whole, its place in a broader socio-cultural context and perceived directorial intent. In addition, at higher level, candidates must refer to responses from audiences, reviewers, critics and scholars at the time of release and/or subsequently. The film's socio-cultural context is frequently simply put as a brief biography of the director.

It is worrying that some candidates, albeit only a relatively small number, appear not to have watched the film as a whole. There are references to have only watched extracts on YouTube.

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

In spite of some of the problems indicated above, more candidates are trying to integrate a detailed textual analysis of the extract in relation to the film as a whole as opposed to presenting a shot-by-shot description. It is encouraging to see that most candidates are engaging enthusiastically with their chosen film.

At their best, candidates were able to fully integrate a thorough and perceptive insight into the themes, issues and socio-cultural contexts of their films with a close, detailed textual analysis of their chosen extract.

This session's candidates showed improvement in many areas. Whilst some candidates are still reciting lists of awards to indicate how films were received, many more are, at higher level,

incorporating brief quotations from critics or scholars with no comment on these from the candidate.

More candidates are organising their presentations effectively and are preparing more fully. Although it is clear that candidates are using well prepared notes as aides memoire it must be emphasised that candidates are not allowed to read their presentation verbatim from a prepared script. Candidates who do read their presentation risk their work being put forward as possible examples of malpractice. It would be better if teachers prevented candidates from commencing their presentation if a prepared script is about to be used. An opportunity should then be given to return with appropriate notes.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- The Film guide must be read fully and carefully before setting out to prepare candidates.
- Co-ordinator's notes in the November preceding the May session must be accessed to identify the prescribed films for the examination session.
- Too few candidates create truly coherent presentations. Candidates must therefore be given ample opportunities to practice textual analysis before embarking upon their examination pieces.
- Candidates should be given ample opportunity to rehearse and practice presentations from films other than those set for the examination session.
- Teachers should help their candidates be selective in what they say so that they can work effectively within the time frame to present all elements of the presentation.
- Candidates must be given practice in timing for their presentations. Too many are either too long or too short.
- Teachers must check the sound levels before commencing recording and also the sound levels of the presentations sent to be examined. Some presentations have been inaudible.
- Once recordings have been started they must not be paused or stopped and restarted. If a candidate wishes to watch the extract through before the presentation this must be done before the recording begins.
- Teachers must not allow candidates to read their presentations. Brief notes are acceptable. Teachers should check a candidate's notes before commencing the recording.
- Recordings must be made in a private, quiet place: not, for instance in an open classroom. Make sure, as far as possible, that the candidate will not be interrupted by outside noise. Some candidates were disturbed by loud school announcements on a public/school address system.
- The supervising teacher must be present throughout the recording. Under no circumstances may a candidate be allowed to record the presentation on their own.
- Teachers must not intervene during the candidate's presentation apart from stating, "You have X minutes left. Do you have anything more to say?" Teachers may not prompt candidates by referring to specific areas that they think that the candidate has not fully explored. Anything that is said in response to an inappropriate intervention by the teacher cannot be rewarded.
- Each candidate's recording must be clearly identified not only on the recording itself

but on the screen ident.

- Candidates should be encouraged to pronounce the common filmic term “mise en scène” accurately. Phonetically it should be pronounced “meez on sen”.
- It is also worthwhile teachers indicating the correct pronunciation of the names of directors.

Further Comments

Guidance for the recording of the Presentation

To avoid any confusion regarding the timing of each presentation teachers are encouraged to use the following script as an introduction to each candidate’s recording.

“This is an [HL or SL] Film Presentation for [Name and number of School/College.] This Candidate is [Name and number of the candidate]. The presentation will be on [Name the film]. The scene chosen is [identify the scene as on the cover sheet]. Then say to the candidate:

“You may begin your presentation.”

This makes it clear when the examiner is to begin timing the candidate.

Candidates do not need to repeat any of this information and therefore do not waste precious time.

Academic Honesty

In addition to an increase in candidates reading their presentations there has been a rise in cases of suspected plagiarism in presentations. Some, fortunately a very small number, are using material and making no reference to the source. In some instances candidates have repeated verbatim an analysis of their chosen extract taken directly from an internet site or a critical work. The General Regulations for the Diploma Programme make it clear that plagiarism is “*defined as the representation, intentionally or unintentionally, of the ideas, words or work of another without proper, clear and explicit acknowledgement.*”

This regulation applies just as much to an oral presentation as it does to any other work.

Where a candidate is found to be guilty of plagiarism the penalties are significant. For the presentation, if part or parts are suspected of being plagiarism then these sections are transcribed and compared with text matching software. If the source is not a print “text” but a source such as YouTube the source will be transcribed for direct comparison.

All candidates must be made aware that the regulations for peer plagiarism and collusion are also treated in exactly the same way for this oral presentation as they would be for any other examination.