

November 2013 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

At both higher and standard level, there is a wide range of work with the best work approaching professional in nature.

At both higher and standard level, a continuing problem with weaker work is the amount of time which has been allotted to create the film. Despite the fact that this assessment is worth fully 50% of the candidate's mark, weaker films often seem to be the result of shooting schedules that last only a few days or less. From pre-production to post-production, the best films have been well prepared and production teams have taken the time to make sure they have solid scripts, thorough planning and storyboards, and good coverage so that they have

the opportunity to make real creative choices with sound and editing during the post-production stage. For all of the assessed roles, the more complete and comprehensive the stages of production have been, the easier it is for candidates to present compelling evidence of their skill and creativity as part of a production team and in their individual role.

Some candidates report that they are taking on roles for the first time. Teachers are reminded that they should consult with the candidates and make sure the candidate is working in an area of strength for this summative evaluation. Candidates should choose roles for which they have shown real affinity and competence.

Though most work has not been problematic in terms of content or production elements, teachers are reminded to revisit the guide in terms of content and treatment (pg. 36) and the copyright statement (pg. 37). It is particularly important to remember that the intention is that candidates have a significant role in the creation of all visual and audio material and that simply using copyright free material is not an acceptable choice. All candidates, not just the sound designer/sound editor should include a brief explanation of how music (or visual) elements were created as part of the presentation of the group's production process.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Many commentaries do a very good job of weaving graphic and pictorial evidence into the body of the commentary to present a picture of the production process. Weaker work frequently lacks this sort of evidence, or features evidence which shows very little. For example, instead of a picture showing a lighting set-up, the picture shows candidates standing around with lighting equipment.

Candidates should always ask themselves what particular graphic or photographic evidence will show about the group's production process, and/or their own individual work in their chosen role.

At higher level the most frequent problem is that a candidate forgets to address the creation of the trailer in the body of the commentary, which is a requirement of the criterion.

Criterion B

A frequent problem at both higher and standard levels is that candidates do not present enough role-specific commentary and evidence to support their chosen role. A careful balance of description of the group process and their individual work in role is necessary to satisfy the descriptors of both criteria A and B. Also, candidates sometimes forget that this criterion also requires a 'critical evaluation of the project as a whole'. Frequently this is ignored or dealt with in a trivial way.

Just as with criterion A, candidates at higher level frequently forget to address the creation of the trailer in the body of the commentary, which is a requirement of the criterion.

Criterion C and Criterion D

Candidates tend to achieve their strongest results on these two criteria, which assess their work on the film itself. When candidates have taken time to carefully plan and complete their work in their individual role, then marks here are often high. It is important to note that criterion C can be clarified by the commentary, so candidates should be encouraged to discuss and illustrate creative choices, especially those that may not be immediately apparent to a viewer. While evidence in the film itself is enough to award marks in criterion C, the commentary can be used to support what is on view.

Criterion E

There is often real creativity apparent in the films, especially when candidates have taken adequate time to plan, shoot, and edit. While work presented may go with or against the convention of genre, it is important to remember that some genres are difficult to present adequately at the permitted length of this assessment. Candidates should be careful that they are not emulating feature films and are focused on the possibilities inherent in a five or seven minute film.

The most common problem here is the use of material that is not of the candidate's creation, especially music. It is a condition of the course that candidates be the authors of, or have a significant role in the creation of, all visual and audio materials used in their films.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It is very important that candidates see a variety of short films throughout the course so that they have seen models of the sort of film which they will be making for assessment. In addition, at higher level, candidates must see a variety of trailers for different genres and from different time periods so that they have some ideas of the various options available to them when creating their individual trailer.

In terms of soundtrack creation, it is necessary to do some practice films that require the creation of both foley and a score so that all candidates will have at least some experience with the sort of sound creation that is expected in the production portfolio assessment.

Over the years of the course, teachers should examine the specific duties of the role of screenwriter, director, cinematographer, editor, and sound designer/sound editor. As well, candidates should have an opportunity to develop some expertise in each of the roles, so that they can choose which role they want to be assessed as for the production portfolio.

At higher level, all candidates must have experience as an editor if they are to be successful in creating their trailer.

Finally, the candidates must have practice of writing commentaries and supplying evidence for their work in a role. This skill should be worked on in some fashion during work on each short film the candidates make for practice over the years of the course.

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

The best work at both higher and standard level had a strong film theory or film history focus, a good understanding of the requirements of a documentary script, as well as a topic and films which could be adequately and engagingly covered in the length of the script.

A number of format requirements were problematic for some candidates, particularly the requirement to include an annotated list of sources. The requirement from the guide reads:

“The annotated list of sources should refer to all materials used in researching the topic and all materials used in the documentary itself, including films from which extracts will be shown and quotations from experts or academics. Annotations should give the source and/or location of the reference. A comment on the relevance of the source must be included.”

Despite this, frequently there were no comments at all, or comments on secondary research materials but no comments on the films used.

The weakest work, at each level, not only did not develop and sustain a film theory or history topic, but also featured little analysis or argument. Often, the script was little more than a description of the plots of the film. Research in this case was often minimal, or non-existent.

Occasionally there was so little engagement with the films that it seemed that the script had been written by someone who had only viewed segments of the film on YouTube or some other source.

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

A common problem is choosing a general topic rather than a specific film theory or film history topic. For example, a candidate may write that the topic is, “Dysfunctional families in film.” Since there is no particular history or theory focus, the candidate will approach it in a

meandering, observational way – frequently citing details of the plot with some limited cinematic analysis.

This topic – if the candidate was looking at formalism for instance - could be an interesting study of mise-en-scène, cinematography, lighting, editing, design, and other elements that create the representation of ‘dysfunctional family.’ It could probably be even more focused if it examined the choices in terms of the directors of the film and used the auteur theory as a guiding force.

Without a film theory or film history focus the candidate tends to string together general observations about their topic in the context of the film’s plot. This is a problem at higher and standard level with many mediocre scripts written by otherwise fairly competent candidates.

The primary research for this assessment must consist of viewing the films, 2 at standard level and 4 at higher level. In some cases, candidates seem to have only watched selections from the films and their understanding is extremely limited.

Frequently the framing device for the film is dwelt on for pages, explaining where the narrator is and describing the mise-en-scène, without actually beginning to focus on the films themselves.

A common problem is that the language of the script is more like the language of the review instead of an exercise in film analysis. In the weakest scripts, particularly at standard level, the candidate seems to be trying to evaluate rather than analyze. For example, “Asian horror movie are superior to American horror movies because they are more subtle” but insufficient research has been carried out to allow the candidate to realize that they are talking about sub-genres of both Asian and American films and that Asian filmmakers often point to American filmmakers as inspirations.

The weakest scripts, particularly at standard level, show little indication of secondary research in either the bibliography or the script.

Finally, although the independent study requires that candidates look at films from more than one culture, there is no descriptor in the criteria that indicate the script must be a cultural comparison of films. In some cases this may be appropriate, but often it leads to sweeping generalizations about culture that are not borne out by the evidence presented.

In all cases, candidates should make sure ideas are supported by evidence, whether it is analytic evidence from their own viewing of the films or secondary evidence from appropriate sources.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It is very important that teachers cover a variety of film theory and history topics throughout the course.

While the teacher is free to pick which theories to address, it would seem likely that formalist theory relating to film language, and the deconstruction and analysis of films, would be a likely

focus point. As well, simply because of its almost universal familiarity, auteur theory seems a natural focus. (Especially with weaker standard level candidates, auteur theory seems a natural starting point for a script with a focus of only two films.) Those ideological theories descended from Marxist film theory, like Gender theory, are also likely to have meaning to candidates when it comes to looking at the institutional and sociological features implicit in films.

Looking at the history of some specific genres, trends, or movements will give the candidate an opportunity to appreciate the many possible historical approaches before they come to this summative assessment.

It is important that candidates have an opportunity to write the documentary script over the years of the course, and an obvious solution is to have them film at least one documentary as a course assignment. However it is approached, it is important that they have some familiarity with the two column script before they complete this assessment task.

It is also important to experience many examples of writing about films so that candidates can determine for themselves the difference between academic analysis of film, reviews of film, and puff pieces written to promote and sell films. Candidates should have many opportunities to discuss writing about film and to write about film themselves, so that the tools of analysis are natural to them when they come to the independent study.

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

Areas of the programme which proved difficult for candidates

In spite of regular references in previous reports to this practice there are still far too many candidates who waste too much time at the beginning of the presentation simply listing awards, actors and characters' names as an integral part of analysis or a substitute for discussing the socio-cultural context. This is clearly due to a lack of careful preparation. It is still quite common for candidates to attribute critical responses to "some people" or "some critics" without proper referencing. Stronger candidates clearly undertook thoughtful and appropriate research; weaker candidates relied far too heavily upon one or two websites such

as IMDB and Wikipedia and then present additional lists or plot summaries that did not fulfil the requirements of the presentation.

A significant number of the candidates failed to focus their presentation on an interpretation of the chosen extract and appear to find it difficult to analyse and interpret meaning. There was a tendency to outline the narrative of the whole film. In many cases this was a common fault of all candidates from the same school. The better candidates coped competently with how film creates meaning using 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. Some of the analysis tended to be simplistic, for example stating that dark lighting equalled evil, white represented purity, high angles represent power, low angles weakness and so on. Most candidates offered detailed descriptions of camera work and/or editing processes but too many did not discuss what intended meanings could be. Too many presentations contained traditional literary analysis of characters and themes. 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 in making no 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 the permitted time effectively. Many higher level candidates are offering presentations at fewer than ten minutes and at standard level fewer than six.

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

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

Whilst a significant number of candidates had difficulties most candidates reflect a genuine sense of engagement with the films chosen. Many seemed reasonably well prepared in the use of basic film language and terminology although few were able to use this knowledge as part of an in-depth analysis. 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-scène and competently addressed cinematography but did less well when analysing editing and/or sound.

Many candidates still limit their sociocultural context and “responses” to lists of awards and nominations and box office receipts.

In spite of difficulties still shown during this session, the significant strength of many of the candidates was their good understanding of the underlying themes of the films that they had studied. Many 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 analysis.

Far too many of the candidates are coming to the recording of their presentation ill-prepared. Some candidates even forgot the name of their chosen film’s director or were not able to pronounce it correctly. More 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 school and candidate numbers and has identified the film to be addressed. [Please see advice to teachers below.]

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 coherently integrate 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

- 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.
- The current film guide must be read fully and carefully.

- Candidates should be shown the criteria, the subject reports and the current film 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. Should a candidate run over time nothing will be credited beyond the ten minutes for standard level and fifteen minutes for 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 that the sound levels on the CDs to be sent to the examiner are sufficient to be heard. Some presentations for this session were inaudible. All recording should be able to be played on a domestic CD player. If this is not the case, schools must indicate the format that has been used for the recording such as Mpeg or Quick Time. Please do not record using X-Box.
- 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.
- 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.
- With regard to film selections at a school 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 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) and end up producing work that is unoriginal.
- Teachers should dissuade their candidates from offering redundant material in their presentations. Narrative summaries and lists of actors, characters and technicians waste valuable time.

At the beginning of each candidate’s recording I would recommend that the supervising teacher introduce the Presentation with the following script:

“This is a Higher/Standard Level Film Presentation for [add School Name and Number] Candidate [add Name and Number]. Her/His Presentation is on [name the Film] directed by [name the Director]. The extract that she/he has chosen is [clearly identify the extract that the candidate has chosen].

[Using first name of candidate] you may now begin your presentation.”

The timing of the Presentation will begin here and the candidates will have the full ten [SL] or fifteen minutes [HL] running from at this point.

By using this introduction, each candidate’s presentation will be clearly identified and the candidate her/himself will not waste time as it will be clear when the timing of the presentation will start.