

November 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

Overall work at standard level and higher level seemed of fairly high quality in terms of candidates' understanding of film language, their roles, and their technical proficiency. Most

candidates had a good grasp of the requirements of filmed narrative, and some attempted documentary style production as well. Understanding of the assessment criteria was generally good. Though the problem was occasional, there are still candidates who equate simply finding and using royalty-free music with the creation of original music using a program which is royalty-free. SoundCloud and other music sharing sites were used (again, occasionally) in situations where the candidates clearly had no involvement in working with musicians and creating music for their specific film. As well, there were occasional problems at higher level, with films' durations and films that were less than 6 minutes or longer than 7. This was more significant at standard level, where films shorter than 4 minutes had a near impossible job of satisfying the criteria. At both standard level and higher level, but especially at standard level, where time demands are exacting, advance planning to meet the time requirements is important.

Candidate performance against each criterion

At higher level, the most common problem is forgetting to mention the trailer in the commentary except in the rationale. Since both criteria A and B specifically include the trailer as a descriptor, this means that marks will be lost in both instances. (It is highly unusual for a candidate to actually submit a project without a trailer, so losing marks by not discussing the trailer is a shame.)

Criterion A

Criterion A is reasonably strong for most candidates. Presenting a picture of their production process is fairly easy for most candidates. The biggest problem is that some candidates fail to present the required pictorial or graphical evidence of their process and their work in their role. This is the second biggest reason for losing marks at higher level. Another frequent problem is for a candidate to discuss the production in general terms, but not in light of their chosen role.

Criterion B

Criterion B requires discussion of relevant production processes and includes the role of the candidate. Overall, in this session, most candidates did present evidence to support their role, but as with criterion A, some did not. If there is another area that is sometimes missing, it is a critical evaluation of the project as a whole. (This should focus on the film, not on group work.)

Criterion C

In this examination session, most candidates seemed to have a good grasp of the skills necessary to execute their chosen role of Director, Screenwriter, Cinematographer, Editor, or Sound designer/sound editor. In some cases, candidates seem to come to this final assessment without enough practice in their chosen role (and in some of the weakest assessments, candidates chose a role in which they had no previous experience.) Doing a good job of presenting their role with evidence and analysis in the commentary helps immeasurably with this criterion.

Criterion D

This criterion is judged wholly by the effectiveness of the candidate's work on the film. Many candidates present excellent work, some that is nearly professional in nature. The most problematic area for candidates in terms of this criterion is the length of time planning and making their film, and their understanding of their chosen role. When a candidate, at higher level, has not had experience working in their role, or when the production is planned late in the year, then the final film tends to suffer.

Criterion E

This year there were many examples of candidates who focused on problems of significance to themselves and their peers, as opposed to merely attempting to mimic feature films. Creating work that comes from the candidate's own life and context is much superior to work that simply mirrors the conventions of various genres. However, in some cases, candidates did create very good work within that context as well.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should come to this final assessment after having done many practice films during which they have the experience of collecting graphic and photographic evidence of their production process and role. If they can practice saving storyboards and taking set photos, reproducing planning sheets and other paper work, it will help with the final assessment. Set photos should be considered carefully, showing set-ups and the candidate's role, not just showing candidates on set. Candidates should ask themselves what their evidence shows, why they would include it, and how it would develop their written commentary. A set journal is not a bad idea, but candidates must understand that its contents unmodified do not satisfy the commentary criteria.

Overall, in class, candidates should have watched short films as well as features so that they have a knowledge of suitable pacing and possible narrative structure for a short film.

They should have watched trailers from different eras so that they come to the trailer creation requirement with a wide variety of choices.

And finally they should have a solid understanding and experience of each of the five roles and the skills required of a Screenwriter, Director, Cinematographer, Editor and Sound Designer.

Further comments

It is very important that the teacher share the content in the guide with the candidates and go over the criteria for success in this component. Sometimes it seems as if the candidates feel they are simply making a film and not completing an assessment worth fully 50% of their marks. Though candidates should be presenting the best film they can, they must also be mindful that they are trying to meet the descriptors in the criteria, and being diligent in collecting evidence of their work in their role.

There was much excellent work on view this year, and often the best work came from candidates who chose subjects that were meaningful to them and of social significance. Ultimately the best results were when candidates chose subjects for which they have understanding, enthusiasm, and passion.

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

There seems to be confusion for some candidates and centres as to what constitutes film theory, with candidates understanding that they must take an analytical approach to their films but without really defining what that approach is.

Selecting four films means that candidates can take on some socio-cultural topics, or a genre history subject, if they have carefully selected their films. Some research into films that would best meet their topic before selecting the films might help, as the most common choice is to select four films that are similar in genre. This is not the best approach for all theory or history topics.

The most common problem is taking a literary approach to the task, in which plot, character, and symbolism are analysed in narrative terms, with little reference to how film creates meaning. The solution to this is probably not just defining the task for the candidates when the assessment is done, but approaching a wide range of theory and history topics throughout the course. For standard level candidates, finding a topic which can be suitably explored in the context of two films can be challenging.

Occasionally, higher level candidates forget that making precise and coherent comparisons is a requirement at this level. Frequently, each film stands on its own in relationship to the topic. At standard level, the film history or film theory topic is frequently vague or too broad for treatment within the scope of the 8 to 10 page script. Many scripts do a very good job of using the candidate as the narrator of the script but there are still some that ignore this necessary requirement and use famous people or other 'guest' narrators. This often indicates a script in

which the framing sequence is much longer than necessary and in which the chosen films are not utilized enough to develop the argument and serve as evidence for the ideas. Engagement with the target audience should be in terms of the exploration of the film, not in the creation of amusing sequences for the framing sequence. Often this is misunderstood in terms of approach - assuming that the 'audience of peers' is a teen audience in general and not an audience of film candidates. An annotated bibliography is often missing, which limits the marks available. Sometimes there is an annotated bibliography in which only some sources are annotated (films, written materials, internet sources, supplementary DVD materials should all be annotated). Sometimes, the only research has been watching primary materials or reading about the films without watching them. Both of these approaches create a severely imbalanced script, usually with limited depth of argument. Overall, most candidates have a grasp of the visual and audio script style, but often the video side is neglected. In some cases, it is actually blank for large sections of the essay, and at other times it features such limited detail that the visual argument is only understood from the audio column.

Finally, the choice of films is often driven by genre similarity. While this is not a problem, if the approach is more theoretical (auteur/gender study/formalist) then it really isn't necessary to have two war films, two horror films, or whichever selected genre in order to have films that are 'relevant to the topic'. In the worst case scenario, frequently it seems that a candidate has read about their film and not viewed it, at least judging from the insight, depth of argument, and engagement (or lack thereof) with the film. In these cases, it seems the candidate is doing the assessment backwards, generating the script from secondary research instead of using that secondary research to develop their own primary research and experience of the film.

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

The range of work continues to be impressive, with many candidates looking at significant genre history and cinematic movements (such as German Expressionism, the French New Wave, the Mexican New Wave, and others).

Both higher level and standard level candidates understand the technical requirements of the documentary script format for the most part. The layout of the two-column script, and the use of visual and audio columns are competently handled by the majority of candidates.

Strong students at both levels realize that an argument can be made with visual evidence as well as audio explanation, and the best work is clearly described, logically ordered, with insightfully chosen video and audio.

In terms of levels of knowledge and understanding, at both higher level and standard level, the strongest work displays both a passion for the history and theory topic, strong evidence of research in terms of the phrasing of the topic, the rationale, and structure of the argument. All marks in the higher mark bands show both clear engagement and reflection on the chosen films.

Strong work is produced by students who have some idea of the critical significance of their chosen films and topic before they phrase their rationale and develop their argument. With this stronger work, the student often cites books as well as internet research, and often documentary materials focused on their topic.

The strongest work, at both levels, is produced by students whose clear engagement with both their films and their chosen history/theory topic has allowed them to reflect on the films themselves, to reflect on the research about those films, and to reflect on their own unique responses to the films. When students have done this, in other words when there has been significant primary and secondary research by a thoughtful student, the result is that the observations in the script are clear, coherent, and significant, and the script's argument is well structured overall, being detailed in both scope and depth.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

As noted, in order to be confident and successful with this assessment, candidates should have many different experiences of film theory and film history. In terms of theory, one would expect the auteur theory, a contrasting social theory like gender theory, and an analytic approach like formalism (which supports both the auteur theory and social theories). Other theoretical approaches are fine if the teacher is more confident with them, but without this experience in class, this assessment is daunting. (And the guide does point out that Film Theory and History should be 25 % of the course in terms of time and content.) Likewise, no specific historical approach to genre, study of the effect of film technology, or analysis of significant film movements, is prescribed, but the teacher should cover enough of these (and related topics) that candidates are confident when they come to the assessment task. Tools of research should be covered, and the reasons for providing an annotated bibliography (surely an important tool to define the candidate's own research in an era of easily available data where it is easy to forget where an idea came from). The technical tools of research and citation must be covered to some degree in the class, as well as the requirements of academic writing on film theory and history. Too often, candidate work sounds like an opinion piece, or a review, instead of a clear-eyed research into the topic. Finally, it is important at higher level that candidates experience practising making "insightful, coherent, and precise comparisons" between films, as this distinguishes higher level from standard level. (Certainly having standard level candidates practice this too is to be desired.)

Further Comments

At both higher level and standard level, it is important that when topics, titles, and rationales are written for this assignment, and when movies are chosen, that there is a theory and historical reason for the choice, not simply a similarity in the movies' genres. Too frequently work seems to be guided by the idea that a similarity in genre is the driving choice for the selection of films. A candidate could easily pick an interesting history or theory topic and then choose the films that represented the clearest choices for analysis and evidence.

As well, at standard level, there are some approaches that may help a candidate to meet the requirements of the assessment. It is very hard to look at the history of a genre or the social significance of film from two cultures with only two films. Candidates should try to narrow their

topic to something that is approachable in terms of the assessment criteria so that their work is not too general. It is easy to do a study of two auteurs, whether or not they work in the same genre and sometimes historical incidents (Truffaut's book on Hitchcock and the auteur theory for example) might lead to a topic that could be easily explored. (In the case of Truffaut and Hitchcock, for instance, looking at Truffaut's exercise in making a Hitchcockian film like *The Bride Wore Black* (also influential to Tarantino) with a Hitchcock film like *Suspicion*. This would include elements of genre study (mystery, auteur theory, and possibly film history). Whatever the case, articulating the rationale to the teacher before the candidate begins work should be more than simply finding two films from the same genre.

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

Although there remain few candidates in the November session, similar problems remain from session to session. The principal elements of the presentation, to analyse a specific film extract still appears difficult for some candidates. Some candidates still concentrate on giving an interpretation of the whole film, making only brief references to the extract. Candidates often concentrate on discussion of character and broad themes rather than how meaning is constructed in filmic terms.

There were still too many candidates who rely upon simple description offering little more than narrative summaries rather than close, detailed analysis. 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.

Basic preparation and organisation is, for some candidates, an issue although fewer candidates are achieving less than their full potential by finishing their presentation significantly well short of the time allowed. Candidates should be reminded that the timing of the presentation itself commences only after the candidate has given school and candidate numbers. Far too much time is often wasted by candidates providing unnecessary detail such as lists of characters and actors or a summary of the plot. [Please see recommendations at the end of this report.]

Although it is possible to follow the extract through shot-by-shot this is not the most efficient or effective method. 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 are still finding 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”, “high angle camera shows power” or “red means danger”.

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 significance 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.

In spite of some of the problems indicated above, more candidates are successfully integrating a detailed analysis of the extract in relation to the film as a whole as opposed to presenting a shot-by-shot description. It is also encouraging to see that many 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.

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

This session’s candidates showed improvement in some 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 and are prepared to discuss these rather than simply quoting them.

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 presentations risk their presentations 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 for the presentation.
- Teachers must be fully aware of the prescribed films in good time before each 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 practice presentations from films other than those set for the examination
- 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. Should a candidate wish to watch the extract through before the presentation this must be done before the recording of the presentation 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.
- 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.

May I encourage candidates 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.