

# **A2 Course and Unit Information (Units FM3 and FM4)**

*The A2 specification is designed to offer students and their teachers opportunities for enquiry and critical engagement across a diverse range of films and critical debates, particularly through making creative links across different topic areas. As a transition from an introductory course to possibly more advanced studies at undergraduate level, the A2 is designed to excite students (and sustain their teachers!). It is designed to encourage a lifelong interest not just in the kinds of cinema and approaches to film already familiar to them but to new experiences, new ideas. By the end of the A2 course, students will be prepared for more sophisticated, rigorous studies in film histories, theories and critical practices, should they choose to go in that direction. At the same time, although the A2 course is not 'practical' in the vocational sense, it should stimulate creativity and encourage students to feel confident about their own abilities to think in practical, as well as conceptual and critical ways, about moving images.*

# 10. *Options in constructing an A2 course.*

## 10.1 Observations and suggestions for those offering the AS + A2 over two years

### (a) **Should A2 work begin during the AS year?**

It is possible to begin anticipating the knowledge and skills required in the A2 units from day one of the AS course. Certainly the development of skills of close analysis in FM1 will be of great value, as will an early awareness of debates around 'messages and values' identified in a film and circulated as a consequence of the film's critical and popular reception. Work on a range of stimulus material for FM2 will be of considerable value in informing critical understanding of contexts across both the A2 units.

### (b) **But specifically, when should the A2 teaching begin - and with what?**

If there is a period at the end of the AS year when students are still in session following their May examinations, then this could be exploited in either or both of the following ways:

- introduction to video production work through a modest project
  - such as asking groups of three or four students to make a one minute short
- introduction to research - and, in particular, the skills required for working effectively with the Internet

Students could be asked to submit ideas for one (or even two!) areas of research which they will pursue over the summer vacation in some shape or form. If, over the summer, students read a book, watch some relevant films and explore some of the key web sites (such as IMDb, this will be a valuable launchpad. This should avoid some of the inevitable procrastination at the beginning of the A2 year proper the following September.

If there is no time available after the AS May examination sittings, it may be advisable to build some initial research work into the second half of the AS year, possibly in relation to Section C of the FM2 paper (American Cinema). Also, the Practical Application of Learning element in FM1 could be taught with a clear eye on progression to FM3.

**(c) Is it recommended to start the A2 year with FM3?**

Well, yes - but only in as much as once started, FM3 work - both the Research Project and the Practical Application of Learning - can then run in parallel with FM4 which lends itself much more to traditional whole class teaching.

As with the FM1 coursework unit for AS, FM3 should run through most of the A2 year, meeting an internal deadline (approximately mid March).

**(d) Should students be prepared for the January sitting of the FM4 examination?**

It is possible to enter candidates after just three months of study – but this seems very unwise. It is best to regard the January FM4 as a re-sit paper for candidates needing to improve their grade from the previous June sitting.

**(e) If FM4 is to be taught in parallel with FM3, in what order do you suggest the three sections of FM4 should be taught?**

It is recommended to leave Section C (single Film Critical Study) till last, possibly when the FM3 coursework has been completed. Section C fulfils a synoptic function and it is appropriate that the maturing analytical and research skills of students be brought to fruition at the very end of the teaching programme.

Prior to this, the delivery of Section A (World Cinema Topic) and Section B (Spectatorship Topic) may be taught consecutively or in an overlapping way, paralleling FM3. It may be that Section B of FM4 offers additional insights for the FM3 Practical Application of Learning – with a sensitivity toward spectatorship issues informing video, screenwriting and documentary projects – and could be delivered ahead of Section A. On the other hand, it may be felt that the World Cinema topic generates cinematic ideas that could be even more useful in developing practical work and informing the independent research topic.

**(f) So what does this look like as a possible year plan?**

## A2 Film Studies: Course Plan A (all assessment at the end of the academic year)

This plan represents four week blocks of 4.5 hours teaching contact per week (18 hours per block) over 24 weeks (108 hours in total) Unit FM3 is allocated approximately 48 hours, FM4 approximately 60 hours.

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>FM3 – Film Research and Creative Projects</b>	<b>FM4 – Varieties of Film Experience: Issues and Debates</b>
<b>[June]</b>	<b>Preliminary Research/Practical Activity - Summer reading agreed</b> (9 hours in total)	
<b>1 - 4</b>	Major Focus on Research Activities Establishing Practical Activities - group work	Introduction to World Cinema Topic - Film 1 Film 2
	8 hours	10 hours
<b>5 - 8</b>	Research – in progress  Further planning/preparation of Practical Activities	Film 3 Film 4
	8 hours	10 hours
<b>9 - 12</b>	Practical Work in progress Research in progress	Synthesis of issues arising from World Cinema Topic Major Essay  Introduction to Spectatorship Topic – Film 1
	12 hours	6 hours
<b>12 – 16</b>	Deadline for Research Catalogue (week 12)  Practical work in progress  Deadline for Research Presentation Script (week 15)	Film 2 Film 3  Synthesis of issues arising from Spectatorship Topic Major Essay
	8 hours	14 hours
<b>17 - 20</b>	Deadline for Practical Work (week 17)  (possible presentation of Presentation Scripts (weeks 17 – 18)  Deadline for Research Reflective Analysis (week 19) All coursework tied up (week 20)	Close Study Film
	8 hours	10 hours
<b>20 - 24</b>		Close Study Film (3 hours)  Revision and examination preparation (15 hours)
		18 hours

Please note that as stated in 7.1. (e), it might be considered more useful to reverse the running schedule for Sections A and B of FM4.

## 10.2 Observations and suggestions for those offering the AS + A2 over one year

### (a) Is this possible?

The Curriculum 2000 *Film Studies* specification was designed with respect for a cohort of centres, particularly in the F.E. sector, which had established a successful working practice of delivering the entire A Level to well motivated older students in about 84 contact hours - 3 hours, one evening a week.

### (b) How is it possible?

Several units lend themselves to supported self-study and this option must be used. Most film viewing will also have to be done independently. Because of this dependence on self-supported learning materials, it seems most desirable to have developed the majority of these materials before considering this 'fast track' delivery.

### (c) Which units lend themselves to supported self-study?

To answer this question the other way around, it seems that FM2 and FM4 are the two units that most need classroom interaction. By contrast FM1 and FM3 can be delivered as supported self-study. (The choice of practical options will be significant!) Much time can be saved on FM2 and FM4 if students watch the films independently - thus requiring only extracts to be used in class.

### (d) What about the difficulty in teaching the AS and A2 together or working simultaneously at different academic levels?

It is important to try to maintain a progression sequence from FM1 to FM3 and from FM2 to FM4.

# 11. Additional Information on each Unit

## 11.1 Unit FM3 - The Small Scale Research Project

### (a) What are students meant to be doing in the Research Project?

The primary objective of this component is to develop student's research skills and make them aware of the challenges, difficulties and pleasures involved in sifting through a variety of sources for material that will allow them to present findings on an area of investigation they have researched. Not all the material discovered and scrutinised will be relevant to the area they are investigating. For this reason students must learn to discard that which is not of value, as well as put into some neat presentation package that which is.

The critical framework adopted is also important. For example, the research around a particular group of films will be quite different depending on whether the focus is on, say, star or genre or ethnicity. It will be still more different if the focus is on institution or technology. An approach which is more sociological, political or cultural will require a different starting point again.

The student is required to conceive their research project around one specific film but will be required to reach out to include at least two others. Thus the other films are used to support arguments stemming from the central focus film.

Carrying the concept forward from FM1, the key dynamic in this work is the student's own motivation. A 'motivated' research project is one in which the student is clearly driven by a personal interest and a genuine desire to become better informed. A 'motivated' research project, like a 'motivated' written critical analysis is also driven by uncovering critical investigation arising out of the student's own response to the focus film(s).

**(b) What are the different critical frameworks permitted and which, if any, are to be particularly recommended?**

There are eight critical frameworks listed (p.17, 2009 Specification). All of them encourage the candidate to place film work within broader contexts.

What unites all three of Star / Performer, Auteur and Genre is that they are critical frameworks that may depend on identifying a set of recurring characteristics and then considering interesting manifestations of these (as well as interesting variations) in particular film examples. In each case it is possible to take an historical approach, looking at developments over a given time frame. It is also possible to work from the surface feature to underlying ideological significance in meaning production.

One of these, the auteur, was the required critical framework in the former FS4 Unit and will undoubtedly remain popular with certain students. Star/Performer is similar in characteristics to the Auteur in that they are both person-based, but beyond that it is possible to talk about the characteristic 'signature' not only of an auteur film maker but also of a performer who brings such distinctiveness to a film that it partly determines overall meaning and response.

Social, Political and Cultural Studies, Gender Issues and Ethnicity are three critical frameworks that, in different ways, encourage a more explicit engagement with ideology (or 'messages and values'). Again, historical studies are possible, looking at developments during a given time frame. Alternatively a comparison may be made based on variables (like national cinema, production company, etc.) at a particular moment. It is important to recognise that these three frameworks may also be addressed through a person-based approach where, for example, the politics, gender, or ethnicity of those involved in making a film or a body of work is investigated for its impact on meaning and response.

Institution and Technology critical approaches both have at one remove the clear significance of economics. What happened and when will often require some recourse to economic determinants. There may be a more direct interdependence where an investigation may make links between a technology and the institution that produced it, or an institution and the technologies that shape it. Both Institution and Technology frameworks may also be person-focused (a producer or cinematographer, for example). Alternatively, they may lead to a key historical moment when a major development took place.

Institutional and Technology investigations may each take the student in the direction of ideology, creating links with one or more of Social, Political and Cultural Studies, Gender Issues and Ethnicity.

Overall, it is quite possible to imagine some blending of the student's chosen critical approach with at least one of the others listed.

None is to be particularly recommended, though engagement with them should stem from student enthusiasm and curiosity. The different critical approaches collectively provide a tool box. As the student develops their proposal, the appropriate tool or tools will emerge quite naturally. However, once this happens, the student needs to keep very much to the forefront of their research what tool(s) are being used.

Also see (m) below.

**(c) What areas of investigation are recommended for 'motivating' the Research?**

The process of defining the area of investigation can be divided into two stages:

The first is at a basic factual level, mapping out a broad potential field of study: for example, with a particular focus on *Unforgiven*, how many other Westerns has Clint Eastwood made as actor and as director, when and under what production contexts?

Answers to these questions will lead to a tighter focus on just a small section of the broader map: for example, the Westerns Eastwood directed or the Westerns he acted in for Sergio Leone.

As the area of investigation becomes clearer, the second stage is entered where a critical framework will emerge as being especially useful. For example, in this case an auteur study, a star study, a genre study, an institutional study or a focus on, say, gender issues, specifically masculinity, are all feasible.

Here are five different projects from the same starting point:

- *The impact a film either starring or directed by Clint Eastwood has had on the Western genre? (focus film: Unforgiven)*
- *The impact Eastwood's performance in a Leone film has had on the representation of western heroes subsequently? (focus film: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly)*
- *The contribution of Eastwood's star image to the ideology of films in which he stars (focus film: The Outlaw Josey Wales)*
- *Influences of Leone on Eastwood as a director of Westerns? (focus film: A Fistful of Dollars)*

- *The importance of the Malpaso Production Company in guaranteeing auteur independence for Eastwood (focus film: Space Cowboys)*

It should be noted that there is no need to express the area of investigation as a question. Questions often point to answers from the outset, and accordingly may close down avenues of research. Investigation leads to findings, and framing an investigation as a statement may allow students to avoid deselecting interesting lines of enquiry. However it is recognised that some students may function better with a question as the anchor for their investigative study, and so there is no particular discouragement of the question form, rather a suggestion to consider its worth as a mechanism of motivation.

**(d) So the Research project should be quite tightly focused?**

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the Research Project is meant to be *small scale and focused*. Students should resist any temptation toward very generalist encyclopaedia-like surveys.

The focus on a particular film as a starting point should guarantee this. In most cases it will be unnecessary for the student to extend beyond the required reference to two further related films.

The other focus is on the area of investigation and on the critical framework structuring it – which motivates and makes specific the kind of research conducted.

**(e) Can more than one student in a class be working on the same topic?**

It is quite likely that some research areas will be particularly popular. There is nothing to prevent more than one student in a teaching group exploring the same research area, although it is essential for purposes of assessment that each has either a different focus film or is applying a different critical framework.

What is not acceptable is a 'whole class' project. This approach throws away the opportunity for students to use this component to reflect their own quite specific interest and motivation, as well as failing to meet the learning objectives and making assessment almost impossible.

**(f) Are students expected to be quite autonomous, finding/supplying their own sources?**

This is a learning experience in which the teacher as tutor may offer advice and guidance throughout the research process, particularly concerning research strategies and options. However, the teacher must be careful not to make key critical and evaluative decisions about research materials on behalf of the student. As a less than perfect comparison, a science teacher will facilitate the experiment while allowing the student to conduct their own experiment, collect their own results, arrive at their own conclusion.

**(g) Must students devise their own Research Proposal?**

Students may well require considerable help and advice in formulating an area of investigation that is appropriate for turning a general interest into a meaningful small-scale research project. On the other hand, the initial interest should be theirs – again to repeat the point, a sense of student motivation is very important.

The role of the teacher is to assess the viability of the student proposal in relation to its manageability and the degree of difficulty involved in accessing appropriate resources. There should be no judgement made by the teacher as to the 'worthiness' or otherwise of the subject.

**(h) Why must guidance from the FM3 Coursework Moderator be sought?**

Your moderator's role at this stage is to protect the student by ensuring that the proposal is within the terms of the Specification, is achievable in terms of available resources and is of an appropriate level of difficulty. Your moderator has the benefit of a comparative overview of proposals being submitted by all the centres for which they are responsible and advice will be based on this overview.

**(i) How should the proposals be submitted to the Moderator and by what date?**

There are two forms, FM3c and FM3d, to be submitted to your Moderator by the 30<sup>th</sup> November for coursework to be submitted the following May. In practice, you are recommended to submit your students' proposals as early as possible. A recommended date is by 30<sup>th</sup> September.

There are two forms (see pages 55 and 57 of the 2009 Specification). The first requires to provide a summary list of all your candidates' proposals. The second is to be completed by the student and requires a teacher comment. This second form asks for some definition of

- the area of investigation,
- the project context (the critical framework or approaches being used),
- the focus film, plus two related films
- indicative list of key resources (book / magazine article / internet source)

This level of detail is to guarantee that some significant work has already been put into developing the project. At the same time it is generally understood that projects continue to evolve and may be rather different by the time of final submission.

Only if a proposal changes completely, should you submit a further proposal form to your Moderator.

**(j) What will be regarded as a good collection of catalogue materials?**

- First, that the items in the collection contain information that directly relates to the student's area of investigation

- Second, that explicitly or implicitly they reflect a clear decision made by the student to adopt a particular critical framework
- Third, that they are of an appropriate level of sophistication
- Fourth, that there is a variety from different sources and media (e.g. books, periodicals, popular magazines, newspapers, television documentaries, radio recordings, dvd material, web sites, etc.)
- Fifth, that there is evidence of quite rigorous selectiveness. This will be demonstrated by the inclusion of 3-5 items excluded from the final catalogue.
- Sixth, that it is packaged for ease of use by the moderator .

There is no particular guidance on how many items constitute a satisfactory collection of catalogue materials, nor the size of these items. For a student pursuing an obscure subject, four or five relevant items may constitute a significant research achievement; for another doing a much more popular subject, ten or twelve relevant items may be presented from an even larger collection of 'raw' material.

There is also no particular guidance on the proportion of 'primary' to 'secondary' sources. Primary sources will include relevant films, as well as any interviews, phone conversations, letters/e-mails with appropriate contacts. Secondary sources will include all other material relating to the topic (e.g., books, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, internet, DVDs, video, film, TV programmes). It is acceptable for a catalogue to be made up entirely of secondary source materials, though students are encouraged to be enterprising in attempting primary research.

Where there is a significant body of web-based material, it is expected that there should be a demonstration of a range of types of material. Therefore five references all of which stem from IMDB can be seen as clearly less impressive than references including one from IMDB, one from a fan site, one from a studio or production company site, one from recognised critic, and one from a film festival.

**(k) What is the function of the annotation for each of the Catalogue items?**

The most obvious function is to demonstrate that the student has indeed engaged with the source and has been able to evaluate its usefulness in relation to the project. More specifically, the annotation allows for reference to be made to the criticalframework adopted. In addition to an annotation of each catalogue item, there should be an annotation against each of between 3 and 5 items NOT included in the catalogue. (see p. 18, 2009 Specification). The annotation will briefly indicate how valuable the item has been in developing the research, possibly applying criteria based on (j) above. This requirement allows the student to demonstrate their exercise of critical judgement in determining what has been included.

**(l) How should the annotations be presented?**

There is no particular requirement on how the annotations should be presented. They may, for example, be made immediately below each catalogue entry, or be presented as a set of endnotes. A logical approach offered by Centres is simply annotating directly below the item reference, though whatever approach adopted the only key requirement in terms of presentation is one of clarity.

**(m) How should the collection of materials be packaged, especially in relation to Moderation?**

Although the specification refers explicitly to an A4 format, a slightly larger box file will be acceptable for internal moderation.

For external moderation the material required by the Specification (p18, ai and ii) **MUST** be presented for ease of moderation – simply held together by treasury tags is fine, as is a simple ring binder. The external moderator will not need to see the collection of materials in the first instance - only the annotated catalogue and presentation. However, it is at the Moderator's discretion whether or not they call in the collected materials subsequently.

Common sense is required in presenting bulky items - full bibliographic details of a book used, together with page references is, for example, both more practical and useful than a copy of the book!

**(n) Why is there such a tight word limit on the Presentation Script – especially given the amount of material the student may have found and wish to communicate?**

The word limit is quite sufficient for a presentation script – though not for an essay. This is not an essay. Although there is no examination requirement to present the script, it is useful for the purpose of thinking about volume to equate a 1500 word script to up to an half hour presentation (approximately 15 minutes of speech and 10-15 minutes of audio-visual material). An element of the discipline involved in producing the Presentation Script is that it makes points briefly and effectively – with the assumption that elaboration in the performance of the presentation script would come from the embedded references.

If students are frustrated by the large amount of additional material they have collected, they may wish to provide a set of endnotes in addition to the script. This is not included in the word count and is not marked.

Clearly there is a skills dimension to the Research Project that extends beyond the points already made in (h) above. Thinking about ways of setting out a presentation script for effective delivery is something that the student can regard as a valuable transferable skill.

**(o) So should the Presentation Script be written for an actual oral presentation?**

Yes it should. Students will have much to share with others - either in group or whole class presentations. The 'script' will certainly be driven by practical considerations about communicating effectively - and succinctly. For example, students may wish to produce *PowerPoint* slides. The presentation can involve the use of audio-visual aids and their use should be identified in the script. The script can utilise headings and sub-headings, notes and bullet points where appropriate. It should offer an enthusiastic delivery of the research findings and any particular points of interest, and should highlight the critical skills involved in selecting the material. It must address the area of investigation explicitly but may not necessarily offer a firm conclusion or 'answer'.

Although there is no requirement that students present their findings orally to others - and you may find this impossible to organise if you have a large group and/or too few contact hours - the ideal would be for students to engage in some kind of formal knowledge sharing.

**(p) How should a candidate reference the catalogue items they have used in their presentation?**

There is no set or preferred method of referencing catalogue items, and, again, the key to selection an appropriate method is that of clarity. A logical approach would be to number each catalogue item and then simply reference each item in parenthesis thus: (Item1). Utilising footnotes or endnotes is an equally suitable method.

**(q) How does the candidate make explicit the underpinning critical framework that is driving the project?**

In practice some work submitted will foreground the critical framework more explicitly, while others will do so more implicitly. One framework is not "better" than the other. The critical framework will be demonstrated in both the script itself and in the annotations to the catalogue (see below). The productivity of the application of the critical framework will be evident all the way through the work from the formulation of the area of investigation to the kinds of resources selected for the catalogue (see h and j above).

**(r) And how is the Project assessed?**

Directions for marking of the Small-Scale Research Project can be found on pages 37 – 39 of the 2009 Specification. You are reminded that the Annotated Catalogue carries 15 marks and the Presentation script 25 marks.

## 11.2 Unit FM3 – Creative Project

**(a) The three options are quite different, so how is it that they share the same assessment structure?**

The three options need to be comparable and the common assessment structure achieves this.

More significantly, the three options are indeed simply variations on a single task - to demonstrate a 'creative application of learning' - whether this is done via the Documentary Step Outline, Screenwriting, or Video option.

**(b) So, what exactly is meant by the 'creative application of learning'?**

Students are provided here with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of Film by some means other than conventional essay writing. At the same time this offers the opportunity for further, creative learning - through *doing*.

**(c) Does this mean that the demonstration of learning, of knowledge and understanding, is more important than the quality of the artefact produced?**

The intrinsic quality of the artefact is important and students should be encouraged to work to the highest standards they can attain within the restraints imposed by time and resources. However, students should be constantly reminded that their work is being assessed primarily in relation to the *ideas* contained in the work. So the specification requires not only a clearly thought through set of aims but also provide clear evidence in the artefact itself of *Film Studies ideas* being engaged with. Again, to quote the specification, "the Creative Project should demonstrate candidates' active engagement with issues raised during their studies at AS and A2" (p.18).

The student is given the opportunity to make explicit the ideas informing their work in the reflective analysis (see below).

**(d) What is the breakdown of marks for the Creative Project?**

- Creative Work – documentary step outline, screenwriting or video making (45 marks)
- Reflective Analysis – a continuous piece of writing or a blog or other similar web based format or a dvd commentary (15 marks)

**(e) A statement of "Aims and Context" is compulsory but not assessed – can you explain?**

For whichever Creative Project option that is chosen, it is vital that the student has a clear sense of their aims and the context(s) out of which the work emerged. Form FM3a (page 51 of the 2009 Specification) has space for the very brief outline of this information. As the Specification makes clear: "the aims and context' must be completed on the appropriate cover sheet, other wise the Creative project and accompanying Reflective Analysis cannot be adequately assessed." (page 19, 2009 Specification). Without knowing what the work set out to achieve, it is impossible to reach an understanding of whether it was successful in meeting its aims.

**(f) For the Documentary Step Outline option, what exactly is required?**

The Documentary step outline is a refinement of the rather hybrid form developed for the purposes of coursework in FM1 that returns it to a more recognisable, industrial form. Simply put, the step outline is a scene by scene 'walk through' the proposed documentary that identifies the key activities, interview content, and documentary structuring devices (without writing any of the dialogue).

Whilst industrially step outlines take many forms, for ease and convenience WJEC has provided an exemplar template that will allow candidates to concentrate on content rather than style of submission.

**(g) How should students be prepared for the Documentary Step Outline option?**

In most cases this option will be chosen as a result of the student wishing to extend their work from the Small-Scale Research Project. The work done for that project will be added to by further research, especially research relating to people and locations that are appropriate to a documentary. Also important will be a broader range of film and documentary extracts than identified in the Small-Scale Research Project itself.

The student will also need to study carefully examples of documentaries so that there is a strong awareness of conventions (even if this work proposes to go against some of these conventions). The most obvious source of documentary material will be in the form of DVD 'extras'.

It will undoubtedly prove beneficial for students to research documentary form and documentary modes, as well as specific documentary making techniques. Essential will be an understanding of the form in relation to the proposed platform, since a broadcast documentary is likely to be different that one devised as a DVD 'extra'.

It may be useful if the student is studying Documentary for Section B of FM4, as there will need to be a critical dimension in the reflective analysis that accompanies this practical application of learning.

**(h) For the Documentary Step Outline how many scenes translate into the 1800 words prescribed in the Specification?**

There is no particular number of scenes required for the documentary, as the number of scenes will be related to the documentary form chosen and the subject matter it addresses. What is important is that it addresses the entire documentary scene by scene.

In the AS Extended Step Outline option, 1000 words are equated to approximately 5 scenes. It is not appropriate for this to be scaled up to the full length documentary step outline, as at AS the step outline is adapted and its content expanded to address specified academic demands. ***At A2, the step outline should describe each scene succinctly, rather than expanding on micro aspects as required at AS.***

**(i) For the Screenplay option which is to be preferred: a section of a feature length screenplay or a whole short film screenplay?**

There are some attractions in going for the whole short screenplay. However, if students wish to do so, it is important that they study short films and recognise the particular features of the form.

If students wish to work on a feature length screenplay and feel frustrated by the word limit, it is conceivable that they write a longer piece of work but only submit a section of it.

**(j) Will the Screenplay be assessed in relation to its use of professional conventions?**

It is expected that a submitted screenplay will reflect presentational conventions.

However, in terms of content, it is possible for the student to work against the conventions of, for example, genre or realism. It is important, however, that this is made clear in the “Aims and Context” section.

Students should be encouraged to consider carefully an over reliance on dialogue, especially in relation to form. A Woody Allen-esque piece may be dialogue heavy, but most other forms will require a more confident use of non-dialogue driven sequences. WJEC has offered specific additional guidance sheets on screenwriting and these should also be consulted.

**(k) What is the best way to support students during the development and writing process?**

A primary starting point is in the recognition of screenwriting as a distinct form that has its own conventions and constructional techniques. It is advisable that students research screenwriting, just as they would any of the other options. At the very least, some engagement with script form should be encouraged.

A workshop environment is best for sharing work in progress. The peer group sharing of ideas and criticism may inform not just the creative process but also the reflective analysis.

**(l) Is it possible for the video project to be a group activity?**

Yes. It is made clear on page 19 of the Specification that up to four students may work collaboratively on a video production.

As each candidate must be given an individual mark, differentiation is vital. One way of enabling differentiation is by ensuring that each candidate has a specific, different but equal role in pre-production, production or post-production (director, cinematographer, sound recorder / designer, editor, etc.) As it is likely that there will be overlap in roles and roles will not be precisely equally weighted, then it is important that the reflective analysis includes clear reference to the specific individual contribution.

**(m) Is it preferable to choose the option of a sequence from a feature length film or an entire short?**

As in (j) above with reference to screenwriting, there are some attractions in going for the latter alternative. However, if students wish to do so, it is important that they study short films and recognise the particular features of the form - such as the closure.

**(n) What is the tolerance for video work that goes over length?**

With video work, a tolerance is already built in to the Specification. (The video may be between three and five minutes long). That part of the work submitted which is in excess of five minutes should not be assessed.

**(o) How will a Moderator distinguish between work from different centres with very different video production facilities?**

First, it is important to state that the Moderator does not mark the work - the teacher does.

It is important to state (again!) that the *ideas* informing the film are important and that assessment is based on an ability to devise films projects creatively, applying appropriate planning and production skills effectively. Further the "creative tensions" between, for example, adherence to conventions and auteurist personal creativity should be apparent.

Information about the context within which work has been produced (availability of equipment, type of equipment, number of hours access, etc.) should be included on coursework cover sheets submitted with candidates' work to the Moderator.

**(p) What should be included in the Reflective Analysis?**

The Reflective Analysis is a precise engagement by the student with the work they have produced. It is closer to a micro analysis of the kind submitted for FM1 than it is some kind of broadly based production report.

Students should bring to bear their Film Studies knowledge in order to evaluate aspects of their own work, for example, in terms of what they were trying to achieve and whether the creative decisions made proved to be appropriate ones. Certainly some reflection on creative intention within their chosen role, and an understanding of potential affect is advisable.

Given the limited length of this analysis, the student is strongly recommended to focus on precise moments, and particular key decisions made, rather than considering the dynamics of production, or any underpinning research methodologies.

**(q) While it seems straightforward to produce such an analysis in conventional form, surely alternatives such as web blog or a dvd commentary lend themselves less well to such an analytical approach?**

The blog in particular may lead the student toward a production diary approach. However, a blog is likely to exceed 1000 words and the recommendation here is that the student extracts from the blog those elements that are most analytical. Though, of course, the student is going to

have to be encouraged to write the blog with a focus on objectives, creative options used and critical self evaluation of the results achieved.

The dvd commentary could be highly analytical. The problem here is one of word length. To speak the equivalent of 1000 words could take 10 minutes of screen time or more – and the video work is 5 minutes maximum. One alternative is that the student speaks over still images before and after the film runs in real time.

With both the blog and the dvd commentary, the WJEC will provide examples of good practice as work is received – and these will be disseminated on the website and at Inset meetings.

**(r) And how is the Creative Project assessed?**

Directions for marking of the Creative Project can be found on pages 40 - 42 of the 2009 Specification. You are reminded that the Creative Product carries 25 marks and the Reflective Analysis 15 marks.

### **11.3 Unit FM3 – Administration**

**(a) Are procedures the same as for FM1 coursework?**

Yes - please refer to pages 43 – 44 of the 2009 Specification

**(b) Are there any particular recommendations for the packaging of work to the Moderator**

The Small-Scale Research Project should be presented in A4 format. The items listed in the Catalogue should NOT be sent to the Moderator, though the Moderator has the right to ask for the research folder itself subsequent to considering the Catalogue and accompanying annotations.

The Documentary Step Outline should also be presented in A4 format.

All video work from a centre should be collected on one or more dvd 'showreels' – with each film clearly identified with candidate names and numbers. Ideally these 'showreels' should be indexed for ease of reference by the Moderator. DVDs MUST be formatted so that they will play on a basic domestic DVD player, and MUST be checked for compliance prior to being submitted for moderation.

The accompanying Reflective Analysis, if written, should also be presented in A4 format. If the student has kept a blog, a web address should be supplied, but the relevant pages from that blog should also be printed out and sent with the student's work.

If the student has produced a dvd commentary, the film with this commentary should be submitted on a stand alone disc, even if the film as a group effort

also appears on one of the showreels submitted. This individual disc should be clearly labelled on the disk itself.

Ensure that all elements of a candidate's submission are clearly labelled and grouped together in a secure folder. More precise instructions on packaging and labelling will be issued by the WJEC prior to deadline day.

**(c) What if I don't have a Moderator assigned to my Centre?**

Contact the Subject Officer at the WJEC.

**(d) How important is it that the student and teacher sign the coursework cover sheet (FM3a)?**

This is vital. Work will NOT be moderated unless both the student and the teacher have signed in the appropriate places, indicating that the work is the student's own.

**(e) How detailed should be the teacher's comments supporting the marks awarded on the FM3a form**

The Moderator will require not less than 50 words or more than 200 words from the teacher to justify the allocation of marks for, respectively, the Small-Scale Research Project and the Creative Project.

## **12.1 Unit FM4 – Varieties of Film Experience – Issues and Debates: an Overview**

**(a) Is a key objective of this unit to extend the student experience of cinema?**

Very much so. While it is perfectly possible to study challenging and unusual films at AS level either in FM1 or FM2, the assumption is that most centres will wish to use the AS to consolidate knowledge and understanding around familiar forms of cinema. In the A2 year the invitation is to step out beyond the familiar – looking at different kinds of cinematic form, possibly from different cultural contexts and / or historical periods.

However, there is another key objective – and that is also contained in the title of the unit: to extend the student's awareness of the kinds of issues and debates that characterise Film Studies as an academic subject. Critical approaches will have been introduced in the AS year and are extended in the FM3 Research Project. Here these are developed further and tested out in their application to particular films. Some issues are explicitly stated in the Specification, such as those around spectatorship. Others are not part of the specification as such but may well inform classroom discussion. These include:

- indigenous cinema vis-à-vis global Hollywood;
- challenges to mainstream cinema contained in different kinds of cinematic practices;

- the construction of ‘canons’ by academics and critics;
- the evaluative criteria that determine the status of particular films and film movements.

**(b) Compared with the previous A2 Specification, there is no explicit reference to Producers and Audiences in FM4. Does this mean that this dimension of Film Studies can be ignored?**

The relationship between the producers of a film and the audience is one that is clearly emphasised in Section A of FM2. It is also implicit in the other sections of that paper. It may be a key point of focus in the FM3 small scale Research Project. Depending on the choice of FM4 World Cinema topic in Section A and the Single Film study in Section C quite significant contextual study may focus on the producer-audience relationship.

**(c) And why is there no explicit study of Critical Approaches in FM4?**

Critical approaches run through both FM3 and FM4. IN FM3 the small scale Research Project explicitly requires a critical approach to give some focus and direction to the enquiry. In FM4 the most appropriate critical approaches will be employed depending on the task in hand. This may require some auteur or genre or institutional or cultural perspective. Students should become increasingly comfortable with the idea that different critical tool boxes are used for different jobs.

What students are not required to do explicitly in FM4, as they were required to do in the former FS6 is evaluate any particular critical approach.

Centres may wish to orientate their teaching around particular critical perspectives – such as gender and ethnicity - and for these to run through the different components of FM3 and FM4.

**(d) Given that there are no prescribed films or focus films for either Section A or Section B of FM4, what advice is available on what films might be appropriate for any particular topic?**

There is a high level of confidence in Centres being able to construct relevant and engaging teaching programmes on the basis of the Specification itself and these Notes for Guidance. INSET events and the soon to be launched teachertalk forum on the WJEC website will both provide opportunities for Centres to share ideas and experiences about using particular films and groups of films.

The WJEC is, of course, concerned to ensure that the films that candidates study for a particular topic will indeed allow them to engage in relevant study in relation to assessment requirements. If in doubt, you may contact the WJEC directly.

**(e) How many films should be studied for the chosen Section A and Section B topics?**

In Section A (World Cinema) it is required that a minimum of two films be studied – with a recommendation that up to two further films be studied to enrich the primary study. Clearly time is a key factor in deciding how many

additional films can be screened and how much teaching can take place around them. There is another factor as well: how many films can your students confidently handle and meaningfully reference in constructing an answer. Although we encourage the wide viewing of films, many candidates are hindered by having too much material in the examination.

This has also proved to be the case with the Spectatorship topics in the past – where superficial reference to a large body of examples has often limited the achievement of the candidate. As in Section A, Section B (Spectatorship) has the requirement that candidates show a detailed knowledge of two appropriate feature length films (or a somewhat larger number of shorts). Here additional films may reinforce or interrogate the two major study films. But again a careful judgement has to be made as when the student as candidate has simply too much material to refer to meaningfully or shape into a coherent answer.

**(f) Is the practice of encouraging students to choose their own films for Sections A and B of FM4 to be encouraged?**

The intention is that the two primary films for Sections A and B be taught as whole class studies. What is possible is that additional films be proposed to students for independent study. Ideally these additional films should be available with supporting independent study materials.

**(g) And does this advice extend to Section C?**

Again the intention is that a single film be the focus for whole class study. Further, a key aspect of the Single Film study is that it generates critical debate between students.

**(h) Are there possibilities for linking teaching across two or even all three Sections of FM4?**

There are possible overlaps between each section, not least in the films themselves. However, while it may be an efficient use of teaching time to establish links and overlaps there are two key considerations.

First, the Specification does not allow a film to be used in any significant way in more than one answer. Second, the focus is quite different in each of the three sections of FM4 and candidates may be more confused than aided by the lack of clear demarcation between each.

What is encouraged is dialogue between films studies in FM4 and FM3. Both the research and the creative elements in FM3 could be enriched by issues and debates raised through the different parts of FM4. The most obvious way to do this has already been mentioned in (c) above: to run the weave of a particular critical approach through different components.

## 12.2 Unit FM4 – Section A: World Cinema

**(a) For the purpose of the Specification what is “World Cinema”? Is it possible to study English Language films?**

One of the purposes of this Section of FM4 is to broaden the student's experience of film (and indeed this is reflected in the overall title of the paper). It is expected that both the principal study films referred to for whichever option is chosen are from a non English speaking context.

The artificiality of this is acknowledged – some daring and innovative non-mainstream work is produced in the English language. However, it offers an unambiguous line in the sand for the purpose of choosing your principle films. *Kes* cannot be chosen as a principal film for Neo-Realism or *Blue Velvet* for Surrealism.

However, ONE of the SUPPLEMENTARY films may be in the English Language. So *Kes* could be referred to in the context of the diffusion of Neo-Realism across different national cinemas, while *Blue Velvet* could be referred to as an example of a film made by an American director strongly influenced by Surrealism.

**(b) Given that there is a choice of question for each option, is it reasonable to expect some kind of pattern to the examination paper in which one question focuses on film form and the other on context?**

In very broad terms, yes, one question will focus on film style and techniques – the other on contexts of production. However, each topic is quite distinctive and the primary purpose of the questions will be to pick up on the key concept of the option, for example, the “national” or “urban stories”.

**(c) Is it possible to study films for more than one of the Section A options.**

Yes it is. Depending on your choice of film, it is possible to create overlaps between for example:

- National Cinema and New Waves
- Neo-Realism and Urban Stories

However, a word of warning. The emphasis in teaching cannot be the precisely the same if, for example, you are teaching *Bicycle Thieves* for the neo-realist topic and as an “urban story”. However, there is plenty of scope for ingenuity.

#### **ASPECTS OF NATIONAL CINEMA**

**(d) With regard to the first option in Section A, what exactly does it mean to study film “by reference to the national”?**

The areas of investigation subsumed within a “National Cinema” study include the following:

- the relationship of films to their immediate political, economic, social and cultural contexts, especially in terms of themes and forms of representation;
- the relationship of films to their (possibly distinctive) contexts of production and reception;
- the significance of either individuals or collectives of people within a nation in shaping a distinctive kind of cinema;

Implicit in some or all of the above may be the importance of indigenous cinema as a creative and commercial response to the hegemony of Hollywood.

**(e) So “Aspects of a National Cinema” has a particularly strong emphasis on contextual rather than critical studies?**

The study of, say, Mexican or Iranian Cinema will be powerfully enriched by contextual knowledge. However, what is formally, stylistically distinctive about the work of a national cinema will also be a central area of study.

It may be worth approaching this option with the idea that it offers direct continuity from Section B of FM2 (British Cinema) – which is, of course, also the study of an aspect of a national cinema. As well as some familiarity with questions of representation and the meanings and values a film communicates, students may already have a sense of some of the intellectual and methodological issues that are part of a much more advanced study of national cinema. For example:

- In its messages and values how ‘representative’ can a film said to be of some aspect of the national situation?
  - How far can a film be said to be “symptomatic” of the forces at work within a national culture at a particular time?
  - Can we talk about a ‘national style’ of cinema?
  - In a national cinema dominated by auteurs, how far can claims be made for them to be making work that is indeed public and national, rather than arising from the personal and the idiosyncratic?
  - In a national cinema dominated by formulae (such as Bollywood), how far can claims be made for films reflecting national contexts?
- These are difficult issues that reach beyond A level work. However, they do thicken a broadly based critical question which is appropriate: Why these films in this place at this time?

**(f) Why is it not allowed to study the work of a particular auteur – given that some national cinemas are very much “auteur national cinemas”.**

The judgment has been made that an auteur study would distract students too far from a focus on the “national”. It is, of course, possible to acknowledge, the importance of auteurs within the chosen national cinema by choosing a representative film of each of two different auteurs.

**(g) The Specification states that it is not necessary to study films from the whole of the specified period. What is recommended in practice?**

Each topic covers a 20 year period, with three of the four topics defining the end date as being ‘now’. Three or four films are not going to cover such an extended period in any meaningful way unless the intention is to identify very broad contrasts and continuities. To take an equivalent, think of British Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s – in which you may wish to focus entirely on, say, the time frame 1964 – 1968 for reasons to do with cultural focus and the productive comparisons that can be made in such a tightly defined period.

**(h) What films are recommended for the “Bollywood 1990 – Present” topic?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Here are some possibilities:

*Hum Aaphe Hain Kaun* (Barjatya, 1994)  
*Dilwale Dulhania le Jayenge* (Chopra, 1995)  
*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (Johar, 1998)  
*Dil Se* (Ratnam, 1998)  
*Lagaan* (Gowariker, 2001)  
*Kabhi Kushi Kabhie Gham* (Johar 2001)  
*Devdas* (Bhansali, 2002)  
*Lage Raho Munnabhai* (Hirani, 2006)  
*Rang de Basanti* (Mehra, 2006)  
*Taare Zameen Par* (Khan, 2007)  
*Om Shanti Om* (Khan, 2008)

**(i) What films are recommended for the “Iranian Cinema 1990 – Present” topic?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Here are some possibilities:

*Close Up* (Kiarostami, 1990)  
*The White Balloon* (Panahi, 1995)  
*The Apple* (S Makhmalbaf, 1998)  
*Taste of Cherry* (Kiarostami, 1999)  
*The Circle* (Panahi, 2000)  
*Blackboards* (S Makhmalbaf, 2000)  
*Secret Ballot* (Payami, 2001)  
*Ten* (Kiarostami, 2002)  
*Turtles Can Fly* (Ghobadi, 2004)  
*Offside* (Panahi, 2006)

Please note that *The Kite Flyer* and *Persepolis* are **not** Iranian films.

**(j) What films are recommended for the “Japanese Cinema 1950 - 1970” topic?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

There are many possibilities for this topic and two lists are offered. In some cases any one of three or four other films by the same director would be just as good.

1950s  
*Rashomon* (Kurosawa, 1950)

*Ugetsu Monogatari* (Mizoguchi, 1951)  
*Ikiru* (Kurosawa, 1952)  
*Tokyo Story* (Ozu, 1953)  
*Sansho Dayu* (Mizoguchi, 1953)  
*Seven Samurai* (Kurosawa, 1954)  
*Twenty-Four Eyes* (Kinoshita, 1954)  
*Sound of the Mountains* (Naruse, 1954)  
*When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* (Naruse, 1960)

also: *Godzilla* (Hondo, 1954)

1960s

*Night and Fog in Japan* (Oshima, 1960)  
*An Actor's Revenge* (Ichikawa, 1962)  
*Onibaba* (Shindo, 1963)  
*Woman of the Dunes* (Teshigahara, 1964)  
*Kwaidan* (Kobayashi, 1964)  
*Assassination* (Shinoda, 1964)  
*Violence at High Noon* (Oshima, 1966)  
*The Pornographers* (Imamura, 1966)  
*Irezumi* (Masumura, 1966)  
*Tokyo Drifter* (Suzuki, 1966)  
*Funeral Parade of Roses* (Matsumoto, 1969)

**(k) What films are recommended for the “Mexican Cinema 1990 – Present” topic?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Here are some possibilities:

*Santa Sangre* (Jodorowsky 1989)  
*Cronos* (Del Toro, 1992)  
*Like Water for Chocolate* (Arau, 1993)  
*Amores Perros* (Inarritu, 2000)  
*Y Tu Mama Tambien* (Cuaron, 2001)  
*Japon* (Reygadas, 2002)  
*The Crime of Father Amaro* (Carrera 2002)  
*Rabbit on the Moon* (Suarez, 2004)  
*El Violin* (Vargas, 2005)  
*La Zona* (Pla, 2007)

## INTERNATIONAL FILM STYLES

**(l) Topic (b), “International Film Styles”, implies that the study go beyond the national – so that it would not be sufficient, for example, to look purely at German Expressionism in Germany in the 1920s. Is this the case?**

The title of this topic is deliberate. Each option represents a film style which emerged from within a particular creative movement which was either international from the very beginning or which became international. So, for example, Neo-Realism emerged in Italy around the mid-1940s but it has continued to manifest itself in different national cinema over the following 70 years. New Waves often emerge more or less simultaneously in different creative contexts as in the 1960s.

However, while the international and historical significance of your chosen film style should be something your students are aware of, it is not necessary in your choice of films to go beyond a particular place or time for this option – which is necessarily small scale. So, yes it IS permissible to study German Expressionism in Germany in the 1920s in relation to the principal study films. What the Specification says is that there is “the expectation that the candidate will have some awareness of the adaptation of the style elsewhere in at least one further film. (So in the case of German Expressionism, it may be interesting to look at how, for example, Hitchcock, brought much back with him from Berlin to inform his British films in the second half of the 1920s – or how Murnau’s *Sunrise* was so significant to Hollywood cinema).

You may feel that your students would feel most confident studying two French New Wave films, supplemented by one or two more. On the other hand, you might think of the benefits of the two additional films coming from a different new wave, such as the Czech. Or you may decide on a quite deliberate comparison between two different New Waves reflected in your choice of two principal films.

Similar decisions present themselves in relation to the other options.

- (m) For the option German and / or Soviet Cinema of the 1920s is it recommended to study examples of films from both?**

The Specification itself offers the possibility of seeing these as two contrasting forms of ‘expressive’ cinema – and it would certainly be coherent to look at *The Last Laugh* and *Strike* as fine examples of different kinds of expressive cinema, emerging from quite different contexts – and in the process challenging the too crude opposition between “German mise-en-scene” and “Soviet montage”.

However, in the light of what was said in (j) above about picking up on the international dimension of the film style, it would be preferable to study German OR Soviet films and concentrate the supplementary study on the later manifestation of this style in another film in another place and time.

Of course, you could have a four way split, a principal film representing each style supplemented by two films that show their influences – but we return to the issue of whether it becomes too complicated for your students to handle and is no longer a small-scale study.

- (n) So what films are recommended for German / Soviet option?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Focus films might include the following:

Soviet Montage:

*Strike* (Eisenstein, 1924)  
*Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925)  
*Mother* (Pudovkin, 1926)  
*October* (Eisenstein, 1927)  
*The General Line* (Eisenstein, 1929)  
*Man With a Movie Camera* (Vertov, 1929)

German Expressionism:

*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Wiene, 1919)  
*Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922)  
*The Last Laugh* (Murnau, 1924)  
*Metropolis* (Lang, 1927)  
*Asphalt* (May, 1929)  
*Diary of a Lost Girl* (Pabst, 1929)  
*Pandora’s Box* (Pabst, 1929)  
*M* (Lang, 1931)

- (o) From the above list it would seem possible to offer an auteur study – for example, films by Eisenstein or Murnau. Is this permissible?**

The Specification does not explicitly proscribe an auteur approach for this option. However, the response is the same as for the National Cinema option

– see (e) above. An overtly auteur approach raises a number of dangers, for example, that the film style will be understood purely in relation to an individual's work; that the auteur 'signature' will be seen as the key contextual factor.

**(p) There are very precise and very broad definitions of Surrealist Cinema. Which is it the definition in relation the surrealist option here?**

The previous Specification included a topic called "Surrealist and Fantasy Film" and this created much confusion in blurring the boundaries between an international film style (Surrealism) and a genre (Fantasy). Here the understanding is that Surrealism as an international film movement emerged out of the Surrealist art movement, especially in the work of Luis Buñuel and Jean Cocteau at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. Purists will in fact argue that there are very very few genuine surrealist films with the list not extending far beyond: *Un Chien Andalou*, *L'Age D'Or* and *The Blood of a Poet*.

In practice a number of experimental film makers have carried forward the surrealist approach – sometimes in order to represent the unconscious, for example, Maya Deren – sometimes as a way of constructing documentary material, for example, Humphrey Jennings.

The claims of independent / mainstream film makers, such as David Lynch, to be carrying forward a surrealist practice is an area open for critical debate. Less ambiguous are the claims of animators, most notably Jan Svankmajer, and it is possible in this option to focus on the surrealism informing certain kinds of animation practice.

What is possible for reference are sequences within otherwise realist films which take on a surrealist form. The most obvious examples, such as in Hitchcock's *Spellbound* and Almodovar's *Talk to Her*, also require critical reflection.

**(q) So what films are recommended for the Surrealism option?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Here are some possibilities:

*Seashell and the Clergyman* (Dulac 1928)

*Etoile de Mer* (Ray 1928)

*Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel / Dali, 1929)

*L'Age d'Or* (Buñuel, 1930)

*The Blood of a Poet* (Cocteau, 1930)

The Short Films of Len Lye and Norman McLaren (The GPO Film Unit, Vol. 2: We Live in Two Worlds)

*Meshes in the Afternoon* (Deren, 1943) + *At Land* (Deren, 1944)

*Dreams that Money Can Buy* (Richter and others 1947)

Jan Svankmajer: The Complete Short Films 1964 – 1992

*Daisies* (Chytilova, 1966)

*Phantom of Liberty* (Buñuel, 1974)

*That Obscure Object of Desire* (Buñuel, 1977)

*Alice* (Svankmajer, 1988)  
*Songs from the Second Floor* (Andersson, 2002)

The work of directors such as Federico Fellini, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Guy Maddin may also be considered.

**(r) As in other options, it seems difficult to avoid an auteur approach?**

Of all the topics on FM4, this is the one most dominated by an auteur: Luis Buñuel. However, as the list makes clear, there is plenty of choice available.

It is also important to note that some of the films listed above were made in the UK or the US. However, these are silent films that strongly demonstrate the extension of surrealism as an international style.

**(s) The Neo-Realism option does not make any specific reference to Italian Cinema. Does this mean that Neo-Realism can be studied without reference to the origins of the movement in the 1940s?**

Yes, this option need make no specific reference to Italian Cinema of the 1940s. However, in the interest of providing a coherent programme of study, it may well be the case that you will come to the view that at least one of the films studied should allow engagement with the origins of the movement, including the particular context out of which neo-realism emerged.

**(t) Arguably, there are new kinds of Neo-Realism reflecting technological developments and the increasing convergence of fiction and documentary. Is there a definition of Neo-Realism for the purposes of the Specification?**

The Argentinian film maker Fernando Birri described neo-realism as the “cinema of the humble”. Certainly one aspect of a definition of neo-realism needs to take account of subject matter and socio-cultural setting. Another is that narrative is subdued and modest in scale – avoiding sensational and unlikely plot-driven developments.

At the same time that South American cinema was discovering Italian neo-realism and adapting it to their own needs, the cinema vérité and direct cinema documentary approaches were developing in France and the USA respectively. This documentary ‘look’, originating in Italy in the 1940s has evolved as new technologies have become available and as documentary has become more self-reflective about issues of mediation.

Having said this, the best definitions of Neo-Realism go back to Italy in the 1940s. Cesare Zavattini wrote that neo-realism required the film maker “to excavate reality, to give it a power, a communication, a series of reflexes, which until recently we had never thought it had ....” Film maker should “make things as they are, almost by themselves, create their own special significance ... things we have never noticed before.”

Combining the above, it must be said that films such as *City of God* and *Slumdog Millionaire* in their cinematography and editing styles are not neo-realist films (though in fact both may be studied under “Urban Stories”). A neo-realist film such as *La Terra Trema* or *Pather Panchali* combines a ‘cinema of the humble’ with a documentary look, and both have as a clear intention to “make things as they are”.

**(u) So what films are recommended for the Neo-Realism option?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Here are some possibilities:

*Paisa* (Rossellini, 1946)  
*Bicycle Thieves* (De Sica, 1948)  
*La Terra Trema* (Visconti, 1948)  
*Umberto D* (De Sica, 1952)  
*Pather Panchali* (Ray, 1955)  
*400 Blows* (Truffaut, 1959)  
*The Cloud Capped Star* (Ghatak, 1960)  
*Rocco and His Brothers* (Visconti, 1960)  
*Blonde in Love* (Forman, 1965)  
*Tree of the Wooden Clog* (Olmi, 1978)  
*Central Station* (Salles, 1998)  
*The Death of Mr Lazarescu* (Puiu, 2005)  
*The Class* (Cantet, 2008)

**(v) For the New Wave topic is it advisable to concentrate on one of the ‘classic’ new waves such as that which emerged in France in the late 1950s?**

The term “new wave” is now used very freely and to avoid uncertainty it is advisable to focus your students’ attention on one of the generally accepted new waves of film history and on films that are unarguably central to that new wave.

**(w) Is it advisable to look at films from more than one New Wave, and to try to establish common characteristics of any New Wave?**

The common characteristics of a new wave often include:

- a new generation of filmmakers reacting against the national cinema they find themselves in
- a response to social and cultural change, often with a strong focus on popular / youth culture
- the utilisation of new technology to create a fresh look
- the encouragement of new actors with distinctive performance styles

These characteristics can be shown by reference to one new wave or more than one.

**(x) There seem to be some significant overlaps with the national cinema topic. Is this the case?**

Well, as stated in the previous response, many new waves are rooted in a national cinema – and it is possible in choosing this topic to conduct a national cinema study of the period defined by your choice of films. Arguably, all the National Cinema topics could be studied as new waves.

It is also worth noting that a number of major new waves, especially those of the 1960s represent an adoption of neo-realist principles. The suggestion of Truffaut's *400 Blows* and Forman's *Blonde in Love* in the Neo-Realist section makes clear the element of overlap.

**(y) So what films are recommended for the New Wave option?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Here are some possibilities, organised in relation to four different new waves, three nationally based, the other regional:

French (1958 – 1964):

*Les Amants* (Malle, 1958)  
*400 Blows* (Truffaut, 1959)  
*Breathless* (Godard, 1960)  
*Paris Nous Appartient* (Rivette, 1960)  
*Les Bonnes Femmes* (Chabrol, 1960)  
*Shoot the Pianist* (Truffaut, 1961)  
*Une Femme est Une Femme* (Godard, 1961)  
*Cleo from 5 to 7* (Varda, 1962)

Czech (1963 – 1968):

*Audition* (Forman, 1964)  
*Blonde in Love* (Forman, 1965)  
*Summer Lighting* (Passer, 1965)  
*Daisies* (Chytilova, 1966)  
*Closely Observed Trains* (Menzel, 1966),  
*The Party and the Guests* (Nemec, 1966)  
*The Firemen's Ball* (Forman, 1967)  
*The Ear* (Kachyna, 1969)

German (1970 – 1979)

*Even Dwarfs Started Small* (Herzog, 1970)  
*The Merchant of Four Seasons* (Fassbinder, 1972)  
*The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty* (Wenders, 1973)  
*Fear Eats the Soul* (Fassbinder, 1974)  
*Alice in the Cities* (Wenders, 1974)  
*The Lost Honour of Katherina Blum* (Schlöndorff, 1975)  
*Heart of Glass* (Herzog, 1976)  
*Germany in Autumn* (various, 1978)

Thai / Korean / Hong Kong (1995 - 2005)

*Chungking Express* (Wong Kar Wai, Hong Kong, 1995)

*Tears of the Black Tiger* (Sartsanatieng, Thailand, 2000)  
*Blissfully Yours* (Weerasethakul, Thailand, 2002)  
*Oldboy* (Park Chan-wook, 2003)  
*Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter .....and Spring* (Kim Ki-duk, 2003)  
*Tropical Malady* (Weerasethakul, Thailand, 2004)  
*2046* (Wong Kar Wai, Hong Kong, 2005)  
*Chocolate* (Pinkiew, 2008)

**(z) The last of the suggested new waves above includes popular genre films. This is surely not appropriate for this topic?**

In contemporary cinema the clarity of definition of a “new wave” is not so clear – unless you choose Dogme 95 which was a self-conscious (and ironic) project to deliberately establish a new wave based on a set of restrictive rules. The characteristics of contemporary new wave cinemas – adding to (s) above – include:

- creative adoption of digital technologies of production and post-production
- even greater emphasis on postmodern pastiche and cinema cultism
- a response to the “national” which is much more mediated through transnational cultural identity and affiliation.

This is an indirect response to the question. A direct response is that new wave films very often blur the distinction between “art house” and “popular” and this is even more so in contemporary cinemas such as those of South East Asia.

**SPECIALIST STUDY OPTIONS**

**(aa) Is there a difference of approach in the two “Specialist Study” options, compared with the National Cinema and International Film Styles options?**

At first sight the most obvious difference is that the “specialist study” options are more focused on content and theme, with potentially less emphasis on film style and the location of films within an historical movement. In practice, there is no significant difference. One of the questions asked for each topic will focus on the means by which the film makers utilise film techniques in order to achieve their effects – and on how far artistic decisions determine the overall impact of the films studied.

If there is a difference with the National Cinema and International Film Style options, then it is in the even greater drive in the Specialist Study options to compare and contrast.

**(bb) But the other topics generally have a coherence – determined by time and place or by a particular cinematic style. Here two almost entirely different films could be studied side by side. Is this not a problem, especially as students will be dealing with very different contexts?**

It is hoped that the specialist study is coherent! As mentioned in (aa) above, a very strong comparative focus is likely to hold the study together. The Specification (p.21) describes the ‘challenge’ of doing this. The choice of

films is, of course, important. Comparing films coming from entirely different historical and cultural contexts might prove too demanding on the students - and their teacher.

**(cc) So what are “Urban Stories”?**

An urban story can be any film in which the city is a defining presence – in which characters’ lives are defined by existence within the urban environment. The words “power”, “poverty” and “conflict” all appear in the title of this option.

You can take films suggested for other options in Section A: from *Metropolis* and *Man with a Movie Camera* to *Bicycle Thieves* and *400 Blows* to *Chungking Express* and *Amores Perros*. However, the expectation is that this option will be used by many centres to continue to teach some of the most popular films from the previous Specification, such as *La Haine*, *Once Were Warriors*, *City of God* and *Tsotsi*. These are films with a contemporary edge which speak across national cultural boundaries – very often having in common an exploration of youth cultures.

**(dd) What combinations of films are recommended for the Urban Stories option?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Indicative examples of films have already been mentioned in (bb) above and in the Specification (p.21). In terms of combinations of films, there are many permutations just from the films listed.

Here are some thematic suggestions:

- films focusing on the struggle within communities
- films focusing on the struggle between a community and the ruling power structures
- films concerned with with ‘living with crime’ (extending the FM2 British Cinema option)
- films dealing with alienation produced by technology and social organisation, including films set in the future

The films may also be linked by stylistic approach:

- films working from a neo-realist / documentary aesthetic
- films working with new wave / experimental techniques
- films based on genre cinema (for example, melodrama or comedy)

Please note that *Slumdog Millionaire* is a UK film – but may only be used as a third (ie ‘supplementary’) film.

**(ee) Does the Specialist Study, “Empowering Women” allow for films to be studied in which attempts at empowerment fail?**

The films need not be ‘good news’ stories – indeed the danger of films opting for a too easy ‘feelgood’ quality is something that will require critical awareness.

As with “Urban Stories”, this topic has been devised to encourage comparison between films, many of which have proved popular choices on the previous Specification.

**(ff) Presumably much work will need to focus on the cultural contexts in which films are set?**

Very much so. A West African film compared with an Iranian film compared with a Chinese film is meaningless without knowledge of the cultural specifics of time and place. Indeed this is so important that in the choice of films centres may wish to be cautious in selecting extreme (or random!) contrasts between films that have as their subject the empowerment of women.

It may be wisest to take films that share, in broad terms, a common culture so that the number of variables is reduced. So, for example, to compare a Turkish film with a North African film with an Iranian film allows for a common underlying context: the place of women within Muslim cultures.

**(gg) What combinations of films are recommended for the Empowering Women option?**

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

Here are some possibilities:

*Bitter Rice* (De Santis, 1949)  
*Cleo from 5 to 7* (Varda, 1961)  
*Daisies* (Chytilova, 1966)  
*Xala* (Sembene, 1975)  
*Question of Silence* (Gorris, 1982)  
*Another Way* (Makk, 1982)  
*Nikita* (Besson, 1990)  
*The Story of Qui Ju* (Zhang, 1992)  
*The Heroic Trio* (To, 1993)  
*Bandit Queen* (Kapur, 1994)  
*Fire* (Mehta, 1996)  
*Show Me Love* (Moodyson, 1998)  
*Ten* (Kiarostami, 2002)  
*Silent Waters* (Sumar, 2003)  
*Five in the Afternoon* (S Makhmalbaf, 2003)  
*Moolaadé* (Sembene, 2004)  
*Water* (Mehta, 2005)  
*Sisters-in-Law* (Ayisi/Longinotto, 2005)  
*Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* (Park, Chan-wook, 2005)  
*Volver* (Almodovar, 2006)  
*Esma’s Secret – Grabavica* (Zbanic, 2006)  
*Pan’s Labyrinth* (Del Toro, 2006)  
*4 Months, 3 Weeks & 2 Days* (Mungiu, 2007)

**(hh) The above list includes a broad range, including mainstream action movies. What is the thinking behind this?**

Films like *Nikita*, *The Heroic Trio*, *Bandit Queen*, *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* are, in their different ways, films about women with guns! The critical issues raised by films such as these are very interesting ones. Are these films of female empowerment or exploitation movies made by men for men?

Other films offer a very different representation of women, such as the African films, *Xala*, *Moolaadé* and *Sisters-in-Law*, or the South Asian based films, *Fire*, *Silent Waters*, *Water*. It is your decision what kind of emphasis you wish to give to this topic

## 12.3 Unit FM4 – Section B: Spectatorship Topics

### General

- (a) **Although this section is entitled Spectatorship Topics, surely it is primarily concerned with studying specific films for whichever of the four options is chosen?**

This would be a mistake. Spectatorship is absolutely central to this section. How we watch and respond to films requires a careful consideration of our role and behaviour as spectator. What this section offers are four quite different 'test cases' of how spectatorship works. Or rather how we work as spectators in relation to the stimulus and the challenge presented by a specific form of cinema.

Which of the four options you choose will, of course, be determined by the kind of cinema you wish your students to engage with and interrogate in the context of a spectator-based study. Each offers different possibilities.

Early Cinema invites us to unlearn all the things we take for granted about film form and how film communicates – in order to put that back together with an enhanced sense of film as a constructed and very pragmatic visual form of communication.

Documentary raises real issues for the spectator, particularly around watching the 'real' as opposed to the fictional. In addition, as a spectator it is possible to evaluate the different effects achieved by different styles of documentary and different kinds of documentary practice.

Experimental and Expanded Film / Video is likely to take the spectator out of the familiar viewing situation – and thus to begin to pose questions about the variety of ways in which we can engage in audio-visual work. It is also likely that spectatorship will be challenged by non-narrative work, raising questions about what besides 'story' might persuade us to sit in front of a piece of film / video work.

The most familiar of the four options (and maybe for that very reason the most difficult) explores spectatorship in relation to popular mainstream films, particularly ones constructed in such a way as to illicit very strong emotional responses. Why do we laugh, cry, scream?

- (b) **So in fact there is much more in common between the four sections of Section B of FM4 than appears at first sight?**

Yes. There are common teaching objectives concerned with exploring the relationship between film form and ways in which we respond as spectators.

### **SPECTATORSHIP AND EARLY CINEMA BEFORE 1917**

**(c) What approach is recommended in studying Early Cinema in relation to spectatorship?**

The Specification is quite clear in identifying "consideration of how and why film form and spectatorship developed as they did" in the period 1895 - 1917. The approach should be open and enquiring – encouraging students to make discoveries about Early Cinema in relation to their own experience as spectators, as well as being informed by film history. Study of spectatorship provides the opportunity to introduce quite complex ideas about an evolving 'control' of the spectator by the apparatus of cinema, by the internal features of the film text and by the shifting socio-cultural contexts for film exhibition in the first twenty years of cinema. One specific study might be in relation to the opposition between naturalistic and fantastic uses of the medium (the Lumière / Méliès. opposition). Another might involve looking at how cinema developed as a voyeuristic medium in this early period, with the 'male' camera.

At a more straightforward level students may wish to consider not just when but how and why different kinds of shots and edits became established as part of a professional practice which, cumulatively, led to what Noel Burch called the "institutional mode of representation". In this respect studies may focus on the trial-and-error development of narrative cinema and the needs of the spectator. These needs are both practical (making sense of what is going on) and imaginative (becoming engaged in the world of the film).

**(d) What films are recommended for this study? Surely it is not expected that the whole period from 1895 – 1917 be covered?**

The period of so-called 'primitive cinema' is well represented by the BFI *Early Cinema* compilation which is available on dvd. It provides a good basis for exploring how cinema evolved as an experience based on a particular conception of the film text as a narrative realist storytelling medium and a particular conception of the film spectator. It also allows for an exploration of the well known opposition between the kind of naturalistic cinema promoted by the Lumières Brothers and the fantasy cinema of Méliès. In practice it demonstrates that a lot of very early films functioned as "attractions" combining realist and trick elements.

For the later period, there are an increasing number of options. You may wish to look at some episodes of Feuillade's *Les Vampires* (1913). The first feature length film - most obviously DW Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* or *Intolerance* –are available, as is Chaplin's *Mutual Films 1916 – 17* . Though taking on either of these films opens up a Pandora's box of other issues!

### **SPECTATORSHIP AND DOCUMENTARY**

**(e) What approach is recommended in studying Documentary in relation to spectatorship?**

This topic has a specific focus: the spectator's response to the representation of the 'real'. One place to start is to begin to think through the different relationship the spectator has to factual material. Another is to consider the significance for the spectator of questions of trust and reliability.

The differences between factual and fictional material has, in turn, to be balanced by consideration of what is similar – for example, in narrative construction and the creation of suspense.

It may also be useful to take two documentaries on the same subject in order to identify differences in style and technique – and then to ask how significant these differences are for the spectator. For example, one documentary may be more overtly propagandist, using a variety of expressive strategies while the other may appear to be studiously objective.

**(f) What films are recommended for the Documentary Option?**

A key question to consider is whether the short course you construct for this option has an historical dimension, perhaps comparing a poetic/propaganda work of Humphrey Jennings from the 40s with a direct cinema film by Pennebaker or the Maysle Brothers from the 60s with a participatory work of Michael Moore or Nick Broomfield in contemporary cinema.

If the preferred approach is to look at a variety of contemporary documentaries, then to identify clear differences in form and rhetoric will be most helpful to your students as they work through questions about spectatorship in relation to these films. For example, very quirky personal documentaries like Varda's *Gleaners* or Madin's *My Winnipeg* could be used to pose interesting and different questions about spectatorship compared with, say, an observational documentary like Philibert's *Etre et Avoir* or James' *Hoop Dreams*.

**SPECTATORSHIP: EXPERIMENTAL AND EXPANDED FILM/VIDEO**

**(g) For the purpose of the Specification what is the definition of an “experimental” and an “expanded” film / video?**

An experimental film is one that, especially for the purposes of a spectatorship study, challenges our normal and routine expectations of film as a narrative realist medium to be viewed in a particular physical context. An experimental film is one that asks questions of our normal expectations and assumptions about what a film is, what it's for and how we should view it.

The term “expanded cinema” may describe: “multi-screen and mixed-media presentation built around one or more film projectors. Cinema is “expanded” in more than one sense in this definition: it could utilize a number of screens or surfaces, it could involve other not-strictly-cinematic mediums, and it could utilize the conventionally static screening environment; even the audience could be implicated or drawn into the flow of performance/event.”

(<http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/08/46/dirk-de-bruyn.html>). In contemporary terms, expanded film / video may include v-j practices and the

screening of film/video work in a dialogic relationship to other art work within mixed media events.

Though it may not be a popular option, this is in many ways the most lively of the spectatorship studies because it requires the student to think most directly about spectatorship in relation to some very unusual and vivid viewing experiences.

**(h) What approach is recommended in studying Experimental and Expanded Film / Video in relation to spectatorship?**

This option should generate excitement, debate, outrage! In relation to the broader objectives of this section of FM4, focus should be on how different kinds of film challenge conventional assumptions about the role of the spectator and the nature of cinematic pleasure. In this latter regard even boredom may become a fruitful area for exploration! As with the Early Cinema option, here there is an opportunity for exploration, setting personal response within a framework of learning about the specific films chosen.

**(i) What films are recommended for the Experimental / Expanded Cinema Option?**

Some of the films appropriate for this topic could find themselves used for other options and topics, especially canonical films from the history of avant garde cinema. For instance, *Man with a Movie Camera* and *Meshes in the Afternoon* are mentioned as appropriate films Section A options. Much experimental work from the 50s and 60s is available on dvd - including the work of Brakhage, Anger, Warhol/Morrissey, etc... Any film work that falls within the broad terms of 'avant garde', 'underground', 'trash' is appropriate. However, it is important to remember the focus is on spectatorship rather than on a history of aspects of experimental film.

If the emphasis is to be on the contemporary, then to see new work in sight-specific locations / events will be important.

*Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

## **SPECTATORSHIP: POPULAR FILM AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSE**

**(j) Why is there a particular reference on “emotional response” in this option?**

This is a fair question because (i) an emotional response is also significant in the other options in Section B and (ii) popular cinema generates more than an emotional response for the spectator. The reason for making this the specific emphasis here is that popular cinema is studied elsewhere within the Specification. For example, at AS level popular films are studied in relation to form (narrative and genre) and in relation to representation (meanings and values). Here the focus on popular cinema is very much in terms of its affective dimension – feeling.

In the previous Specification one particular affective dimension – shock – was the focus. Here affect embraces a broad range of spectator experiences,

posing questions like ; why do we cry or laugh or hold our breath or wince at key moments in our viewing of popular films.

**(k) So what approach is recommended in studying Popular Film in relation to spectatorship?**

There will be some focus on film form and on the particular strategies filmmakers use in order to generate response. In this respect, there is continuity from the micro analysis work done in FM1. However, as often as one might want to argue for a clear cause / effect relationship between film device and response, there will also be the need to explore and question these assumptions from a spectator perspective. For example, why might a 'shocking' horror film make us laugh? Why might a comedy make us cry?

You may wish to centre your study on a particular genre – such as horror or melodrama or thriller. This is perfectly acceptable and indeed adopting a mixed genre approach might produce too diffuse a study.

There is also an ideological dimension – which better students will almost certainly raise. This concerns manipulation and the pleasure of 'surrendering' to the film experience. You may wish to choose films which are overt is the level of control and manipulation being exercised – so that your students are in no doubt that a particular film has a "palpable intent". More specific questions may return to issues of representation. In as much as this option is looking at the affective pleasures made available by popular films, then a gendered critical approach may be mobilised. Are the pleasures offered 'male' or 'female' and what might this mean? You may even wish to explore Mulvey's old question about what the female spectator does when watching a film dominated by the male gaze ..... though this is a suggestion not a requirement!

**(l) For the purposes of this option, what is a "popular film" and what is recommended?**

A popular film is one that sets out to reach a broad mainstream audience using what can broadly be described as a conventional stylistic approach and employing tried-and-tested film techniques to provide audience pleasure . In doing so, it is likely to be identifiable by its adherence to classical narrative and to generic features. In addition, it may play on the particular screen persona of one or more stars. A popular film need not be an English Language film. Essentially your choice of films should be determined by the intensity of the affective viewing experience they offer and the interesting reasons for this.

The films may be contemporary or not. It is worth bearing in mind that if you don't want to study the films of Danny Boyle, there is Hitchcock or Sirk or Ophuls. You may wish to take a genre approach as mentioned in (k) above. You may wish to take an historical genre approach, comparing, say, Cat People with a contemporary psychological horror film.

And, to repeat, there is no restriction on country of origin. Bollywood or East Asian films, for example, would be perfectly fine.

Recommendations – including those from teachers – will be posted on the website after each relevant examination series.

### Specific Recommendations in approaching this topic.

In choosing a popular film designed to give pleasure to an audience, the first criterion should be – does it raise interesting questions for a study of spectatorship?

Let us take a specific film – Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*. (which, by the way, is a 'popular film', an Oscar winner and a film clearly designed for the mainstream market in its country of origin, and which has gone on to be a global best seller in the dvd market.) *Life is Beautiful* tells an emotive story – designed to play on the cusp between comedy and tragedy. It is somewhat (!) fantastic in its premise but has a coherence within its own fictional terms. We may ask the following questions:

- How does the film work to generate emotion, and here the emphasis may be on relatively straight forward issues like the use of mise-en-scene, staging and music or more complex issues of identification and spectator alignment with particular characters?
- How far does the spectator feel consciously manipulated by the film and, by contrast, how far does the emotional power of the film derive from a combination of elements which are difficult to pin down?
- How far does the emotional affect of the film derive from contextual knowledge, - in this case, our ability to respond to the film in the gap between fictional representation and historical fact?

Studying this film alongside *Schindler's List* opens up some important broader debates about 'good news' Holocaust movies.

The above is a complex example – chosen to illustrate how rich and challenging this topic can be, depending on the level of ambition.

Some steer has already been provided in (I) above for how you might choose films for this topic. You may take a genre approach – or identify auteurs whose cinematic approach lends itself particularly well to the study of emotion and spectatorship. As a completely serendipitous way of identifying possible films, here are the Oscar winners, 1988 - 2008:

<i>Rain Man</i>	<i>Shakespeare in Love</i>
<i>Driving Miss Daisy</i>	<i>American Beauty</i>
<i>Dances with Wolves</i>	<i>Gladiator</i>
<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>	<i>A Beautiful Mind</i>
<i>Unforgiven</i>	<i>Chicago</i>
<i>Schindler's List</i>	<i>The Lord of the Rings: the Return of the King</i>
<i>Forrest Gump</i>	<i>Million Dollar Baby</i>
<i>Braveheart</i>	<i>Crash</i>
<i>The English Patient</i>	<i>The Departed</i>
<i>Titanic</i>	<i>No Country for Old Men</i>
	<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i>

And keeping to the Oscar theme, here are some foreign language films that have been nominated or have won "best foreign picture" during the same period:

<i>Cinema Paradiso</i>	<i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i>
<i>Life is Beautiful</i>	<i>Tsotsi</i>
<i>All About My Mother</i>	<i>The Lives of Others</i>

As none of the above films represent animation, it is worth saying that some of the most affecting of films are animations. But perhaps it is time to move beyond the death of Bambi's mother.

Another powerful body of work is propaganda, with the interesting appeal to patriotism and the national.

Another rich vein may be sports movies – from *Chariots of Fire* to *Breaking Away* or from *fever Pitch* to, yes, of course, *Rocky* .....

## 12.4 Unit FM4 – Section C: Close Study Film

### General

- (a) **The Specification flags up the synoptic dimension in this Section of FM4. Can you say a bit more about this?**

Well, as the Specification says, it is expected that the student will bring their “cumulative knowledge” gained during their film studies to bear on a single close study. In practice, this means that macro and micro features of film form will be studied, as will questions of representation. Students will be able to place a film within its institutional and cultural contexts and apply other historical knowledge as appropriate. Overall, the study will be mediated by the application of one or more critical approaches – from the list supplied for the FM3 Small-Scale Research Project.

- (b) **How important is it that students are aware of critical writing on their chosen close study film?**

This section is described as a “critical study”. The primary energy for this will come from the student's own application of learning – as outlined in (a) above. However, reading, reflecting upon and debating a variety of critical writing on the chosen film is also invited. This may be regarded as a new and additional skill being introduced at the very end of the course.

It is expected that students will go into the examination aware of the major debates (and sometime controversies) surrounding their chosen film and will have established their own critical views in the context of this knowledge. It is assumed that this knowledge will have come from writing that has some critical status – and is not all taken from the *Rotten Tomatoes* website.

- (c) **Will the WJEC supply a critical resource pack for each film?**

Yes: a short Reader including photocopied articles on each film will be available on request.

*Recommendations of resources will be posted annually on the WJEC website after the Summer examination series.*

- (d) **What are the key questions and debates surrounding each film?**

Well, the following list is not exhaustive, but questions are likely to focus on the following issues:

#### *Modern Times*

- The political satire of the film
- Chaplin as left wing?
- Chaplin's continuing preference for the conventions of silent cinema
- Chaplin's tramp persona
- Physical comedy – and other aspects of performance
- The importance of the love story
- Accusations of excessive sentimentality against Chaplin's work
- The ending of the film – narrative closure but no resolution?
- The impact of the film – both on release and subsequently
- (maybe .... The plagiarism accusation vis-à-vis René Clair's *A Nous la Liberté*)

#### *Les Enfants du Paradis*

- The film as allegory of the situation of France under occupation
- Other factors that contribute to specific 'readings' of the film
- Practical issues concerning the film's production context in 1943/44
- The creative contributions of Carné and Prévert
- The representation of performance
- The film as star vehicle (Barrault, Arletty, etc.)
- The narrative intricacies and the maintenance of spectator involvement
- Defining and discussing the film's style (a film that is difficult to explain because easy to understand?)
- The film's canonical status

#### *Vertigo*

- A film about film: identification / obsession / misrecognition?
- A film about film: the gendered look, the female object
- The significance of this as a "Hitchcock" film
- Recurring motifs and the possible symbolic patterning of the film
- Interpreting the Madeleine / Judy split
- The spectator relationship to Scottie as the film develops
- The use of locations
- The success or otherwise of the film as a thriller
- Difficulties in taking the film seriously from a narrative realist perspective and problems of audience response that result from this
- The film's canonical status
- The film's critical reception

#### *Battle of Algiers*

- The political context
- Mix of styles: neo-realist and mainstream thriller techniques
- The film as docu-drama, including production context
- The conflict between a humanist and committed political position
- The use of Christian music and iconography
- The strength or weakness of constructing audience sympathies for both sides
- Identification with the thrill of terror attack
- Construction of the Colonel Mathieu character

- The success or otherwise in narrating a mass movement uprising, set against the audience need for individualised characters
- The reputation / impact of the film today

### *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*

- A politics of the film
- The representation of black masculinity
- The film as satire
- The context of production
- Van Peebles as auteur / avant garde figure
- Low production values and visual style
- The success or otherwise of the film as a narrative
- Specific evocation of a black history
- The impact of the film for African American audiences in the US
- The film's reputation (including its UK release problems)
- Status as radical film , the Black panther/Ebony debate

### *Solaris*

- As a philosophical film about identity and memory
- The role and function of Hari
- The undemonstrative character of Kris and the reasons for this
- Issues of representation in relation to conventions of the Sci-Fi genre
- The significance of the earth sequences – including the emphasis on nature
- The overall pace and length of the film
- Spectatorship issues related to the above and to narrative development
- The film as characteristic of Tarkovsky's work
- Contexts of production
- (Maybe : the challenge to the film by Soderbergh's version)

### *Happy Together*

- The relationship between Ho Po-wing and Lai Yiu-fai
- And between Lai Yiu-fai and Chang
- The representation of gay relationships and gay culture
- Themes of exile, dislocation
- The use of the Argentinian locations
- The film within Wong Kar-wai's work.
- Chris Doyle's cinematography and the significance of the film's look
- The film as an experimental melodrama
- The film as life-affirming or as a negative portrayal of human relationships
- The film as substantial or lightweight

### *Fight Club*

- Jack /Tyler Durden – the meaning and significance of this split person
- A progressive film or a deeply reactionary one?
- The representation of modern urban and corporate life
- The representation of masculinity and its threats
- Marla: women as object of scorn? Misogynistic?
- Managing the spectator's identification and sympathies
- Distinctive stylistic features and the look of the film
- Motifs and their function

- The social and cultural context of production
- Critical and popular responses to the film

*Talk to Her*

- A melodrama that works according to its own internal rules (of coincidence, etc.) and the viewing problems this may create
- A film about love?
- The problems of maintaining sympathy for Benigno after the rape of Alicia
- Lydia as character or plot function
- Marco and Benigno
- An Almodovar film – signature characteristics?
- The social and cultural contexts of production
- Critical response

*Morvern Callar*

- The rather opaque central character and problems of audience identification that arise from this
- Loose narrative that lacks plausibility
- The difficult to pinpoint qualities of the film ...
- The importance of Ramsey's visual style
- And soundtrack
- A film directed by a woman film maker?
- And with a feminist agenda?
- A Scottish film?
- Critical response

## 12.5 Unit FM4 – The Examination Paper

- (a) **The volume of work and complexity of answer seems greater for Sections A and B, so why do all three sections carry equal marks?**

The synoptic nature of Section C includes the requirements to explore personal response, to apply learning from other units, especially identifiable critical approaches, and to demonstrate an awareness of critical writing on the film, makes Section C as complex as Sections A and B.

It may be the case that the length of answer for Section C is less – but volume is not the issue.

- (b) **So should equal time be spent on each answer?**

Candidates have 50 minutes per question. This should be enough to demonstrate learning and quality of argument for each Section. As was stated in 9.1 (e), there is the danger of hindering students in Sections A and B by providing them with too much material. Overlong answers very often are the result of the candidate feeling the need to display material, though it is contributing little more to the argument.

Being realistic, many candidates will spend proportionally more time on A than B and more on B than C, perhaps Section A 60 minutes, Section B 50

minutes and Section C 40 minutes. Any greater variation than this is likely to be damaging.

**(c) Are there any other pointers for students as to how to produce a successful exam paper?**

Well, there are the obvious ones like answer the question, not the one set for the mock and rehearsed in class. Spend some time gathering ideas and shaping an answer before starting to write – particularly for Section C.

One thing that is really important is that candidates are accurate with their facts – and this extends to being accurate in the spelling of names. If a candidate cannot spell the name of a key character (or the director) (or the film!), then the examiner's confidence quickly begins to wane.

**(d) How often will topics and named films change?**

All options will remain for a minimum of three years (to 2012). At that point some will change. The WJEC will announce changes one year ahead.