

What is Blender and is it specifically used for animated filmmaking rather than video games?

Blender is a free and open source 3D creation suite. It supports modelling, rigging, animation, simulation, rendering, compositing and motion tracking, video editing and game creation. It is a community-driven project under the GNU General Public License (GPL) and therefore free to all, both now and going forward. Blender does not require internet access once downloaded. Although under the GNU GPL it is free to use, there are copywrite notices in regards to content created by users and therefore students and teachers are reminded the usual plagiarism rules apply. Despite everything Blender can do, it remains a tool and students can use this to create their moving image project and demonstrate their understanding of genre and film form. However, teachers and moderators need to remember the AOs and brief when assessing, rather than awarding for the overall aesthetic created using Blender. It can be used to great effect with existing live action footage.

Do users create characters themselves or are sets and characters pre-populated?

Blender can be used in a variety of ways including to enhance (post-production) live footage or to create 3D animation. There are some downloadable elements, such as characters Rain and Vincent, that can be taken from the Blender Cloud <https://studio.blender.org/welcome/> If students are using these downloadable elements they must make this explicit in their evaluation and in the coversheet accompanying the submitted NEA. Teachers are reminded they are responsible for authenticating the stages of production. Using these pre-populated characters can be likened to using actors in a live-action film. However, it must be made clear through storyboarding/shooting scripts and the evaluation how and why characters were chosen and manipulated by the user/student.

Do users fully control the cinematography and mise-en-scene?

Although some elements are downloadable, the majority of mise-en-scene aspects will be made by the user. Cinematography will be manipulated by the user, as will the use of sound. As with current guidelines, all found footage and sound should be acknowledged in the coversheet. Editing and narrative will clearly differentiate the outcome. Teachers will need to be aware of the technical aspects of the production in order to correctly apply the mark scheme.

Can candidates meet the assessment criteria using Blender?

Blender looks like an excellent programme which requires a lot of work to produce film footage. The results can be professional level, but essentially the narrative and 'meeting the brief' will come down to the individual student's knowledge and understanding of the genre and film form. For this type of entry it is imperative the teacher has authenticated the stages of production and can verify the work was that of the student and where aspects were taken from the Blender Studio/Cloud.

Are there any animated software programmes that should not be used?

There are copious software programmes available, lots for free and some with add-on applications to purchase to 'enhance' the output. Programmes such as Adobe Animate and Blender allow students to explore animation and VFX. Any programme used must be clearly outlined in both the coversheet and the evaluation so that moderators can verify the platform and tools used. Programmes that allow students to simply import pre-programmed movements, such as Unity and Unreal are not allowed, and we would not expect to see students attempting to use footage from existing video games, such as Minecraft. The students needs to use a programme, such as Blender, to demonstrate their film-making skills.

Statement:

We are receiving a high number of queries regarding the use of animation software such as Blender for Component 3 NEA, to add visual effects post-production or to create 2D or 3D animation.

We are happy for students to choose to produce animated short films and sequences if they are confident with the process and are aware that it is much more time consuming to make than live action films to achieve the same quality.

Please note, however, that if a software programme is being used then the coversheet and the evaluation **must** be clearly and correctly completed. Candidates should identify the software used on the coversheet and by signing the declaration they are confirming that they have not used any pre-made assets. **The stages of production must be authenticated by the teacher assessing the work.** As part of their evaluation. it would be useful to see screenshots of the shots being produced to help teachers and moderators authenticate the work, as well as supporting the student in evaluating their own production and process.

If NEA has not been correctly authenticated by the centre, and the moderator feels there are aspects of work being used from existing sources without acknowledgement, then this could result in the NEA work being invalid. This could also result in further samples being requested from the centre.

Overall, these software programmes provide an excellent opportunity for young, independent film-makers to experiment and create engaging and creative projects. With the correct support and supervision, we look forward to seeing any NEA submitted in this format.

Please note that programmes that allow students to simply import pre-programmed movements, such as Unity and Unreal are not allowed, and we would not expect to see students attempting to use footage from existing video games, such as Minecraft. The student needs to use a programme, such as Blender, to demonstrate their film-making skills.

Thanks,

Principal Moderators for GCSE and GCE Film

Subject Officer