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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE  
FILM STUDIES**

**SUMMER 2023**

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# EDUQAS FILM STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### COMPONENT 1

#### General Comments

Overall, this year centres should be commended for how well candidates have been prepared for what was effectively the last session of the current selection of films. In the main most candidates were able to access the full range of questions. They largely responded with the appropriate levels of knowledge both in terms of the theoretical requirements and detailed knowledge of the films themselves.

There were very few rubric infringements where candidates tackled a section or question with reference to the wrong film. The preparation of candidates for the specific requirements of the questions is generally strong and continues to improve. We would remind centres that the revised timeline will be examined for the first time in 2024.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the teachers involved in the delivery of Film Studies and the preparation of their candidates. Your hard work was apparent in the way that the large majority of candidates were able to approach the paper with an evident degree of confidence.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

**Q.1 (a) Identify one key use of sound in the film you have studied. [1]**

This question proved problematic for some candidates, but the number is diminishing year on year. The problem continued to centre on the correct interpreting of the word “identify” and the specificity required of a correct answer. Many were able to give a correct example of sound terminology but their identification was not made specific to their chosen film. “Diegetic sound” is an example of sound that can be found in any film. To make an identification it must be specific: “the diegetic sound of the gunshot in Rebel Without a Cause”. Candidates should be reminded to be specific - generalised responses cannot be rewarded.

Additional guidance to candidates would be to carefully select the example in 1a since this question is often linked to 1b. Candidates are advised to read through all the questions in each section in full before completing the first one, as this choice can have an impact on how they approach subsequent questions.

**(b) Briefly explain the effect created by this use of sound within the film. [4]**

Relevant responses here were of a generally good standard. They were able to discuss the how and the why the particular sound technique had been used. Where candidates faltered was in a lack of detail in their explanation, repetition and failing to make direct links between the technique and the meaning created. Candidates should be encouraged to consider as to whether they have made 4 mark worthy points within their explanation.

Candidates should also avoid being too general in their response here. A noticeable minority responding with explanations that were along the lines of "non-diegetic music because this can make the audience feel emotion" rather than the specific emotional meaning of how a piece of non-diegetic music was used in the film they had studied.

Overall sound proved in general to be a very accessible key element of film form here, the great majority of candidates were able to access some marks in explaining the use of sound in their chosen film.

**(c) Explore how sound is used to create meaning in at least one key sequence from the film you have studied. [10]**

The standard of response here tended to vary depending on two factors: the detail from a chosen sequence and the variety of sound terminology at their disposal. Candidates who had thoroughly prepared 1 (or more) sequences were able to access bands 4 and 5 more readily as they had plenty of examples to discuss. This detailed knowledge of specific sequences also facilitated a wider use of terminology. The weaker candidates tended to repeat what they had done for question b) with some additions, which is rewarded but rarely at the higher levels. Weaker candidates were often limited in their response by only being able to address a limited range of sound concepts. Centres are reminded that sound terminology is in most instances 'paired' – diegetic & non-diegetic, on screen & off screen and parallel & contrapuntal and candidates are well served if they can remember this when called upon to produce a detailed 10 mark analysis. Many of the exemplary responses were able to deal with aspects of sound and how they combined with other elements to make meaning, sometimes exceeding the expectations of GCSE.

**Q.2 (a) Identify one interesting use of cinematography in the film you have studied. [1]**

The response here was in line with that of 1(a), the use of the prompt "interesting" seemed to help focus the candidates on specific identification. For example, we were much more likely to see the answer "close up of ET's finger" (1 mark) rather than "close up" (0 mark). Nevertheless, specific identification from within the chosen film is still the standard here. Pleasingly some historic issues concerning confusion around the term cinematography were rare, but not absent entirely. A frequent mistake was to refer to "shot reverse shot" which is editing and "breaking the 4<sup>th</sup> wall" which is performance.

**(b) Briefly explain why this use of cinematography is interesting. [4]**

The general quality of responses to this question was good. With a variety of approaches rewarded, from camera angle symbolism, a narrative role of framing and the multiple applications of lighting. Where candidates faltered was again in a lack of detail in their explanation, repetition and failing to make direct links between the technique and the meaning created. Candidates should be encouraged to consider as to whether they have made 4-mark worthy points within their explanation.

**(c) Discuss how cinematography creates meaning in at least one key sequence from the film you have studied. [10]**

The standard of response here again tended to vary depending on the same two factors discussed in question 1c), the detail from a chosen sequence and the variety of cinematography terminology at candidate's disposal.

Candidates who had thoroughly prepared 1 (or more) sequences were able to access bands 4 and 5 more readily as they had plenty of examples to discuss. This detailed knowledge of specific sequences also facilitated a wider use of terminology. The weaker candidates tended to repeat what they had done for question b) with some additions, which is rewarded but rarely at the higher levels. Weaker candidates were often limited in their response by only being able to address a limited range of elements of cinematography.

Centres are reminded that cinematography embraces the elements of camera angle, camera framing, camera movement and lighting. Candidates are well served if they can discuss each of these areas when called upon to produce a detailed 10 mark analysis. Many of the exemplary responses were able to deal with 2 or more of these aspects and how they combined with other elements to make meaning, sometimes exceeding the expectations of GCSE.

**Q.3 Compare how the time of production has had an effect on the films you have studied. In your answer you may consider:**

- **social, cultural contexts (for example, changing attitudes, representations and beliefs)**
- **historical, political contexts (for example, key events at the time)**
- **production context (for example, changes to how films were made). [20]**

It was pleasing again to see responses from the full range of the films on offer with a clear understanding and engagement with the central "time of production" contextual theme. Candidates who made a clear choice as to which aspect of context they discussed and analysed them in relation to both films before moving on more readily accessed bands 4 and 5. The emphasis on the assessment of the responses to this question continues to be comparison and careful selection of what to discuss here went a long way to supporting a successful response. For example, dealing with the change in gender roles and expectations between the two areas lent itself readily to direct comparison. Many exemplary answers dealt well with one or more areas prompted by the bullet points. The most sophisticated responses were able to compare the films within their contextual era, some of these responses went beyond what we would expect at GCSE level. Some excellent teaching of content and technique was readily apparent in many responses. Where candidates were less strong here was through a lack of a clear comparison. They either chose disparate examples that did not readily lend themselves to comparison or merely considered each film in isolation. Additionally, there were some examples where there was clear recall of the historical eras of the films but the link between this and the films themselves was not really explored or compared. Candidates should be reminded that in this question that comparing their two chosen films is the key to success. One final specific note here in relation to production context is an ongoing issue. That is the confusion around the technical difference between special effects, visual effects and CGI. This was particularly evident in responses to E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial and Invasion of the Body Snatchers. Many candidates stated that CGI was used in E.T., particularly when talking about the spaceship, and compared that to no CGI in Invasion of the Body Snatchers.

This is not correct as there was no CGI in the original E.T., they were in fact visual effects as computer graphics were not able at the time to produce effects at this level. Similarly, any effects present in Invasion of the Body Snatcher are of the practical on camera special effects variety.

## **Section B: Key Developments in Film and Film Technology**

**Q.4** This section generated responses across the full range of possible marks. Other than the need for candidates to practice responding to the content of the new timeline the only other observation to be made is the time-honoured guidance to consider the question carefully and prepare as thoroughly as they can. Accurate recall of dates and names will remain a perennial staple here.

## **Section C: US Independent Film**

**Q.5** **Discuss one or two key ideas from the specialist film writing on the film you have studied. Refer to key sequences within your response. In your answer, you may:**

- **identify the example of specialist writing you are using**
- **outline and explain one or two key ideas from the specialist writing you have studied**
- **discuss how far you agree and/or disagree with the key ideas**
- **use sequences to illustrate your points. [15]**

There was a perceptible improvement in response to this question this year. Some of this is possibly contingent on the broader instruction to “Discuss one or two key ideas” but it is also undoubtedly a reflection of excellent engagement with the writing and the film and the necessary preparation for this. More effective time management seems to have reduced the number of truncated or none attempted responses this year. The main issue this session continues to be that minority of candidates that do not make reference to the specialist film writing. This is particularly frustrating when the quality of what they are saying is high but not rewardable as it is not actually answering the question as asked. If centres find that the chosen text is problematic for their candidates, the 2 general pieces - 'Finding the Frame' by Gustavo Mercado and 'What Makes a Film Independent?' by Rona Murray can provide more accessible alternatives. One specific note here being that some candidates had misunderstood the specialist film writing for Whiplash a notable number saying the writer had discussed toxic masculinity, which is incorrect. This may be a symptom of the phrase 'toxic masculinity' being in the news so much of late, it is not necessarily a problem for the candidate address issues of toxic masculinity in their own interpretation, but it is a misreading of the specialist writing so say that the writer talks about toxic masculinity in the film.

In studying the writing an agree or disagree approach to its ideas is a useful approach and proved readily applicable this year with the “discuss” approach. However, it should still be stressed that once in the examination candidates must be prepared to shape this approach to the needs of the question.

Nevertheless, it was pleasing to see not just the wide range of film choice here, but also the general level of engagement with the specialist film writing. It is good practice for candidates to state their chosen piece at the outset of the answer. Most candidates were able to engage on an informed and personal level with the chosen specialist film writing. The better responses were both varied and personal in their arguments and clearly backed this up with evidence from the film.

Centres are reminded that assessment at both AO1 and AO2 depends on the use of detailed reference to elements of film to justify any mark worthy assertions a candidate may make. Those candidates who were working from either of the 2 generic pieces did well as they were able to maintain focus on detailed examples from the film rather than making overly general observation on the authors ideas. Those candidates who discussed the writing specific to each film did well when they clearly matched aspects of the writing with aspects of the film relevant to the argument they were making. This session all of the chosen pieces largely proved accessible to a range of candidates and responses.

### **Summary of key points**

Credit and thanks are due to teacher's professionalism in preparing candidates for this session and their effective delivery of the content.

### **In conclusion:**

- In question 1 and 2 (a) candidates should be clear as to the requirement of an identified example.
- Candidates need detailed sequence specific knowledge and examples of the key elements of film form.
- A good general understanding and appreciation of the films, particularly in terms of genre and context, is also important.
- In question 3 the ability to compare as a practiced skill is as important as the content-based knowledge.
- In question 5 a personal and informed response, guided by the approach set out in the question is recommended.
- In a very demanding component efficient planning and timing is essential.

# EDUQAS FILM STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### COMPONENT 2

#### General Comments

- As with previous examination series, candidates were expected to complete three questions in 90 minutes, with each question consisting of three or four stepped sub-questions.
- Candidates are expected to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of elements of film form and, as in previous years, each section also has a specific area of study that is assessed – narrative for section A, representation for section B, and aesthetics for section C.
- As in Summer 2022, it was pleasing to see that most candidates were able to manage their time appropriately and complete all three questions in sufficient detail.
- For the most part, candidates were well prepared by their centres and managed to avoid rubric errors, and there was a marked decrease in the number of candidates using films in incorrect sections of the exam.
- Some candidates continue to address each sub-question (1a, 1b, and 1c for example) in one overall response. In such instances, it is unclear to examiners where one answer ends and another begins. When preparing candidates for examinations, centres must reiterate the importance of clearly labelling and responding to each sub-question separately.
- As noted in Summer 2022, some centres are teaching candidates generic responses to the higher tariff questions. As such, these candidates did not address the specific questions at hand and were therefore unable to attain marks in the higher bands. It is imperative that centres do not continue with this practise as it is inhibiting candidates' performance.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Question 1 (Section A – Narrative Focus)

All films in this section were covered across the centres however the most popular by far were *District 9* and *Slumdog Millionaire*.

- 1. (a) Identify one important sequence in the film you have studied.**

An overwhelming majority of candidates were able to answer this question and were awarded a mark accordingly. Candidates were sufficiently familiar with their chosen film and were therefore able to identify a sequence that they deemed to be important. Given the low tariff for this question, it was sufficient for candidates to identify the opening or the closing of the film, though most chose to be more specific with their response by pinpointing a moment within their chosen film's narrative.
- (b) Briefly describe where this sequence fits into the film's plot.**

This question proved to be one of the more contentious on this year's paper. As mentioned in Summer 2022, candidates are somewhat confused by the term 'plot' and so the quality of their responses varied as a result of their uncertainty.

Examiners were looking for candidates to outline where their chosen sequence happens in the film and to describe its significance to events (for example, how it serves to introduce a character or is an inciting moment). Most candidates were able to achieve some marks for this question.

**(c) Discuss how the key elements of film form are used to create meaning at the end of the film you have studied.**

The question here specifies that candidates analyse the end of their chosen film. Whilst most were able to do so effectively, some candidates did not address this particular moment and instead gave an analysis pertaining to a sequence from elsewhere in the film. Examiners were liberal with candidates in terms of how they interpreted the 'end of the film' and so they were able to discuss more than the final scene, for instance. However, those who did not address the end of the film at all were unable to achieve marks in the higher bands. Encouragingly, many candidates were able to articulate insightful and well-informed interpretations. There is growing assurance amongst candidates in the application of key film form terminology and the best responses used it effectively to underpin their analysis. It is worth highlighting, however, that some candidates inaccurately use terminology (specifically with regards to camera angles) which often undermines the effectiveness of their responses. Although not specified in the question, responses that compared the end sequence with another moment in the film (for instance, the denouement of *Slumdog Millionaire* with the interrogation scene or the gameshow itself) were particularly successful.

**Question 2 (Section B – Representation)**

All films were looked at across the centres. The most popular by far were *Tsotsi* and *Let the Right One In*.

Overall, this was the question that candidates answered most successfully.

1. **(a) Identify one key prop in the film you have studied.**  
Almost all candidates were able to identify a key prop. There were a number, however, who stretched the parameters of what a prop is by identifying a baby or a bridge, for example. These candidates were not awarded a mark.
- (b) Briefly describe how this prop is used to create meaning within the film.**  
Almost all candidates were able to attain some marks for this question. The best responses were those that clearly explored the construction of meaning rather than simply assessing the prop's importance.
- (c) What does costume tell you about one or two characters in the film?**  
This question was approached in a variety of ways and answered to good effect. Many candidates looked at two distinct characters and explored the construction of meaning through costume. Others explored in greater depth one particular costume worn by a character. Another common approach was to explore multiple costumes worn by a single character across the film. Given the phrasing of the question, examiners were asked to reward all approaches equally and as a result many candidates were awarded marks in the highest band.

**(d) Explore how mise-en-scene links to the themes of the film you have studied.**

This question specifies that candidates explore the themes of their chosen film in conjunction with mise-en-scene and there were some very pleasing responses. It was clear that most centres have taught representation effectively and this resulted in assured candidate responses. Some candidates strayed from mise-en-scene and addressed other elements of film form (such as sound, cinematography etc.) and though they were not penalised for this, they were not awarded marks for the parts of their response that were outside the parameters of the question. Similarly, candidates whose answers focused on sequence analysis without explicitly referencing themes had their overall mark capped at Band 3 in the mark scheme. As with 1c, many candidates effectively used film form terminology to underpin their analysis and were awarded high marks as a result.

**Question 3 (Section C – Aesthetics)**

The most popular films in this section were *Attack the Block* and *Skyfall*. There were few to no entries looking at *My Brother the Devil* or *Brooklyn*.

**1. (a) Identify the genre of the film you have studied.**

Almost all candidates were able to answer this question. Examiners were instructed not to expect a specific answer and so candidates were credited, within reason, for the genre they identified; for instance, candidates were credited for spy or action for *Skyfall*. In fact, many candidates perceptively identified their chosen film as being a hybrid genre and were awarded accordingly.

**(b) Briefly outline two genre conventions in the film you have studied.**

This particular question saw a significant number of candidates misunderstand the term 'genre conventions'. Consequently, their responses often saw them explaining the genre they had identified in the previous question without identifying any of the evident conventions thus restricting their ability to accrue marks. More successful candidates demonstrated their familiarity with the term by outlining some of the common features to good effect.

**(c) How typical of its genre is the film you have studied?**

Most candidates were able to assess their chosen film's typicality to some degree. The more successful candidates were those who were able to assess the nuances of typicality by exploring the ways in which the film deviates from the norm. For example, there were some excellent responses which discussed how *Attack the Block* subverts expectations through its setting whilst conforming in other ways (such as through the inclusion of aliens).

**(d) Explore how the look or style of the film you have studied reflects its genre.**

In previous years, candidates' responses to the higher tariff question in Section C has seen the weakest responses. It was encouraging to see many more candidates demonstrating a clear understanding of aesthetics this year and centres deserve credit for this improvement. However, as mentioned in the General Comments section of this report, some candidates produced generic, prepared responses that did not address the specifics of the question and therefore were unable to achieve a mark in excess of Band 3.

The best responses came from candidates who were able to analyse key sequences from their chosen with a clear focus on genre throughout. For instance, there were some skilful explorations of how colour and light were used in *Submarine* to convey the coming-of-age narrative of the film. Similarly excellent responses explored the use of lighting and special effects to reflect the sci-fi genre in *Attack the Block*. Unlike the higher tariff questions in Sections A and B, candidates here seemed less confident in deploying film form terminology and were sometimes awarded lower marks for AO1 as a result. Centres should be mindful of the importance of this aspect of the mark scheme across all sections of this particular examination.

### Summary of key points

- It is pleasing to see that centres continue to show commitment to Film Studies. Candidates are, for the most part, well equipped by their teachers.
- Candidates of all abilities were able to access this paper and marks were awarded across the full range of the mark scheme. Some excellent candidates produced work that showed insight, enthusiasm, and maturity beyond their years. I look forward to seeing work of this quality in future series.
- Candidates are managing their time well with an overwhelming majority able to sufficiently answer all of the questions in the allocated time.
- Centres must encourage candidates to read the specifics of the higher tariff questions (1c, 2d and 3d) and ensure that their answers pertain to these specifics. This was a particular issue in 1c where some candidates did not discuss the end of their chosen film.
- There is growing confidence with the application of film terminology to underpin analysis, though this must be used consistently across the questions. Some candidates did not demonstrate this skill in 3d. Centres should be mindful that candidates must accurately use terminology and that misapplication can undermine the authority of their analysis.
- Centres should not be encouraging candidates to reproduce prepared responses in examinations. A minority of centres appear to be taking this approach and this is not permitted.

# EDUQAS FILM STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### COMPONENT 3 – PRODUCTION

#### General Comments

There were some very high quality examples of work entered this year, with the screenplay & shooting script option proving to be the most popular choice. Administration for the NEA was much smoother this year, with most centres now being familiar with how to upload work onto Surpass. There were some problems with one or two centres submitting a storyboard as part of their NEA work. Centres are reminded the storyboard option was only available for 2022 and should no longer be submitted.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Administration

- Administration for the NEA component has greatly improved, with centres being more familiar with the process and platforms used. Centres communicated well with the board in regards to any issues and these were swiftly dealt with.
- Some centres had not ensured that the candidate declaration or stages of authentication had been signed on the coversheets. This delayed the moderation in some cases and centres are reminded it is a requirement that the coversheet is signed by the candidate and a digital signature can be used. Without this signature, the work will not be eligible for submission.
- Centres with excellent administration used the coversheets to summarise, using language from the marking criteria, why the work achieved the final mark.
- Where penalties had been applied in relation to exceeding or not meeting the brief (as outlined in the 'Assessment Procedures' section of the Specification p29) the coversheets were used to record this and clearly demonstrated how and why a penalty had been applied.
- Least effective administration was typified by a lack of annotation on the work. In these cases, coversheets often contained limited or generalised comments, sometimes aimed at the candidate rather than the moderator.
- Centres are reminded that the coversheet is an official document used by moderators and senior staff to determine how the final mark has been awarded. The moderation process was impeded where work itself and/or the coversheets had no annotations.
- Also, where submissions exceeded or had not met the brief and the coversheet made no reference to this, it was difficult to discern if the centre had applied the marking criteria correctly.
- Centres are encouraged to use detailed annotations on the work and the coversheets, using the language of the marking criteria, to demonstrate how the final mark was awarded.

## Screenplay and Shooting Script

- The screenplay option was the most popular and the majority of candidates followed the format of professional screenplays with all of the relevant details included.
- The best examples of screenplays strike the right balance between visual exposition and dialogue, with a 60/40 or 70/30 balance between visual exposition and dialogue allowing greater opportunity to demonstrate candidates' skills.
- The shooting script allowed many candidates to demonstrate their technical knowledge and understanding, using a vast range of technical terminology, across all the key areas of film form, to demonstrate how they envisioned their work on screen.
- However, in some of the less creative work sampled it was clear the shooting script is not always embraced as an opportunity to demonstrate technical skills and instead limited to a list, often just of shots and sounds, in a simplistic manner.
- Centres are encouraged to use the shooting script as an opportunity for learners to demonstrate their technical skills in regards to the four key areas of film form.
- Centres can use the template ([available on the EDUQAS website](#)) or they may wish to adapt their own version. This is acceptable and encouraged as long as the candidate is able to cover all the areas of film form. There are still missed opportunities for candidates to include a wider range of editing and sound aspects in their shooting scripts.
- Some work sampled still has candidates explicitly referencing camera shots and technical aspects in the screenplay. Centres are reminded these elements are not to be included in the screenplays and should be explored in the shooting scripts.
- In some cases, all the work sampled from a centre demonstrated a lack of understanding of the correct formatting of a screenplay. Centres are encouraged to carefully check the formatting requirements outlined on pages 24-25 of the specification, as well as refer to the exemplar and CPD materials available on the secure site.

## Film-making Productions

- Although the less popular choice, filmed productions continue to produce some excellent and creative NEA work. Moderators saw some highly skilled responses to the brief that demonstrated excellent application of both structural and key elements of film.
- However, centres are reminded that candidates are encouraged to work outside of their educational setting. As noted in the marking criteria, the constraints of filming in an educational establishment at GCSE are recognised but it is expected that attempts are made to create a sense of appropriate setting, props and costume. The level of attempt made will be reflected in the final mark and should be noted by centres on the coversheet.

## Evaluative Analysis

- In many cases, the quality of the evaluative analyses submitted were high, with many learners taking the opportunity to explore and evaluate the meaning and genre of their production.
- In some cases, candidates simply recounted what they did, rather than creating a critical analysis of their production. Centres are encouraged to review the exemplar work on the secure site to support with producing, and assessing, excellent evaluative analysis submissions.
- Most candidates chose highly appropriate texts as influences in the analysis, however centres are reminded that television texts are **not** suitable as this is a Film course.
- The word limit for this aspect of the NEA is still causing some issues. Centres are reminded that the Evaluative Analysis should be between 750-850 words.

- Work that is significantly over or under this limit should have the relevant penalty applied, as outlined on p.29 of the specification.
- Some centres had excellent practice for this, clearly stating on the coversheet and the work where and why penalties had been applied. In some cases it was very difficult for moderators to discern if penalties had been applied.
- Therefore, centres are encouraged to include word counts on all written submitted work, including the Evaluative Analysis.

### **Summary of key points**

Centres are required to annotate all written submissions along with the coversheet, using language from the mark scheme, to demonstrate how and why the final mark was awarded. Word counts and time limits should be included on the work and/or the coversheet to demonstrate the brief has been met by the candidate, or that the relevant penalties have been applied by the centre.

Shooting scripts should be used by centres and learners as an opportunity to demonstrate the range of technical skills acquired throughout the course, across all the key areas of film. Centres are reminded it is a requirement of the NEA submissions that all coversheets and authentications are signed by the candidate and the centre. Digital signatures are acceptable.



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