



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**FILM STUDIES
AS**

SUMMER 2022

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FILM STUDIES

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COMPONENT 1 – AMERICAN FILM

General Comments

Given that candidates have not had the opportunity to engage with external examinations since 2019, it was very pleasing to see evidence that candidates were able to navigate this paper with confidence and adhere to rubric instructions. They also demonstrated good understanding of the expected exam techniques required at this level. This was pleasing to note, and centres are to be congratulated on the preparedness of their candidates in this first external exam series in three years. Lock down learning was no doubt varied across the country with local issues likely to have impacted on individual centres. However, evidence suggests that very good teaching and learning took place and attainment standards appeared to have been maintained.

Some films remain perennially popular and common pairings such as Casablanca/Bonnie & Clyde, Blade Runner/One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Vertigo/Do the Right Thing dominated candidate's responses. However other combinations were attempted as well as more evidence of the use of Lady from Shanghai and Some Like it Hot was noted. Johnny Guitar does not appear to be a popular choice and Apocalypse Now was rarely used and when it was the responses were weaker than those of other film choices.

Candidates appeared to manage their time fairly effectively. Candidates tended to write quite extensive responses to Q1.1 (perhaps as they did this question first). Responses to Q2.2/2.3 were often much shorter which perhaps suggests that they were running out of time. Teachers should note that these questions are both worth 20 marks and therefore should be mindful of this when preparing their candidates for the whole paper. Q1.1 responses often ran to two sides whereas Q2.2/2.3 regularly came in in at 2/3rds of a page. It is therefore likely that marks could be uneven across these questions with candidates missing out on the higher band descriptors. Candidates often found it necessary to add contextual information to Q1.1 (production/auteur etc) and this isn't required. This is more appropriate in Q1.2/1.3 and candidates should be guided to approach Q1.1 differently with the aim of getting to the thrust of the question quicker and being more focussed on the key assessment points.

Issues of Spectatorship are integral to Section B and most centres has prepared their candidates well for this theoretical approach. In the main candidates wrote with understanding and confidence about Spectatorship and were able to apply theory to their analysis in a meaningful way. The message of 'taking candidates to the brink' of theory to enhance their response seems to have been recognised by teachers and allowed for both academic understanding the thoughtful insight into spectatorship.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: Hollywood (1930-1990) (comparative study)

1.1: Compare how cinematography is used to create meaning in one key sequence from each of the films you have studied.

As stated above this compulsory question often generated a fairly extended response. As it is often the first question that candidates attempt, there is a tendency for context setting/background information giving. Teachers should guide their candidates to the question which asks for a discussion of one key sequence from each film studied. The focus is given in the question (in this case cinematography). Most responses acknowledged cinematography correctly and candidates were able to accurately discuss this element of film form and how it creates meaning. A number of candidates ignored this steer and strayed into other areas of film form or representation in their answer. It was noted that as in previous years, candidates who wrote on *Vertigo*, persist with an auteur-based analysis. This is not required at AS level and often leads to an uneven approach in the comparison element of this question. Distinctiveness can of course be discussed but should, in this question be analysed in the context of cinematic meaning rather than specific directorial traits. The best responses to this question were seen in *Bonnie & Clyde* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, with some good analysis from *Blade Runner*. Evidence of knowledgeable film terminology was noted with candidates understanding both camera and lighting elements of film form. Most candidates implied comparison by demonstrating contrast/difference. Explicit comparison was less noticeable, and teachers would be advised draw their candidates' attention to this element of the question and support candidates to access this skill in order to reach to higher bands. This is not to encourage a 'he did this/they did that' approach but to extend candidates understanding that different techniques can create completely different meanings and responses for spectators.

1.2: Compare how both of the films you have studied reflect the political ideas of the times in which they were made.

This was the more popular of the two questions in this section. The question is broad in its scope and offered candidates the opportunity to focus on their area of learning and study. The bullet points allowed for either a political/historical context or a discussion of societal issues. Candidates were able to bring much good learning to this question, often choosing to discuss gender representation. As is common, there was some muddling of the timeline of Feminism/changing attitudes to women in society with some fairly outrageous sweeping statements about female power/second & third wave of feminism. Candidates often find it difficult to apply gender and race politics to a time in which they have no personal experience of. One approach would be to avoid any taught historical perspective early in the analysis of a film and simply discuss the action and experience of characters. Once candidates are secure in this then discussion through the lens of contextual attitudes is easier for them to grasp and express.

Comparison was acknowledged with some good ability to find similarities and differences in films.

1.3: 'The Visual style of a film is influenced by its context' Compare the two films you have studied in relation to this statement.

Fewer candidates chose this question but those who did were confident in their discussion of visual style and wrote well about distinctiveness in relation to context. Vertigo fared well for this question as did Bonnie & Clyde. Candidates were able to discuss Classical v New Hollywood and had been taught enough contextual detail and which enabled them to support textual analysis effectively.

Candidates were able to discuss creative influences that shaped the visual style of their films and could draw on good comparison points to support the question.

SECTION B: American Independent Film (single film study)

2.1: Examine how the use of a specific prop or costume creates meaning for the spectator in the film you have studied.

This compulsory 10 mark question requires a focussed answer given that the time allocated can only be about 10 minutes. Most responses dispensed with much intro, some to the extent that they did not even name the film they were writing on. Whilst brevity is important in the question, some context to their answer should be evident. The word 'prop' or 'costume' was fairly broadly interpreted, and a significant number of candidates suggested that location or place were a prop. Depending on the depth and quality of their response, marks were awarded. It is important however, that candidates follow the instructions of the question and ensure that they use the prompt/context given to explore their response. Overwhelming, Captain Fantastic was the most popular choice with candidates able to identify suitable props or costumes. Beasts of the Southern Wild also proved a popular choice and costume was often cited. Candidates struggled a little more with Frances Ha! and Winters Bone and responses using these films felt more vague, perhaps because of the more naturalistic style of the films, candidates were less aware of 'props'. A similar trait was noticed in Boyhood, but many found good points to make about 'cars' and characters clothes.

2.2: Explore how spectators are encouraged to respond to two different characters in the film you have studied.

This question has the potential for candidates to fall short of the rubric and potentially fail to discuss two different characters. This was evident in a small minority of responses and should serve as a reminder for candidates to read questions carefully to ensure that they are following the instructions properly. Explicit in the question is an understanding that characters can be represented differently and that this in turn has an impact on the way the spectator will respond to them. Where candidates chose contrasting characters, they gave good responses. Winters' Bone and Boyhood elicited strong responses to this question and there was evidence that the bullet points were helpful in directing analysis. An understanding of spectatorship studies was demonstrated. This question was the most popular in this section.

2.3: Explore how particular events or moments in the film you have studied create enjoyment for the spectator.

Enjoyment and pleasure are important elements in Spectatorship Studies. Why audiences like moments in films are fundamental to engagement, experience and feeling. However, the word 'enjoyment' did not seem to hit a chord with many candidates. Candidates should be encouraged to express why and how they like moments/events in films, particularly if they are complex and maybe contradictory e.g. "I enjoyed feeling anxious and worried about...." Most candidates seemed more comfortable discussing 'impact' and 'meaning' rather than 'enjoyment'. Where this was valid marks were awarded but I would encourage centres to help their candidates explore the pleasures inherent in moments in film that can be tense, uncomfortable, or even distressing and to provide them with the vocabulary to articulate this. Candidates who could do this wrote well on their own feelings and how they were manipulated to take pleasure and enjoyment in the film studied.

Summary of key points

- Pleasing to note that candidates did not seem unduly impacted by lack of formal exams over the past three years.
- The balance of marks/time allowed for questions should be reviewed by centres to allow candidates to access the full range of marks.
- Spectatorship Studies is being taught well and candidates were able to apply theory appropriately.

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COMPONENT 2 – EUROPEAN FILM

General Comments

Many candidates engaged with their films' contribution to generic conventions. Candidates were very prepared for the demands of this paper and centres must be congratulated. Overall, candidates approached the paper with confidence demonstrating very good and excellent textual knowledge of their films. Candidates continue to engage effectively with the distinctive aspects of British films such as their social realism and the significance of wider contexts. Although many centres have opted for the popular film choices in both Section A and B, it is pleasing to see that some centres have studied other films on the specification. A range of film pairings by centres led to varied responses in relation to the examination questions. There were few cases of candidates running out of time on individual questions or not completing the whole paper. This indicates a greater familiarity with the layout and mark allocation of the paper as well as effective preparation of examination techniques and time management. The length of candidates' responses demonstrates a confident and skilled approach in responding to the 20 and 40 mark questions. There were few rubric infringements. Candidates made effective use of the prompts in the 40 mark questions to develop a range of relevant points. However, candidates should avoid any unnecessary re-writing of the film's details such as date of release or director as this does not contribute to their overall mark and it can take up time unnecessarily.

Pan's Labyrinth remains the overwhelmingly popular film choice. However, in this examination series it is pleasing to see centres teach some of the other choices too, including an increase in centres studying *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. Section B offers candidates opportunities to focus on a single film study, engaging with context, representation, and key elements of film form. The range of responses across centres indicates that candidates engage very well with these aspects of their chosen film. In many instances, candidates bring a sound understanding of the significance of wider contexts to European films and this enables candidates to develop sophisticated and detailed responses. Given the length of responses for both questions, it is evident that candidates manage their time effectively. There were few rubric infringements.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A: BRITISH FILM (two film study)

- 1.1 Candidates were able to tackle this question with confidence. The best candidate responses were those where candidates identified a key sequence for each of their films as well as one female character. Popular female characters were Tina, Liz, Diane and Lol. This enabled candidates to develop and sustain their response. In these instances, excellent responses were shaped by detailed references to the key sequence in each film as well as exploration which focused on the question. Given the time allocation and mark tariff for this question it is important that candidates tackle the question head on.

Weaker responses often veered between two different female characters whilst missing opportunities under time constraints to develop a more explorative and detailed approach. Thus, candidates lost marks for AO2 (application of knowledge and understanding).

- 1.2** The very strongest responses to this question came from candidates who avoided downloading narrative theories. In these cases, strong essays demonstrated excellent knowledge of how their chosen films used particular narrative devices to construct interesting stories. Candidates studying, *We Need to Talk About Kevin* and *Moon* demonstrated some sophisticated responses in relation to linear/ non-linear narratives. Candidates are strongly advised to engage fully with the implications of the question, rather than divert their efforts towards theories and theorists. It is possible for candidates to attain marks in Bands 4 and 5 without exploring Todorov or Propp. It is rewarding to see candidates explore a range of narrative devices by making detailed references to specific moments in their films to substantiate their points. Many candidates discussed a range of key elements of film form such as sound and lighting effectively, in the context of the question. Weaker responses drew less on specific examples from their films which impacted on their AO2 marks.
- 1.3** Strong responses to this question avoided a purely theoretical approach or 'download' of Levi-Strauss so that they could develop a sophisticated and detailed response in relation to the set question. In these cases, excellent responses focused on characters and dialogue as driving forces within the films' narrative. Conflicting values and ideologies were explored in *This is England*, whilst in *Trainspotting* this conflict was discussed in relation to life choices and heroin addiction, with a focus on the characters' outlook. It was pleasing to see that candidates explored the question with reference to *Moon*, *Under the Skin* and *Secrets and Lies*, as well as through the more popular choices of *Trainspotting*, *Shaun of the Dead* and *Sightseers*. Sophisticated and confident responses in Band 5 often drew on mise-en-scene, the use of colour and motif, sound, British realism and generic codes and conventions to explore the question in interesting ways. Weaker responses limited themselves to explanations of binary oppositions without linking their points to specific moments in their film. Limited and basic responses were invariably plot descriptive.

SECTION B: EUROPEAN FILM (single film study)

- 2.1** Candidates were able to demonstrate confident responses to this question. Given that the majority of centres studied Pan's Labyrinth, it is not surprising how many responses focused on particular sequences in this film (the opening, the Pale Man/ Banquet parallels). The opening sequences to *Mustang* and *Victoria* were also explored with confidence and focus. It is very pleasing to see candidates' ability to engage with mise-en-scene at a highly detailed and sophisticated level whilst drawing on specific elements to explore meaning. At the top end of the mark scheme excellent responses were those where candidates interweaved aspects of mise-en-scene to the themes and ideas in the sequence as well as the film as a whole. Good and satisfactory responses demonstrate solid knowledge and understanding of their film and key elements of film form. This suggests that centres may allocate further time to AO2 such as application and analysis of how particular aspects of mise-en-scene sustain a range of meanings. Weaker candidates did not focus on a specific sequence and thus they offered basic or limited explorations which did not fully explore mise-en-scene and its contribution to the film's meanings. A few candidates had focused on sound as part of their exploration of mise-en-scene, thus forfeiting marks.

- 2.2** This question was overwhelmingly more popular, and many candidates demonstrated highly sophisticated responses where the representation of gender encompassed a range of ideas across their film. It is pleasing to see candidates' increased command of subject-specific terminology which enables confident and explorative responses. Candidates were able to consider the representation of both femininity and masculinity within their films. In *Life is Beautiful*, Guido's paternal qualities were regarded as both feminine and positive, whilst in *Victoria*, the best responses explored both masculine confidence and feminine timidity in the lead character. Candidates who studied *Mustang* were often able to make interesting connections between the film's wider contexts and the representation of both masculinity and femininity. The best responses navigated their film to draw on specific references and examples from which they developed focused, analytical, and detailed explorations of the question. Stronger responses drew key elements of film such as camera work to engage with issues of gender and power. Responses which met the criteria in Bands 3 and 4 demonstrated sound and good knowledge of their film and key elements of film, but these responses were less exploratory; and references to sequences or moments in their film were more limited. Candidates made use of the prompts to structure their response.
- 2.3** Fewer candidates opted for this question. However, those who did were able to discuss a wide range of points which integrated social context to themes, ideas, and wider debates. Although most centres studied *Pan's Labyrinth*, it is very pleasing to see how candidates engage with the social context to other films studied, to explore interesting ideas in relation to culture, social norms, and conventions. This was case with *Ida*, with explorations of post-war society in Poland, or mobility for EU citizens in *Victoria*. Candidates brought a wealth of relevant and interesting ideas to their study of social context, which is highly commendable. The best responses came from candidates who effectively linked how social context enhanced their understanding of the film by offering detailed examples. Weaker responses tended to identify a range of points which were not linked meaningfully to the film studied.

Summary of key points

SECTION A:

- Many candidates were able to navigate their films effectively to select specific moments or key sequences to support their points and respond to the question
- The best responses in this section came from candidates who had a secure knowledge of their films and thus avoided plot descriptive responses
- It was very pleasing to see how many candidates were able to integrate key elements of film form into their responses, applying subject-specific terminology with accuracy and confidence to explore their films' narrative
- There have fewer instances of pre-prepared essay responses and an increased focus on the specific question which is very pleasing to see.

SECTION B:

- A focus on specific sequences enables candidates to sustain their exploration of the film's themes and ideas
- Sequence analysis approaches can support detailed exploration of key elements of film form, wider context, and representation
- Candidates demonstrate a strong knowledge of their films which indicates that further time can be devoted to AO2 skills such as the ability to offer sustained, detailed, and analytical responses in relation to particular questions
- Candidates demonstrate a greater confidence in developing their response with increased relevance to the set question, in place of a more pre-prepared.

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COMPONENT 3 – PRODUCTION

General Comments

There was some interesting and creative work where candidates clearly relished the opportunity to respond to the new briefs this year. For this crossover year it was acceptable to still use the previous briefs, but next year, candidates must choose from the new ones. Most candidates are now identifying the chosen brief on the coversheet and then evaluating their work against it in the evaluative analyses, which is good to see, however some candidates still just identified which type of work it was (screenplay or filmmaking) rather than referring to the specific brief chosen. It is good practice for candidates to refer to the brief at the start of the Evaluative Analysis, then evaluating the ways that their piece met the brief.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Film Extract:

There were some excellent film extracts this year which were ambitious and clearly linked to the chosen brief, they were a pleasure to watch, and many centres have candidates whose work should be entered for the Eduqas/WJEC Moving Image Awards. This is the section of production work where the assessment is the most accurate; however, there still remains an issue where candidates take a music video approach, with the use of a single track or use songs where the lyrics can overwhelm the images, rather than carefully constructing a multi-layered soundscape. This is required for sound as a key element to be considered excellent. There was some evidence of some beautifully composed and framed shots, and this was lovely to see, but for cinematography as a key element to be highly rewarded, the filming must be in landscape rather than portrait. Candidates would be well advised to use more close ups and fewer long shots, especially of people walking or running. Please be advised that the work should be uploaded in an appropriate format rather than links to SharePoint which cannot be opened outside of the organisation, or as YouTube links, which is not acceptable.

Screenplay:

There was some accurate and confident use of the master scene script layout this year; however, some centres are still being advised by moderators to engage more fully with the guidance given in the specification, in the notes for guidance and digital resources. The issue of editing and camera instructions being included still arose; the natural place for this is in the illustrative storyboard, where there was some good use of transitions and timings in seconds indicating pace with fewer candidates having over long shots. Creation of character through performance and convincing dialogue, sparingly used, is overlooked by many candidates. Instead, candidates should focus their attentions on visual descriptions of scenes including mise-en-scene and actions which advanced the narrative or create subtle character points. There was still a little bit of confusion about the visual nature of screenplay writing and some candidates included thoughts or feelings of characters not conveyed as visual instructions, or instructions for an actor, this must be discouraged.

A small, but important point, scenes should also be numbered. It is useful for candidates to include a word-count and be aware of the consequences of being under or over the word-count as outlined in the specification.

Illustrative Storyboard:

Unfortunately, this remains the weakest piece for many candidates. While many produced thoughtful and accurate pieces, a substantial number of candidates tried to storyboard the whole screenplay or chose randomly from it or submitted short work. This is the place rather than the screenplay to consider transitions between shots, cinematography, and sound. There was generally a lack of attention to non-diegetic sound and where music was mentioned, there was no detail given, for example creepy music might be indicated, but for higher marks candidates should identify types of instruments, volume, and pace as they would when analysing a film for an essay. The shot type shown through the image must be identified correctly in the written information, and I would still urge more extensive use of the close-up to be made. It would be good to see the same care and attention being given to the storyboards as are given to the screenplay.

Evaluative Analysis:

The work here was successful, with a high degree of accuracy in the assessment. There were some thoughtful approaches to production work demonstrated with some interesting and appropriate choices of cinematic influences, although some popular TV, *Stranger Things*, for example did feature; please advise candidates that their influences must be films. There was also some good use of the short films set for A Level, although this is not required, we saw some good examples of how this can work well for AS. In some cases, there was too much emphasis on the influence with not enough analysis of detail of own work and how meaning and response were created. The analysis, and possibly the study, of professional screenplays was lacking in many pieces, please be aware of the significance of this on the assessment criteria. It would be helpful for this piece if candidates could include a word count on their work and this would help them meet the requirements, as some short pieces were submitted this year.

Summary of key points

- Use close-ups more widely in filmmaking and storyboards
- Do not use a single track, especially one which overwhelms the visuals
- Screenplays should be entirely visual, thoughts and emotions should be made evidence through action, dialogue, and performance
- Dialogue should not dominate and should enhance characterisation rather than purely for exposition
- There should not be any instructions for cinematography or editing in the screenplay, these should be in the storyboard
- Number scenes and indicate which scene is being storyboarded
- Storyboard a small continuous section of the screenplay
- Include detail about the non-diegetic sound as part of the written information on the storyboard: types of instruments, volume, and pace
- Consider cinematic influences alongside analysis of candidates' own work to ensure that the candidate does not focus too much on the influences
- Include a word count on written pieces.



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