Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at: https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?l=en

Online results analysis

WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.
General Comments

This fifth year of the GCSE Film Studies course has seen another significant rise in the number of centre and candidate entries. Existing centres continue to build upon the good practice established in past years. Most centres paid close attention to the new specification when designing and delivering the course. However, there were still several centres continuing to reference the old specification and offering some former options rather than the controlled assessment options. It is important that all centres check to ensure that they are following the current specification (see website: WJEC GCSE in Film Studies – For First Award in 2013). The current specification will be valid until further notice.

The reports of the principal examiners for Paper 1, Paper 2 and the Controlled Assessment were, on the whole, very positive and all commented on examples of effective teaching and learning across a wide range of centres. They felt that there were excellent examples of very high quality work submitted for each assessment areas (Paper 1, Paper 2 and the Controlled Assessment). Candidates across the ability range were able to demonstrate a growing knowledge and understanding of the three inter-related study areas: film language, film organisation and film audiences. Most candidates were also able to demonstrate this understanding using appropriate terminology.

As mentioned in last year’s report, many centres are offering the course in one year. Where candidates have been allotted the appropriate amount of curriculum hours and suitable teacher expertise, this option has proved highly successful. There appeared to be less evidence this year that time pressures on both candidates and teachers weakened performance in general. However, centres are reminded that 120 Guided Learning Hours is the recommended time allocation for a GCSE and that amount of teaching time is required for candidates to gain the appropriate levels of knowledge for all aspects of the specification.

The new specification seems to be working well in terms of encouraging and facilitating strong personal engagement from candidates across the ability range. The Superhero genre is proving both popular and a good means of developing a deeper understanding of genre, industry and audience issues. The new films on the Paper 2 list have also proved very popular. Many candidates chose to write about The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas and The Wave and both films elicited some particularly fine responses.

Overall GCSE Film Studies continues to grow in size, quality and popularity. Hopefully, this subject will continue to flourish during a period where it seems that the educational importance of creative arts subjects like Film Studies is not always recognised.
Paper 1: Exploring Film (Dave Fairclough, principal)

**Introduction**
This year candidates were able to demonstrate successfully macro and micro analysis, industry awareness and creativity - the three main elements being assessed in this paper. I have made comments on each question area.

**Question 1**
This was an effective question, which enabled candidates to respond successfully. Points to note are:

**Q.1**

(a) Although most candidates did identify an example of sound, such as the music score or sound effects, centres are reminded that the trigger word “identify” should signpost the need for a specific example from the extract. A simple reference to 'diegetic sound' as an answer is not sufficient and candidates should be prepared to identify a specific example from the extract.

(b) Candidates engaged well with the concept of ‘create meaning’. Most were able to explain how the sound would have impacted upon the audience. The guidance for this kind of question should always be to keep the effect on the audience uppermost in any answer, even if explained from the perspective of director’s intention.

(c) The quality remains good for this kind of question and continues to improve year on year. The deliberate use of the more open descriptor ‘involve’ did encourage candidates to deal with a range of meanings across the range of options. However, one main note of caution needs to be sounded: if candidates opt for mise-en-scène, they should be confident to discuss how a reasonable range of its features make meaning. Some candidates fell into the trap of merely describing mise-en-scène where awarding more than basic marks can be difficult. As usual candidates should cover two micro features if they are to access the full mark range. Guidance on time management for (c) should still be stressed as the second micro feature was often the weaker of the two (and was occasionally omitted entirely).

**Question 2**

**Q.2**

(a) Virtually all candidates were able to identify a superpower used in the extract.

(b) The term ‘important’ was interpreted deliberately widely to enable a wide range of responses. Answers that identified three reasons of importance scored well as did those that discussed individual points in greater depth. Candidates who presented too much description inevitably did not access full marks.

(c) The best candidates for this question were able to draw on analysis and knowledge of other films they had studied. Answers ranged form the very basic response of how the nominated Superhero used their powers practically (fighting crime, saving people, getting around etc.) to better discussions of the responsibility they posed. The best answers looked at how the powers served the narrative and the macro ideas filmmakers were trying to put across. Those centres that had studied a diverse range of texts served their candidates well here as it enabled candidates more naturally to compare and contrast and thus make more sophisticated points. Again, answers that consisted of lists of descriptions could not access the higher marks.
Question 3

- Responses to question three which assesses knowledge of aspects of the marketing and promotion of films continue to develop. Responses fall into three broad categories: the lower mark responses typically described features from the posters in the resource materials with only a basic awareness of how they created interest. Those in the middle ranges did rely on a more textual approach but began to discuss how some of these worked as marketing methods, mentioning audience and the creation of anticipation, interest and ‘buzz’. The higher order responses acknowledged the differentiated role of both kinds of poster in a campaign designed to generate “interest” or ticket sales (through timing and placement, for example). The very best answers engaged well with the typical requirements needed in order to sell a ‘tent-pole’, high budget franchise blockbuster. Their discussion centred on issues specific to the Superhero movie, using both the resource materials and examples of their own.
- It should be remembered that this question is the main focus of what the candidates have studied in regard to the mainstream film industry and its commercial nature. Their answers are expected to reflect this knowledge and understanding. Marketing (as a major and essential feature of distribution) should always be the main focus. The audience targeted functions of informing and persuading should be discussed in the context of “creating interest”.
- Candidates should also be clear on the requirements of this question. Whereas more media style textual analysis of connotation and denotation may be useful, this is not the main aim of this question. Candidates need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the marketing and promotion role of resource material and their own examples. They should aim to identify and discuss those features which are designed to market and promote films.

Question 4

- Question four was completed well this year. There were fewer instances of it remaining unfinished.
- Candidates should be reminded of two main things in regard to question four. Firstly, they should leave sufficient time to complete the question and secondly, they need to recognise that a major part of the question is being creative – they are required to come up with their own ideas!

(a) This was completed by virtually all candidates and in most cases reflected good knowledge of Superhero movies. There were a few instances where the candidates had misunderstood the question, particularly the notion of a season. Candidates should be reminded to read and think carefully before answering any question, particularly questions at the end of an examination paper.

(b) The answers here tended to reflect how much thought had gone into the answering of part (a). Candidates need to recognise that a six mark question will require them to respond in reasonable depth and thus shape the style of their response appropriately. The best answers offered a range of explanations for both the individual films and how they would work together as a season. Where choices had been less considered, it led to a basic approach of repeatedly offering the same reason for each choice. Again where centres had explored contrasting texts it seemed that the candidates were better able to construct knowledgeable arguments for a film’s individual and joint inclusion.
(c) The responses for this part tended to cluster around the middle of the mark range. The main issues preventing access to the higher marks fell into three areas: some lack of poster codes and conventions, some unclear knowledge of Superhero codes and conventions and annotation that labelled rather than explained. Candidates should be encouraged to use colour here as it can be a very useful reflection of Superhero movie codes and conventions.

(d) This year very few candidates seemed to miss out the final part of the last question. Most made good attempts with some interesting ideas. The main flaws in answers were not considering the cost practicalities of a free gift (e.g. giving away DVD’s that cost as much if not more than the tickets) and not firmly explaining the promotional functions of their ideas.

Paper 2: Exploring Film outside Hollywood (Julie Patrick, principal)

Introduction
There seemed to be a wider variety of texts studied this year and a number of centres have taken on more challenging films, with excellent work carried out on Ratcatcher and Amelie. The Wave and The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas were popular and Tsotsi continues to be very successfully explored. Bend it Like Beckham is still popular (with some larger centres in particular). The film is however more challenging than its apparent accessibility suggests. Certainly, candidates who work on some of the other options (such as those just noted) appear to perform better in the examination.

Candidates are now generally prepared well to analyse key sequences, applying their knowledge of film language and their understanding of the film’s themes and issues to these sequences. Sometimes candidates veered away from close analysis but generally a good attempt was made at all questions.

Question 1
Unfortunately a number of candidates ignored the fact that they were asked to discuss the opening of the film rather than a key sequence of their choice and some missed that the discussion of film language was linked to the theme they had mentioned for question 1 (a). If candidates responded to the question without reference to the opening sequence, this was reflected in the marks awarded. However, there was some very good analysis of one or two aspects of film language and generally candidates are getting to grips with this kind of detailed analysis and how meaning is created by particular uses of film language.

Question 2
Generally I was pleased with candidates’ attempts at question 2 as most had attempted all sections and had therefore given themselves every opportunity to gain marks. Some candidates could not identify two characters by name but went on to discuss the relationship between the two characters discussed quite well, thus showing their knowledge of the film. Many candidates could discuss costume and body language quite well for part (c) and had really tried to describe in detail how gesture and facial expressions revealed aspects of the relationship to audiences. Some candidates found it difficult to focus on a key sequence here and preferred to talk about costume and body language in a more generalised way, which was less successful.

Question 2 (d) had been attempted quite well on the whole and though some answers lacked focus or repeated points, candidates generally showed good knowledge of the texts they were studying, discussing various themes in relation to their chosen characters. Most candidates had clearly read all the questions before answering them to ensure they could answer questions (b), (c) and (d). This is excellent examination practice.
**Question 3**
Candidates are generally confident with this kind of question and many have really got to the grips with the style of writing and depth of knowledge expected in this section. Candidates could sometimes engage more with the film rather than writing what they think the examiner wants to hear! The best answers showed genuine discussion of the film with the candidates' own views and ideas about it at the heart of their writing.

**Controlled Assessment (Gerard Garvey, principal)**

**Introduction**
This was another highly successful year; the availability of exemplar material through the WJEC secure site has helped centres to develop a good understanding of what is required with each component and there were fewer misinterpretations of the specification than in previous years.

**Film exploration**
The film exploration is often the strongest component of the portfolio and most centres have a clear understanding of what is expected and support candidates effectively in producing work of a standard which often exceeds what might be expected at GCSE. In a small number of cases, centres appear to work with a ‘set film’ with a ‘set’ task, which the whole cohort research and analyse with strong teacher support. The specification asks for candidates to work on a film of their own choice and requires the film exploration and its outcome to be individual (see pages 11, 14 and 15). Apart from leading to a similarity between responses, this approach can also limit candidates who appear most engaged when exploring films which they like and are motivated to analyse.

There are still problems with some candidates’ notion of ‘research’ - which too many interpret as ‘cut-and-paste’. Whilst I would encourage candidates to use Wikipedia as a starting point, much can be gained from broadening the number of sources used. In the very best examples, candidates were able to use primary sources. One of these included an interview with the manager of a local cinema who had provided information on how far in advance the film was ‘booked-in’ and how he had used the marketing materials supplied for that film. Over the past couple of years, it has been very clear to the moderation team where candidates have been taught about the film industry and the different stages of film production, distribution and exhibition. This equips candidates with the terminology needed effectively to articulate their knowledge and understanding. This can be done whilst teaching the industry section for paper 1 and even though films from the superhero genre are not permitted for the film research component, there is no reason why teachers cannot model the approach using a superhero film.

It would appear that the most successful candidates choose films made in the last few years as material on the film is more readily available. It is certainly the case that films made since the advent of the internet leave a greater footprint and quality information is more readily available. That said, a number of candidates successfully worked on films made before the advent of the internet and there is certainly no recommended time frame. The whole purpose of the film exploration component is to get the candidates to explore a film which they are already familiar with – if that happens to be something from the 1940’s, then they should be encouraged.
As I have stated in previous years, the level of engagement with the findings is what distinguishes level 3 and 4 candidates from those of more modest ability. A key question that candidates should have in their mind as they select each fact that they include is ‘what does this tell us about the film or the film industry?’ – level 1 and 2 candidates may be able to find that the film performed particularly well in Canada, but level 3 and 4 candidates would be able to highlight that this may be because the main star had previously been a very popular character in a Canadian sitcom.

The ‘micro analyses’ presented very few problems and the overall standard of work is very good. The choice of film can have a real effect on the success of this component and it remains the case that those choosing ‘richer’ texts have much more to discuss. I would always recommend a discussion with candidates before they embark upon this component where the use of their chosen aspects of film language is discussed. This can be used to ensure that they will have enough to say about their chosen aspects in their chosen sequence. Helping candidates to choose another sequence or simply suggesting they focus on different aspects of film language can often yield much better results.

There are still a small number of centres who allow candidates to analyse more than two aspects of film language. This can limit the level of detail required as candidates feel the need to cover all aspects, rather than a sustained focus which shows the depth of their understanding of two. In the very best examples, candidates select very short sequences (sometimes under a minute) and conduct a thorough analysis of how creative decisions affect the spectators’ understanding. Terminology is often used with confidence and teachers are clearly making use of the abundance of resources on film language that are available to equip candidates with terms to articulate their ideas in an efficient way. The inclusion of well-selected images is encouraged and modern technology has made this easier than ever before.

**Production: Pitch**
This year’s submission suggests that centres are becoming more comfortable with the pitch and the number of centres choosing to present this as a PowerPoint has dropped considerably, which could be in response to the exemplar material circulated over the past few years. This is a challenging task because candidates need to include a number of things in a relatively limited number of words. Working in an established genre often helps, and it is clear where centres have used genre study as preparation for the task.

**Preproduction: screenplay**
The screenplay is quickly becoming one of the most popular options, which may be attributed to the fact that candidates can create quite convincing work with limited resources. Most centres opt to follow the industry format for this task which is good practice as there is a clear emphasis on visual storytelling. Candidates must remember that this task is an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of film language and this is best done through effective scene description. Those candidates who produce work which is dominated by dialogue struggle to do this as successfully.
Preproduction: storyboard
Storyboards remain popular too, and like the screenplay option, the emphasis here is on film language. As I have commented in previous years, whilst this is not a drawing task (and the ability to draw is not assessed), this option does rely upon a degree of artistic talent. Candidates who are less artistic struggle to create a convincing sense of mise-en-scène, which is a key part of the assessment. If drawing is more schematic, then the description of visual detail, covering mise-en-scène should amplify the drawing appropriately. The quality of annotation has improved, and messages in moderators’ reports about the need to refer to all aspects of film language seems to have registered. Whilst digital storyboards have been encouraged in the past, screenshots from already filmed productions do not demonstrate planning and visualisation and should therefore not be used. The storyboard should be an original piece of work. I would recommend that candidates electing to produce a filmed production should either consider hand-drawn storyboards or another option.

Pre-production: magazine and marketing campaign
The marketing campaign and magazine cover have become less popular options which may be due to the requirement for the more advanced resources needed to produce these digitally. Unlike the screenplay and storyboard, the emphasis with these options is much more on industry and the best work is produced where there has clearly been some good learning in relation to this aspect of the course. A small number of centres still interpret the marketing campaign as a merchandising exercise and candidates simply submit a number of template items (t-shirts, mugs etc) which have the film’s logo on. The best examples seen are characterised by detailed annotation which makes clear reference to learning in relation to film industries. This also gives candidates the opportunity to discuss why the items they have designed are appropriate.

Final production: film sequence
The quality of filmed productions continues to impress the moderation team and this year’s submission was no disappointment. The real area of development seems to have been in relation to editing and sound – areas which have historically been less well handled. The best work continues to come from centres where the video productions emerge from teaching on a specific genre (i.e. horror) as this gives candidates a stylistic framework to work within. That said, there were war films, thrillers, crime and of course zombie films (which have been a popular choice since the specification was introduced). A number of candidates continue to outline their role as ‘director’ which does not always make their contribution to the production clear. As I have recommended in previous years the major roles should be camera, sound and editing. The individual candidate’s role should be clearly identified on the FL1a form and the marks should be for their individual contribution.

Final production: poster campaign
The popularity of posters continues, but the gap between the best and least successful examples seems to be large. At level 4, work is often indistinguishable from industry output and the attention to detail is excellent. If done well, candidates can show artistic ability and confidently convey ideas about genre, narrative and industry. The worst examples lack creativity and often highlight that limited study of posters has been undertaken. It is also worth noting that candidates who do not have access to digital imaging software struggle to convey their ideas effectively and may be better advised to consider one of the other options.
**Final production: magazine feature**

Magazine features remain popular and some excellent work is seen which effectively replicates professional output. It is important that candidates do not lose sight of the purpose of the task which is to demonstrate their learning on the course. The best examples are stylistically successful but also use the task as a platform to demonstrate their knowledge of the film industry and the way that new films and new talent is promoted to audiences. The press pack also places the emphasis on knowledge of industry issues and the number of candidates electing to produce these is growing.

**Evaluative analysis**

For the evaluative analysis many candidates still evaluate the whole process, approaching the task as a piece of self-reflection which is not the purpose of this task. Only the final production should be analysed and the discussion should centre around how successfully the finished production communicated with the audience. The task most closely related to this is the micro analysis, and the best centres took a similar approach with candidates identifying significant features from their production and discussing how an audience might respond to these features.

Adjusting this to fit the requirements of the task is not that difficult, if candidates feel compelled to write what they did, they should follow up each point they make with a reference to how an audience might respond to this.

Overall, this was the largest controlled assessment to date and the moderation team were highly impressed by what can be achieved. I do have to comment that the number of administrative errors was unusually high this year and recommend that any new centres do read the specification carefully where the process of preparing work for moderation is carefully outlined.

**Reminders to centres**

- The film industry research and analysis of micro elements must be on the same film
- Centres should avoid teaching, or setting, the same extract for a whole class.
- The pitch, pre-production and production must all be linked. The pre-production and production are thus based on the ideas for the ‘pitched’ film. The exception to this is the filmed sequence where only one group member’s idea should be developed into a sequence. In these instances, it is expected that all group members will have pitched different ideas (not three pitches of the same film).
- ‘Original images’ means original images! I.e. these are photographs taken specifically for the production. A range of appropriate locations should be encouraged if candidates are effectively to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding developed on the course.