GCSE Film Studies
Guidance & Frequently Asked Questions

1 Exploring genre (Paper 1)

- Encourage students to be as focused as possible in their examination answers – particularly in answers with extended writing.
- Encourage students to use examples and film language to underline and develop points they want to make.
- Examiners think it is valuable for students to be aware of what genre is - its importance to industry and audience, how it tends to reflect social and cultural issues of society at the time, how it can change - and have a language to discuss it. Key language: conventions or ‘iconography’ of genre – covering typical mise-en-scène (sets/settings, costume), typical characters, typical narratives and themes/issues, typical music, ‘icons’ of genre. These aspects of genre could provide a short introduction to the study of the set genre.
- Industry and audience issues (see specification) should be studied alongside the set genre (can be reinforced through controlled assessment & vice versa).
- Questions 3 & 4 (see specification for approach to these question areas) assess knowledge of the industry and audiences.

2 Exploring Film outside Hollywood (Paper 2)

- The emphasis on studying film outside Hollywood is on narrative (characters, character roles, how film narrative is constructed) and representation (fundamentally of people and places).
- You will also need to discuss contexts relevant to films
- Issues the film raises/the themes of the films
- Much the most difficult area for students is representation. Teachers might want to think how they approach the teaching of this. The key point is that the images we see in films (or any media for that matter) are not simply pictures of people and places but images plus points of view about those people and places. A representation in other words conveys an attitude or judgment about a character because of the way those people are portrayed in a film – the kind of shot selected, the costume a character wears, the pose the character is filmed in, the context of the shots.
- Examiners have found that some of the more superficially ‘accessible’ films have proved more challenging for students – perhaps because they think the films are ‘easier’. Conversely, some of the more challenging films have produced excellent work by students. Teachers might therefore like to think carefully about their choice of film for this section.
- Question 3, the creative task, standardly invites students to write letters, reports, magazine articles, online reviews etc in order to convey their responses to their chosen film. Candidates are not, however, assessed on their ability to write in a particular style. The style is intended to allow candidates to relay information and points of view in formats they will be familiar with rather than as a discursive essay.
3 Controlled Assessment

General

1: Word limits for all elements of Controlled Assessment
There is a 10% tolerance on all word limits set.

At present centres are being asked to stress the importance of adhering to word limits (encouraging focus on important elements, selecting key information). Moderators will be asked to comment in reports on any cases where word limits are significantly exceeded. Where centres overtly disregard word limits, moderators may need to consider adjusting a centre’s marks.

2: Controlled Assessment
The controlled assessment does not need to entail completing work in class under controlled conditions.

The controls required for GCSE Film Studies have been put in place to ensure the authenticity of the work completed by candidates.

Film Exploration (industry research and micro analysis of a short extract)

3: Choosing an appropriate film
- The film chosen for industry research and micro analysis must not be a superhero film.
- The same film must form the basis of the industry research and the micro analysis.
- It is recommended that candidates choose a film for which industry information is available. Older films may prove more difficult to uncover distribution and exhibition details in particular.
- Equally films should be chosen which will lend themselves to suitable micro exploration. It is recognised that it may not always be possible for candidates to choose a film themselves. Should this be the case, films can be suggested by the teacher but centres should avoid more than one candidate working on the same extract as this is individual work.

4: Exploring the significance of items included in industry research
Candidates should be encouraged to consider the significance of any item they consider including in their industry research. Personal engagement is encouraged (as a way of exploring the significance of items) but is not explicitly part of marking scheme.

5: Industry research form
Although there is still an (expandable) form available for use on the website, it is not compulsory to use this. The key requirement is for the three areas of production, distribution and exhibition to be researched. Subheadings can achieve that.

6: References & word count
Including a list of references, including internet sites, is good practice. Equally, including the word count is good practice.
7: Title
The task specified in the controlled conditions must be adhered to but individual titles may be used to supplement this. Titles should identify the two micro features being explored and make reference to the timing of the extract chosen.

8: Mise-en-scène as one micro feature
Mise-en-scène must count as one micro feature but emphasis may be given to specific aspects of mise-en-scène within the exploration. Candidates are encouraged to be selective. It would, however, be expected that there would be some reference to the majority of the aspects of mise-en-scène within exploration.

Please note that at GCSE, performance is not identified as a requirement for the study of mise-en-scène and, unlike AS/A Level, it is not identified as a separate micro feature. Equally, please note that lighting is considered as part of mise-en-scène at GCSE. At AS/A Level, it is integrated with cinematography.

9: Introduction
A brief introduction may be provided to provide the context of the chosen extract (e.g., where in the film's narrative the extract is taken from and the genre of the film, which may affect meanings and responses created). This need not be detailed.

10: Length of extract for micro analysis
Extracts may be up to five minutes but the recommendation is for approximately 2 minutes, particularly if the extract is sufficiently 'rich' in micro features. There is no lower limit and a very short extract may be justified where there is a lot to say about micro features.

11: Approach to micro analysis
Even within a shorter extract, candidates need to be selective. An approach might be to ask candidates to start by identifying three 'stand-out' moments where their selected micro features appear and explore them in depth. Exploring the way micro features interact is encouraged. For this reason, it is not recommended that candidates divide their essay into two sections, the first section on one micro feature and the second section on the other micro feature. It is recognised that there may not be equal emphasis on both micro features.

12: Exploring in detail
The aim of the film exploration is to encourage exploration in depth. Candidates should always be encouraged to ask why – to consider the significance of micro features. It may help candidates to explore meanings and responses within the context of the overall purpose of a scene (e.g., to establish a character).

Production (pitch, preproduction, final production and evaluative analysis)

13: Production - choice
If a genre of film is chosen, the production must not be based on Superhero films (as with the film exploration).

14: Pitch logline
- Candidates need to recognise that the ‘logline’ is not a tagline.
- Powerpoints may be used for the pitch but it is recommended that they are finally submitted in a more compact form – A4 using sub-headings?
- Pitches are likely to be for mainstream Hollywood films. However, a pitch for smaller budget, more specialist films is also acceptable.
- Skillset’s website has examples of how to develop a film idea through a pitch. Orange ads obviously provide humorous examples, as does the opening of Robert Altman’s The Player.
15: **Screenplay**
Candidates should use the conventional screenplay format (centre text, slug lines). Candidates can be encouraged to develop a ‘visual exposition’ but they should be aware of the difference between a screenplay and a shooting script (which is not required).

16: **Storyboard**
As practice varies so much, a template is not provided – although teachers may want to use one. All the main elements of a storyboard should however be included: shot number, duration of shot (or timeline), indicative image of shot, visual description (including indication of settings/locations and key camerawork), sound description without dialogue, key transitions.

17: **Final Production**
All work apart from the final production must be individual. Group work is only permitted for the filming option of the final production. If that option is chosen, the pitch of one candidate can be used as the basis for it but each member of the group should complete their evaluative analysis based on their role as set out in the specification.

18: **Roles for Final Production (short film sequence)**
Significant roles in group productions are likely to be camerawork, editing and (where there is sound design or even recording sound independently where equipment is available) sound. Camera and editing roles can be shared but teachers need to be assured that there is a clearly identifiable section for which each individual is responsible. It is recommended that smaller groups are used where possible. If groups of four are unavoidable, then two completely different edits of the same filming could be considered but centres should be aware that this is not always an easy option.

19: **Press packs**
Examples of press packs to download can be found on Newline cinema’s website. ‘Press packs’ are generally now provided in electronic form. There is, however, no requirement for candidates to produce them in electronic form.

20: **Playing the ‘role’ of a star**
It is perfectly acceptable for candidates to play the role of a well-known star in any production. However, devising productions based on films such as teen dramas, teen horrors etc can help with plausibility of production for candidates.

21: **Websites**
Although working websites are encouraged, for moderation please submit the relevant pages in print form.

22: **Format for Audio-visual work**
Despite the range of formats, it is still requested that audio-visual production work is submitted on a DVD which is playable on a standard DVD player. Submitting films on memory sticks (which can easily be mislaid) or in Quick time format is to be avoided.

23: **Magazines**
Candidates must produce a new magazine. However, research into magazine conventions and a range of film magazines should be undertaken. Candidates should give some thought about the most appropriate style of magazine for their film.

24: **Evaluative Analysis**
Please note that the evaluative analysis is based only on the **final** production. Candidates should explain how they: used technical and creative skills, used the format and codes/conventions, demonstrated an understanding of film language, organisations and audiences in their final production. It is recommended that candidates select key moments from their production to evaluative the above in a selective way.
Administration

25: Identifying candidate work
Please ensure that all candidate work is clearly identified: centre name & number, subject level, candidate name(s) and number(s) and (for films) the role each candidate took.

26: Time taken for production work
See controlled conditions in Specification.

27: Completing the FL1 & FL2 forms
The FL1 form – particularly the elements to be completed by the candidate – is intended to confirm tasks completed and help candidates be fully aware of their aims and identify their contribution to a group task (where relevant). It is recommended that the FL1 is given to candidates during the controlled assessment and used as a progress check on work. Teachers need only make brief comments to justify marks – a summary of comments on the annotated work itself. The FL2 must be completed by teachers as a (further) guarantee of the authenticity of the candidate’s work.