



# GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Subject: FILM STUDIES

Level: GCE A Level

Summer 2024

## Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>1</sup>

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

## Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	<a href="https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.  For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here:  <a href="#">Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)</a>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/">https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   Eduqas</a>

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## Executive Summary

### Component 1

#### Overall Performance

The paper proved to be accessible and enabled all candidates to show their knowledge and understanding of the subject content whilst applying it in meaningful ways to the films studied. Many candidates displayed an impressive depth of knowledge and understanding of films studied and relevant contextual issues, indicative of effective teaching. Responses that kept a focus on the question and applied conceptual, contextual and textual knowledge to discuss the films tended to show better understanding and more sophisticated critical awareness of the films.

#### Key issues and recommendations

Weaknesses were noted in the application of Spectatorship and Auteur approaches, and in comparing films. Candidates should use detailed examples and subject-specific terminology to access higher bands. Centres are encouraged to remind candidates to answer the question set, rather than pre-prepared answers. Avoid borrowing Media Studies theories. Centres are reminded that theory is not required and if used, should be a tool of analysis and linked to filmic examples.

### Component 2

#### Overall Performance

Overall, there was a notable improvement this year of candidates who responded to the question set, rather than a pre-prepared response. Candidates in higher bands offered considered responses, demonstrating an understanding of the complexities of the films studied. In Section A, candidates generally displayed a strong understanding of stereotypical representations, specific film contexts, aesthetic choices and meanings. In Sections B, C and D, candidates were able to respond to the demands of the questions in the limited time frame. Responses for Experimental Film were particularly good, as candidates demonstrated enthusiasm for the challenging films in this section.

#### Key issues and recommendations

Some candidates offered generalised responses for Section A, with no detailed filmic analysis. The application of a filmmaker's theory in Documentary caused issues, as many candidates did not spend enough time relating this to the film they had studied. For Q3.1, some candidates did not address the 'create meaning' aspect of the question.

### Component 3

#### Overall Performance

Many candidates created impressive films and screenplays, with some excellent digitally photographed storyboards in the higher bands. Overall, candidates are commended for the creative risks taken and their strong ownership of their work. The standards of excellence achieved in film production were impressive, with many recommendations to enter the Moving Image Awards. Evaluative analyses were strong, especially when candidates closely analysed short films as inspiration.

#### Key issues and recommendations

Issues included inconsistent brief identification and inappropriate genre selection. Some films failed to meet the minimum length or relied too heavily on music. Many storyboards lacked sufficient detail and there are still instances of centres submitting drawn storyboards.

A reminder that storyboards must be digitally photographed. Some analyses lacked meaningful connections to the short films studied. Centres are reminded of the importance of using the new briefs, avoiding over-assessment, and ensuring accurate annotations and word counts.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Component 1: Application of spectatorship and ideological critical approaches requires improvement.	Blended learning: <a href="http://eduqas.co.uk">Resource (eduqas.co.uk)</a>	Blended learning starter lessons on applying ideological critical approaches and spectatorship.
Component 2: Section A: Detailed filmic analysis is required.	Blended learning: <a href="#">Eduqas Digital Educational Resources</a>	Blended learning lessons for every film in Section A Global Film with key sequence analysis.
Component 3: Storyboards do not always have required detailed and some are not digitally photographed.	Sample storyboard template and digitally photographed storyboard: <a href="#">storyboard-template.docx (live.com)</a>  <a href="#">STORYBOARD EXEMPLAR</a>	Template for candidates to adapt for their storyboard. Exemplar storyboard to use as an example with candidates.

## FILM STUDIES

### GCE A level

Summer 2024

## COMPONENT 1 – VARIETIES OF FILM AND FILMMAKING

### Overview of the Component

This component assesses candidates' abilities to:

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of elements of film

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of elements of film to:

- analyse and compare films, including through the use of critical approaches
- evaluate the significance of critical approaches

Both assessment objectives are weighted equally by the mark schemes of this component.

AO1 is assessed in all sections and questions of the exam by requiring candidates to show knowledge of the films studied and their relevant contexts.

AO2 is assessed throughout the exam paper by requiring candidates to analyse films through the use of critical approaches. Section A assesses the ability to use the Auteur critical approach in analysing films, Section B assesses the ability to apply the critical approaches of Ideology and Spectatorship and Section C assesses the use of the critical approaches of Narrative and Ideology. The ability to compare films is assessed in Section A and the ability to evaluate the significance of critical approaches is assessed in **either** Section B or C each year.

The responses to this paper continued to reflect the strengths and challenges observed in previous years but improvements were clear in some areas. In terms of AO1, many candidates displayed an impressive depth of knowledge and understanding of the films studied and relevant contextual issues, indicative of effective teaching and good student preparation. However, some candidates did not use detailed examples to support points made or found it difficult to show how contextual issues affected the films studied. In terms of AO2, there was much confident and detailed application of the Ideological and Narrative critical approaches. There were, however, recurring issues related to the application of Spectatorship and Auteur critical approaches. There was some improvement in the ability of candidates to evaluate the Ideological critical approach but this, again was a weakness in many responses. The ability of candidates to compare films in Section A declined slightly again this year, with too many candidates offering very simplistic comparisons or contrasts. There are too few candidates who offer detailed and productive comparisons of their two films, which is disappointing when it is a clear requirement of this section of the examination.

The paper was accessible and enabled all candidates to show their knowledge and understanding of the subject content whilst applying it in meaningful ways to the films studied. Responses that engaged with the question set and where candidates considered carefully what the question was asking them were far more successful than those that simply downloaded a pre-prepared essay or case study. There were instances, in all the sections, of responses that featured lengthy recitals of theoretical definitions, plot descriptions, historical overviews and filmmaker biographies that, whilst showing some knowledge of the subject, did not answer the question.

Responses that focused on the question and applied conceptual, contextual and textual knowledge to discuss the films, tended to show better understanding and more sophisticated critical awareness. There were many candidates who did this well but some practice on answering questions rather than just downloading knowledge would benefit some candidates. It is also important to remember that this is Film Studies and so the focus of responses should always be on the films themselves rather than vague discussions about theoretical or contextual issues.

The majority of responses across the whole paper showed remarkable standards of critical engagement and real passion for film study. However, there are some general areas for improvement:

In Section A, candidates should offer comparative analysis and the meaningful use of historical contextualisation, and their arguments need to be underpinned by more detailed and developed examples from the films studied. These examples would have benefitted from the more precise use of subject-specific terminology where relevant.

In Section B, more candidates needed to show an understanding of the Spectatorship debate and an ability to discuss this in relation to the films they have studied. Too many candidates used inappropriate 'theory' from other academic disciplines that do not allow them to engage with the subject content as published in the specifications. It should be remembered that if theory is used, it should be as a tool of analysis and linked to filmic examples, not used as an end in itself. In Section C, despite some improvements, too few candidates were able to evaluate the ideological critical approach and this is a teaching gap that centres should address.

In Section C, there were clear improvements in candidates being able to engage with character construction and narrative patterning, as well as use any relevant theory more productively which is to be encouraged and embedded further. These areas for improvement are further detailed and expanded below with specific reference to the individual examination questions.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### **Section A**

- 1.1 This was the most popular question in Section A. Most candidates were well prepared to apply the auteur critical approach to their chosen films and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the films, filmmakers and the contexts in which they were working. Candidates demonstrated a robust understanding of auteurism, with some using auteur theories/approaches of Sarris, Bazin, Schatz and Kael to frame their analyses and discuss the question set. Some candidates chose to focus on the idea of the 'director as auteur' whilst others considered the collaborative nature of production or the influence of contexts upon this. Either approach to the question was possible, depending upon the films studied, and most candidates were able to engage well with the question.

Stronger responses effectively applied auteur theories/debates to analyse and compare the films studied, using well-chosen and detailed examples from the films to discuss whether they could be termed 'auteur films' or not. There were many responses that were able to link detailed textual analysis to a clear understanding of auteur signatures and the contexts in which the films were produced.

For instance, candidates examining *Vertigo* and *Blade Runner* often highlighted how each director's distinct style and thematic preoccupations were evident in their films, connecting these auteur elements to specific scenes and techniques whilst also considering the influences of production collaborators such as Hermann and Vangelis and/or the institutional contexts which these filmmakers worked within. Candidates comparing *Casablanca* to *Bonnie and Clyde* were often able to draw upon a very detailed understanding of how Classical and New Hollywood hampered or facilitated auteur individuality. Strong responses also tended to include sophisticated discussions on the evolution of auteur theory, considering contemporary critiques and the ways in which collaboration in filmmaking brought into question assumptions within the auteur debate.

Weaker responses frequently simply listed biographical details, auteur signatures or broad historical contexts without connecting these in any productive detail to the films' textual elements. Some candidates merely described the directors' careers or provided plot summaries without engaging in meaningful analysis or showing an ability to support points with detailed knowledge of the films studied. To enhance these responses, it would be beneficial for candidates to focus on specific examples of directorial influence and how these contribute to the overall meaning and impact of the films. A second common weakness in responses was the lack of meaningful comparison with many candidates just claiming auteurs or films were similar or different and not developing any substantial points. Again, it would benefit candidates to focus on clear comparisons and contrasts that can be drawn between the films studied and linked to the examples from the films.

- 1.2 While this was the less popular question, responses often showcased an impressive grasp of historical and institutional influences on film with many candidates able to discuss the dominant use of the continuity system in Classical cinematography and editing, and how and why this may have changed in the New Hollywood era. There was much productive analysis of how the use of the continuity system in *Casablanca* had evolved into a much more expressive and innovative style in the productions of *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Do the Right Thing*. Some candidates, quite rightly, challenged the notion that these formal elements in the New Hollywood period were 'revolutionary' in the light of the films they have studied. Many candidates who had studied *Vertigo* were able to discuss how this film was much more innovative than some later films, such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The best answers integrated specific contextual influences with detailed analysis of cinematography and editing in the films studied, using precise examples and accurate terminology. For example, candidates discussing *Casablanca* highlighted how the film's cinematography and editing choices were influenced by both the wartime context but also by Classical Hollywood aesthetic and cultural norms and exemplified this by reference to continuity conventions such as the use of match-on-action, shot-reverse-shot and the 180° rule. Similarly, responses analysing *Bonnie and Clyde* or *Apocalypse Now* examined how the film's editing techniques and cinematography mirrored the countercultural sentiments of the 1960s, the influence of the French New Wave and the rapid growth of independent film, thus encouraging the use of discontinuity, jump-cuts, expressionist framing and handheld camera work to create a sense of immediacy and rebellion. Candidates linked these stylistic choices to the film's themes of anti-establishment and countercultural rebellion. They provided detailed examples of how specific scenes were shot and edited to heighten tension, express meaning and emphasise the protagonists' defiance.

Weaker responses tended to provide generic descriptions of historical periods and the birth of New Hollywood without linking these effectively to the films' cinematography and editing, beyond simplistic and generalised statements about the ending of the Hays Code and the Studio System. Such responses tended to also show a very limited understanding of film form and subject-specific terminology. Candidates should be discouraged from using phrases such as 'fast editing', 'plain camerawork' and 'basic shots' which only display a lack of relevant knowledge and understanding and are effectively meaningless phrases but are commonly used in weaker responses. The teaching of formal glossaries and technical precision would really help candidates be much more exact and precise when analysing and comparing films.

## SECTION B

2.1 This question was very popular but with varied success. Those candidates who were familiar with the Spectatorship debate were very confident in discussing the spectator's influence upon the creation of responses compared to the ways in which film might seek to manipulate spectators. However some candidates seemed unaware of this debate and struggled to engage meaningfully with it. There were many possible approaches to this question, but the most popular and successful approach considered how a spectator's beliefs and attitudes might affect emotional allegiance with characters and so aligned with ideological meanings in the films. A less popular but equally successful approach was just to consider how different spectators might emotionally respond to the films studied because of their beliefs and attitudes. It was not necessary to consider ideological meanings as this was a spectatorship question, but it obviously helped some candidates who had prepared detailed ideological readings of their chosen films. Candidates are assessed on what they can do and therefore different approaches to the question are rewarded. Many candidates borrowed theories from Media Studies and Sociology, often with limited success because they failed to engage with film as an art form and interactive experience which are central concerns of the Spectatorship debate. Such responses are often very reductive and superficial, especially those that attempted to justify the 'hypodermic needle model' as a tool of serious film study. Candidates using Hall's preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings sometimes worked well when the focus was on investigating the film and responses to it rather than foregrounding theory. There is still confusion over the ideas of 'active' and 'passive' spectatorship with too many candidates writing about them as fixed modes of spectatorship or, even, as types of people. It is worth revisiting CPD materials on the use of these terms and all terms connected to this critical approach. As ever, if theory is used, it should be used as an analytical tool to investigate films and, here, their reception by spectators, not as an end in itself. Indeed, theoretical terms are not always necessary for a full engagement with the Spectatorship debate as a critical approach to film study.

Strong candidates engaged well with the concepts of spectatorship, discussing personal positioning and its impact on film interpretation. Strong analyses linked spectatorship theories /debates to specific filmic examples, enhancing the overall quality of the responses. These responses provided nuanced reflections on spectatorship and ideological or emotional positioning, often exploring how these films engaged with or provoked a range of possible readings and spectator responses. There was much good reference in stronger responses to the viewing context, for example in terms of the historical or cultural contexts in which spectatorship occurs and how these can influence responses.

There were some excellent responses using *Captain Fantastic* that considered how responses to this film might differ in spectators from communities with different beliefs about parenting or with different attitudes to the American Dream. Similarly, there were excellent responses that considered how some spectators might see *La La Land* and *Captain Fantastic* as cultural appropriation and the 'white-washing' of American cultural history. Such responses always located these debates within detailed analytical studies of specific moments in the films studied.

Weaker responses were overly formulaic and simplistic, with candidates listing theorists without meaningful application to the films. Some candidates merely mentioned terms like "male gaze" or "preferred reading" without linking these concepts to specific scenes or the dynamics of how meanings are created with and by the spectator. This indicated a gap in teaching the analytical application of critical theories and the Spectatorship debate, highlighting the need for more focus on how to integrate spectatorship approaches / debates into film analysis.

- 2.2 Fewer candidates attempted this question, which asked them to consider the role of sound in constructing ideological meanings in their chosen films. Perhaps candidates felt unprepared to focus on sound which highlights a need to ensure all candidates are confident in discussing all elements of film in their film studies. Those who did answer this question often produced high-quality responses by engaging deeply with ideological meanings and linking this well to specific filmic examples of how sound is used to trigger and reinforce these meanings.

Stronger candidates tended to explore a range of aspects of sound from music to sound effects and dialogue, and explored how these were integrated with other filmic elements such as editing or cinematography to create meaning. Better candidates could explore these aspects of sound more deeply and consider how tone, volume, foley and sound filters in soundtracks or accent, dialect and intonation in dialogue could help convey precise meanings. *Winter's Bone*, again, proved to be well used in terms of exploring the use of foley, multitracking and dialect in meaning creation. There were also excellent responses considering the use of silence and musical styles in *La La Land*, *Frances Ha!* and *Boyhood*, and the use of vocabulary and intonation in *Selma*, *Beasts of The Southern Wild* and *Carol*.

Again, weaker responses tended to list a range of theories without demonstrating any depth of understanding of them in terms of ideology or the creation of meaning. There was also a tendency to focus on music over other elements of sound in films, often with very basic references to genres and musical styles. Some candidates used the question to focus on other filmic elements such as cinematography or narrative in relation to ideological messages and this often led to a lack of focus on the actual question, although a few very strong candidates did manage to navigate this approach with nuance and sophistication.

## SECTION C

- 3.1 This was the most popular of the two questions in this section. The question was assessing the candidate's ability to evaluate the ideological critical approach to film study by asking them to focus on its application to character construction. Most candidates decided to focus on their chosen film's central protagonists but there were some interesting responses using more minor characters that allowed candidates to provide equally successful answers to the question.

Some candidates chose to consider the ideological critical approach very broadly as the study of how representations created ideas, messages and values in films whilst other candidates considered a more specific ideological perspective, such as a 'Feminist' or 'Marxist' reading, of their chosen films. Either approach was acceptable as long as the candidate evaluated the ideological analysis of films as well as applying it. It was the evaluation of ideological analysis of films that was lacking in weaker responses and points, again, to a gap in teaching. This is a continuing issue in Component One and it is recommended that previous Examiner's Reports, Exam guidance and CPD materials on this are revisited by centres.

The best answers identified in detail how the ideological critical approach was useful in studying how and why characters were constructed in their chosen films. This was often done by considering what ideological analysis had revealed about characters compared to other ways of experiencing and studying the films, particularly the narrative critical approach which is also required study in this section. For example, there were some excellent responses that argued that without ideological analysis Renton in *Trainspotting* is simply an immoral 'slacker' character from a 'Coming of Age' narrative, but that ideological analysis reveals him to be a product of socio-political forces and elevates the film into a searing indictment of Britain in the 1980s. Other excellent responses pointed out that ideological analysis can sometimes reduce the emotional and dramatic power of character identification, reducing charismatic and fascinating characters like Lol in *This Is England* to merely an ideological representation of a 'strong woman'. Better responses tended to have clear and detailed reference to the films with a productive application of film terminology. Character actions, appearances, motivations, and relationships were explored in the light of ideological study. Even better were answers that were able to make valid points about characters' backstories and future projections which are only hinted at in the plot, for example Combo and Shaun in *This is England* or Eva and Kevin in *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, but can be illuminated by ideological analysis. There was some really sophisticated and nuanced understanding of how aspects such as character arcs and spectator alignment/allegiances in *Sweet Sixteen*, *Fish Tank* and *Under the Skin* could be better understood by application of the ideological critical approach.

Weaker responses tended to demonstrate basic ability to discuss characterisation in film narratives, with very generalised ideological analysis, and making only superficial reference to the films. More commonly, these responses did not evaluate the ideological critical approach or just stated briefly that it was useful. There is still uncertainty in some centres about the application and evaluation of the ideological critical approach and it is recommended that those centres look carefully at previous Exam reports and CPD materials to better prepare candidates in the future.

3.2 This was a less popular question but there were many different approaches to discussing narrative structures, from responses that discussed plot patterning or the use of structural binary oppositions to discussions of the use of aesthetic patterning and motifs. A variety of approaches were possible, depending upon the films studied if there was an engagement with narrative structures used. The evaluation of the ideological critical approach as a means of understanding these narrative structures was key with this question and, again, aside from some improvement this challenged many candidates who were not prepared for this question despite it being a requirement in all Component One exams. This is a continuing issue in Component One and it is recommended that previous Examiner's Reports, Exam guidance and CPD materials on this are revisited by centres preparing for next year.

There were very good responses that detailed how binary oppositions, such as the introduction of opposing characters or sets of ideas in films, created conflict and resolutions which could be better understood by ideological analysis rather than other critical approaches. In other very good responses, candidates could detail how ideological analysis could clearly show how and why plots were structured in the way they were in their chosen films. Some excellent responses pointed to wider contextual and auteur issues that made ideological analysis essential for understanding films, such as *Fish Tank* and *Sweet Sixteen*, with candidates arguing that these films have been made by filmmakers with clear ideological agendas whilst other films were, perhaps, made for other reasons. Candidates addressing this section showed improved engagement with narrative construction in general and it was good to see less reliance on simply listing the usual narrative theorists (Todorov/Levi Strauss) or the mechanistic application of them to the films but instead using narrative theories and terminology to productively analyse the films.

Weaker candidates struggled with the concept of 'narrative structures', evaluating the ideological critical approach and in referring in detail to specific examples from the films studied, whilst also showing an understanding of the whole text and any contextual issues which pointed to key gaps in teaching.

## **FILM STUDIES**

### **GCE A level**

#### **Summer 2024**

### **COMPONENT 2 – GLOBAL FILMMAKING PERSPECTIVES**

#### **Overview of the Component**

Overall, candidates exhibited confidence in their approach to the exam. It is encouraging to note that many responses demonstrated not only a solid grasp of the material but also a genuine engagement with film studies. Most answers reflected a strong understanding of the selected films, effectively applying relevant concepts and debates. There was an improvement in structuring an answer as it was evident that centres had reminded candidates not to provide descriptions of the films' narratives if this was not needed for the set question.

Candidates successfully balanced the demands of the paper, with very few instances of rubric violations. This indicates a well-prepared cohort that is both knowledgeable and capable of critical thinking within the subject area.

The contextual elements of the films studied were evidently well-taught, as reflected in the candidates' confident discussions. Many candidates demonstrated a thorough understanding of the historical periods in which the films were made, showcasing their knowledge of the industrial frameworks and broader socio-economic factors of those times. This indicates a strong grasp of the subject matter and an ability to critically engage with the context surrounding the films. The depth of their insights into these aspects not only highlights effective teaching but also shows the candidates' capacity to connect film content with its historical and industrial background. Overall, the candidates' responses were insightful and well-informed, reflecting a comprehensive understanding of the films' contexts.

An area that could be improved is in the teaching of elements of film, with centres focusing on key topics such as cinematography, sound, mise-en-scène, and aesthetics. Some candidates exhibited a lack of specialist vocabulary or precision necessary for fully analysing specific sequences or exploring the fundamental aspects of film representation. Instead of providing detailed analyses, these candidates often resorted to generalised descriptions of events. Emphasising these integral topics will help candidates develop a deeper understanding and the ability to articulate their insights more precisely. Strengthening their grasp of these concepts will enhance their analytical skills, enabling them to produce more sophisticated and nuanced interpretations of film sequences. This will ensure that candidates can effectively engage with the core elements of film studies and demonstrate a higher level of critical thinking in their responses.

With the introduction of new films to the curriculum for first assessment in Summer 2025, this presents an excellent opportunity for centres to diversify their selection of texts, which can help prevent uniformity in student responses. It is crucial for centres to prepare candidates to engage in debates, challenge interpretations, and thoroughly explore their selected films. This approach encourages critical thinking and prevents candidates from simply regurgitating prepared answers without fully addressing the specific questions set in the exam.

Incorporating different films into the curriculum not only broadens the candidates' exposure to a variety of cinematic styles and contexts but also revitalises the teaching process. Teachers might find it beneficial to challenge themselves by teaching a new film or refreshing the sequences of familiar films.

## **Comments on individual questions/sections**

### **Section A : Global Film**

This section of the paper generated numerous engaged and substantial responses, showcasing the candidates' ability to provide relevant detail in addressing the set questions. The enthusiasm and enjoyment that candidates have for the films they studied were evident, reflecting a genuine sense of discovery and an appreciation for the impact of cinema. Responses indicated a deep engagement with the films, demonstrating that candidates were not only well-prepared but also genuinely interested in the subject matter. This enthusiasm translated into answers that were both thoughtful and comprehensive, highlighting the candidates' ability to analyse and interpret film effectively. The quality of the responses is a testament to the excellent teaching and learning taking place within the centres.

Candidates should be reminded to allocate their time effectively for this exam: approximately 60 minutes for Section A and 30 minutes each for Sections B, C, and D. It is important to adhere to these time limits to ensure balanced responses across all sections. Section A does not require more time than allotted, as it involves no comparison of films. Most candidates were successful in crafting two separate short answers within this section, linked by a shared introduction and conclusion. Emphasising efficient time management and clear structuring of answers can help candidates maximise their performance.

Candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the films' themes, techniques, and contexts, often going beyond surface-level observations to provide insightful analysis. This level of engagement suggests that teachers are successfully fostering a learning environment where candidates feel encouraged to explore and appreciate the nuances of cinema.

The responses also indicated that candidates were able to connect their personal enjoyment of the films with critical analysis, resulting in answers that were both passionate and academically rigorous. This balance of enthusiasm and scholarly engagement is a credit to the teachers' ability to inspire and educate their candidates effectively.

Overall, the high quality of the responses in this section of the paper underscores the importance of passionate and well-rounded teaching in Film Studies. It highlights the successful efforts of teachers in making cinema an impactful and engaging subject for their candidates, leading to thoughtful and detailed exam responses.

- 1.1 Overall, candidates demonstrated a solid understanding of stereotypical representation and effectively addressed the question with pertinent references to the specific contexts of the films studied.

Most candidates showed a commendable ability to select relevant film sequences that illustrate challenges to stereotypical gender representations. They effectively referenced specific contexts within the films, demonstrating an understanding of the films' thematic content and narrative structures. Candidates provided detailed and sophisticated responses to nearly all the films.

Notably, responses to *Ida*, *Mustang*, *Victoria*, and *Taxi Tehran* were thoughtful, exploring the intersection of gender with race and class. Many candidates also examined the differing representations of gender in *City of God* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, discussing the films' limitations in challenging stereotypes.

Some responses effectively explored the theme of gender toxicity within the films, highlighting the lack of choices for individuals living in a society that perpetuates gender toxicity. These answers demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between gender and societal norms. However, there was also a tendency among candidates to categorize characters simplistically as 'good' or 'bad' representations of a particular gender. This approach often led to generalisations and assumptions, detracting from a more sophisticated analysis. To enhance candidates' critical engagement, it is recommended that teachers encourage deeper examination of characters and themes, avoiding reductive labels and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in the films.

The best responses demonstrated a strong understanding of the complexities involved in representing gender across various cultural and social contexts, highlighting both the achievements and shortcomings of the films in addressing and challenging traditional gender roles.

- 1.2 This question was the most popular in the section, with many candidates addressing it effectively. Most candidates demonstrated a solid understanding of how aesthetic choices contribute to meaning making in films. They successfully analysed various aesthetic elements such as cinematography, mise-en-scène, colour palettes, and sound design, effectively explaining how these elements enhance the narrative and emotional impact of the films. Many candidates offered evaluative judgments on the importance of aesthetics, arguing convincingly about their critical role in the overall effectiveness of film storytelling.

Candidates frequently cited specific examples from films to support their arguments, showcasing their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical analysis. These examples helped illustrate the intricate ways in which aesthetic choices shape audience perception and understanding of the film's themes and messages. The most successful answers were those that used descriptive terms like 'gothic,' 'neo-realist,' or 'MTV' to anchor their discussion. By naming the aesthetic, candidates could then describe its key elements, such as cinematography or editing, in more detail. This approach allowed for a more focused and coherent analysis.

Candidates provided sophisticated responses contrasting the differing aesthetics in the first and second halves of *Life is Beautiful*. They also delivered excellent answers on the relationship between aesthetics and meaning in *House of Flying Daggers* and *Taxi Tehran*. For *Taxi Tehran*, candidates effectively identified how the confined space of the taxi and the limited number of camera positions relate to themes of free speech in Iran. They recognized the taxi as a safe space for political discourse, demonstrating how aesthetic choices enhance the film's narrative and thematic impact. These insightful analyses show a strong understanding of how specific aesthetic elements convey deeper meanings within a film's context.

However, some candidates struggled with this aspect, showing no sense of how to identify and name the aesthetic. Consequently, their discussions were limited to a checklist of features rather than a comprehensive analysis. To enhance student performance, it is recommended that teachers emphasise the importance of recognising and naming different aesthetic styles.

This will help candidates anchor their discussions more effectively and provide deeper insights into how aesthetic choices contribute to film storytelling. Encouraging candidates to explore and articulate the specific characteristics of various aesthetics will foster a more nuanced understanding and appreciation of the films they study.

## Section B Documentary

The films used in Section B all worked well for both questions. There was excellent work that demonstrated the candidates' knowledge and understanding of contemporary documentaries. Some candidates are still including substantial information and examples from a filmmaker's theory that was of limited relevance to the set question or the film they have studied.

*Amy* is by far the most popular film and although there is often enthusiastic work produced centres may want to consider looking at the new films for first assessment in 2025 added to the specification. As a final introductory point, it is worth repeating the importance of reading the wording of the question very carefully.

- 2.1 Most candidates were able to select relevant documentary techniques to apply to their selected sequence. There was some excellent work that demonstrated candidates' knowledge of specific documentary techniques rather than generalised references to editing or sound. The question highlighted at least one key sequence, using more than one is fine but the advice would be to make sure that using an additional sequence adds something to the answer, either by exploring a different technique or a different way that it manipulates the spectator.

There were some very effective answers using *Stories We Tell* that responded to Sarah Polley's complex emotional manipulation through her use of techniques. *Amy* was the most popular choice with many candidates successfully identifying documentary techniques. However, many candidates did not fully explain why and how the spectator was manipulated, relying on basic interpretations of meaning such as 'feel sorry for Amy'. There was also a tendency to make over-assertive references that the film was unbiased or revealed the 'truth' which often needed further debate.

Many candidates focussed on documentary modes or filmmakers' theories, neither of which were required for this question, and subsequently distracted from their answer. Candidates need to be reminded to answer the question rather than write a pre-prepared response, so they can focus on textual detail and the question set.

- 2.2 This question required discussion of how the application of a filmmaker's theory provides insight into how the selected film is constructed. Candidates identified the key features of their filmmaker's theory and the key features of their studied documentary but tended not to address the 'new insight' element of the question. One significant issue was the weight of the answer addressing the filmmakers' theory. The best answers were able to work from the filmmaker's theory to the chosen film, exploring the theory and its insight. The weaker answer seemed to mention the theory briefly at the start or at the end and it often appeared to be 'tacked on'. All four filmmaker theories were used, with Moore and Broomfield being the most popular.

As in question 2.1 the importance of answering the set question is vital and this question needed both insight and construction to be addressed explicitly.

The best answers tended to focus on making a few points but in greater detail from AO1 and AO2. Answers which appear almost like a checklist with a lot of brief points rarely achieve the depth needed to reach beyond satisfactory.

### **Section C: Film Movements - Silent Cinema**

This section produced some very engaging answers, with excellent textual and contextual knowledge and understanding. The films used in Section C were all well-taught and many answers demonstrated a clear thoughtful engagement of this 'new' area of cinema. Centres seem to use the realist and expressive techniques as the foundation of this section, and this prepares candidates well for this topic.

Both questions on this year's paper required focus on a sequence and as mentioned previously, candidates who refer to multiple sequences often reduce the quality of their analysis and therefore their answer. Candidates who study *Man with a Movie Camera* and *A Propos de Nice* do not have offer a sequence from both, either would be adequate. Contextual knowledge needs to be used only when contributing to answering the set question.

Most centres had prepared candidates to refer to the Keaton shorts or *Sunrise* for this section and both questions allowed candidates to develop competent answers.

3.1 The most frequently addressed question in this section focused on the debate between realist and expressive techniques in film. Overall, candidates demonstrated effective preparation and engaged directly with the core debate, showing a robust understanding of the topic.

Candidates displayed a strong grasp of André Bazin's arguments on realism, using his theories to underpin their responses. This theoretical foundation provided clarity and depth to the discussion, allowing candidates to articulate well-informed positions on the use of realist and expressive techniques in film.

Although the question specifically mentioned realist or expressive techniques, candidates were not penalized for discussing both. Many responses successfully navigated the distinctions and overlaps between these approaches, offering insightful analyses of how different techniques can shape a film's aesthetic and narrative impact.

A significant issue identified in the responses was the exploration of how these techniques create meaning. While some candidates thoroughly examined the realist or expressive nature of various techniques, they often did so without delving into the specifics of meaning creation. For responses to achieve higher marks, it is crucial to explicitly connect the techniques to their role in generating meaning within a film.

For candidates to excel in future examinations, it is recommended that they:

- Ensure that discussions go beyond identifying techniques to explicitly analyse how these techniques contribute to the film's overall meaning.
- If using theory, this should be linked to practical examples from films, demonstrating a clear connection between theory and practice.

- 3.2 (Top of Form) Many candidates effectively handled this question, utilizing relevant filmic examples reinforced with appropriate contextual knowledge.

The film *Sunrise* offered numerous opportunities for candidates to explore the construction of masculinity and its reflection of contemporary societal norms. Candidates who excelled in this area demonstrated a deep understanding of the film's historical context and its influence on gender representation.

Keaton's shorts provided a platform for debates on the shifting gender roles in 1920s America. Candidates who incorporated these films into their responses highlighted the evolution of gender dynamics during this period, showcasing a nuanced understanding of the cultural backdrop.

The best answers featured well-chosen sequences that directly engaged with themes of experimentalism and representation. These responses stood out for their ability to link specific scenes to broader discussions of gender roles and cinematic techniques.

### **Section D. Experimental Film**

This section yielded many excellent answers, with candidates demonstrating detailed textual knowledge of their chosen films and contexts, alongside an understanding of experimental film concepts.

Regarding the film options, there is no penalty for candidates who discuss only one film from *Daisies* and *Saute ma Ville*. This flexibility allowed candidates to focus their analysis more deeply on a single film, which often resulted in more detailed and nuanced responses.

The debate on how "experimental" *Pulp Fiction* is has improved. However, weaker candidates struggled to identify its experimental elements beyond its narrative structure. Stronger candidates successfully analysed its experimental features, including editing, mise en scène, and sound, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of how these micro elements contribute to the film's narrative.

Centres selecting new films for first assessment in Summer 2025 should ensure that a study of narrative is underpinned by examples of elements of film. Understanding how elements like editing, mise en scène, and sound contribute to the narrative is vital. Detailed studies should encompass shots, scenes, and sequences to provide a holistic understanding of film narrative.

Candidates must read the questions carefully, especially prompts in questions such as 4.1. Attention to detail in question interpretation is crucial for crafting well-focused and relevant responses.

In summary, candidates who manage their time well and provide detailed, contextually aware analyses excel in this section. A balanced approach that combines theoretical understanding with practical examples will continue to enhance candidates' performance in discussing experimental films.

- 4.1 The question statement includes four elements, asserting that the freedom provided by experimental film enables an auteur to create a unique artistic vision. This complexity allowed for varied approaches, but the strongest answers focused clearly on the quote and consistently linked their analysis to its concepts.

Some candidates, particularly when discussing *Pulp Fiction*, wrote extensively about the film's experimental aspects without addressing the quote's other elements.

Although many candidates have detailed knowledge of *Pulp Fiction*, the challenge was to shape their responses to align closely with the specific question.

Outstanding answers were produced across different film options, including *Pulp Fiction*. Candidates who debated Quentin Tarantino's auteur status provided thoughtful responses. Many analysed the diner scene and intertextual references, framing these elements as expressions of artistic vision. These candidates often referenced André Bazin and occasionally Pauline Kael, compiling well-rounded arguments.

Centres selecting *Vivre sa Vie* often produced detailed references to auteur debates and wider production contexts and there were some inspired answers using the film *Daisies*.

Candidates need to be reminded to use detailed scene analysis to support arguments and to shape extensive knowledge into responses that specifically address the set question.

- 4.2 Candidates were generally well-equipped to answer this question. However, some candidates seem to miss or ignore the 'how far' aspect of the question which prevented them from explicitly answering the question.

Candidates who were able to draw on analysis of characters and themes as part of the narrative were more likely to develop a discussion, rather than make unsubstantiated assertive points especially regarding 1990's cinema. There were engaging answers that debated how far postmodern techniques were experimental regarding aesthetics and production context. *Fallen Angels* was a successful film for both questions, candidates used this film confidently and used scene analysis productively.

Please remind candidates that questions about narrative do not need lengthy descriptions of the plot, as examiners know the story of the film.

### Summary of Key points

Emphasise accuracy and precision:

- Promote accuracy and precision in all aspects of film writing. Revisit terminology regularly to ensure candidates write about elements of film with precision rather than in generalised terms.

Encourage rigour and passion:

- Motivate candidates to engage rigorously and passionately with film analysis. Those who focus on detailed examination of their studied films and use film study terminology effectively will apply their learning more successfully.

Detailed sequence analysis:

- When directed to reference a sequence, encourage candidates to provide detailed, precisely observed, and extended analyses of one sequence. Avoid superficial points about multiple sequences.

Answering the set question

- Instruct candidates to answer the specific question set. Relevant and productive application of knowledge is more valuable than placing answers in a broad contextual framework. There has certainly been an improvement in candidates taking the advice of 'getting in early and clearly' of previous reports and avoiding long introductions or extensive background information.

Practice selectivity in analysis:

- Teach candidates to be selective in their analysis. Guide them to focus on different aspects of the same sequence to address various types of questions effectively.
- By implementing these strategies, candidates can enhance their analytical skills and produce more nuanced and insightful film studies essays.

Presentation:

- A small number of candidates' handwriting legibility is an issue, centres might want to photocopy a candidate's mock exam answer and discuss with them how easy it is to read. Examiners do take the time to search through an answer but at times this can be quite difficult.

Film choice considerations:

- Reflect on film choices, especially with new films being introduced for first assessment in Summer 2025 and others removed. This is an opportunity to explore more challenging texts and create a diverse curriculum, enhancing the depth of candidates' analysis.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank and congratulate all the candidates and teachers whose hard work, passion, and commitment to this subject produced such engaging and knowledgeable responses. You should take credit for your contributions and professionalism.

## FILM STUDIES

### GCE A level

### Summer 2024

## COMPONENT 3 – PRODUCTION

### Overview of the Component

Many candidates were able to create successful films and screenplays with some excellent thoughtfully constructed digitally photographed storyboards; however, storyboards were not always a strength and remain the most problematic aspect of the NEA.

Candidates often responded with a high level of engagement to the briefs clearly enjoying the challenges of the creative project.

### Tasks

### Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

#### Briefs

We are now in the second year of the second set of briefs, and it was pleasing to see that most candidates are responding well to these. Where centres used the most up to-date coversheets, it was easy to see the chosen brief, and this mostly directed the candidate to discuss how the production met the brief in their evaluative analysis. There was still a slight issue where the brief was not always clearly identified on the cover sheets and 'film or screenplay' was written, although this was much less of an issue than in previous years. There were some inconsistencies in the brief identified on the cover sheet and the brief explored in the evaluative analysis; candidates must be consistent with this.

Distinct Genre: there was some excellent work here in this very popular option; however, some students selected drama as a genre, this is not appropriate as it is not distinct with clear conventions which can be evaluated in the analysis. It is useful to name the genre on the coversheet which many candidates did.

Narrator: there was some very good work here, with some lovely use of the narrator for characterisation, using fourth wall breaks and voice overs. However, in some cases it was not always clear narratively why a narrator had been used and it seemed artificial. The use of a narrator was more of an issue with screenplays than in the filmed work, as there were often large amounts of voiceovers with no visual information provided.

Non-linear: there was some very good work in response to this brief with some sophisticated handling of flashbacks and circular narratives, using non-linear features to create a real depth of character for the protagonist or narrative intrigue. However, some candidates needed to consider more carefully how flashbacks connected to the overall narrative, often leading to a lack of clarity.

Parallel stories: there were some excellent examples of this less popular brief which successfully showed the two stories becoming inter-twined in some really creative way. However, in some of the work, the two parallels of the narrative were often not parallel and the connection between them was never really explored in any meaningful detail, missing opportunities to make connections through key elements. All candidates should be using the new briefs now, the old briefs are no longer acceptable and there were a few instances of these being used.

Filmmaking: The standards of excellence achieved in film production were impressive, with many recommendations to enter the Moving Image Awards offered.

Moderators saw high levels of expertise across both structural and key elements and candidates were prepared to take creative risks and demonstrated a very strong ownership of their products. There was clear evidence that many candidates had prepared themselves by watching short films beyond the ones required.

However too many films did not achieve the minimum length of four minutes through their narrative; extended fades to black and credits cannot be used to fill the time. There were also too many films which used filler getting up sequences which added little to the narrative or extended sections of walking.

There were still some films which seemed like narrative music videos and were edited to one or an extended use of a few songs, with a total lack of diegetic sound; such films cannot be awarded a mark in the higher bands.

The candidate should remain in control of the camera to maintain sole creative directorial control, there were some instances where the credits revealed that this was not the case.

### **Screenplays and Storyboards**

There were some excellent examples of screenplays which were highly visual and showed a really good grasp of screenwriting and the master scene script layout. However, there are still many screenplays submitted which contain non-visual language: backstory, reasons why characters are doing something or reacting some way, internalisations, feelings and realisations. Candidates need to be taught the distinct ways in which prose writing and screenwriting are different.

The use of dialogue, action and mise-en scene for narrative and characterisation was handled well by many candidates, but there were many instances of the over-use of unconvincing dialogue, often lacking a distinctive voice for each character. It is vital here for candidates to study professional screenplays and screenwriting, as this, unlike film viewing, is something unfamiliar to most candidates. Too many candidates wasted valuable words on camera and editing instructions at the expense of description of characters, action and mise-en-scene; it is clear in the specification, exemplars and CPD materials, that these are not required.

There were some exemplary examples of storyboards which had carefully composed digital photographs where both narrative and characterisation of a section of the screenplay really came to life. However, the storyboards didn't always match the screenplay in terms of the section chosen and too many candidates tried to cover the whole screenplay or take sections from various parts; numbered scenes on the screenplays and the number indicated on the storyboard would help to focus candidates on the need for a continuous sequence.

There was often a lack of variety in shot types, with the overuse of long and medium shots with little sense of the connection between the viewer and the protagonist. Camera movement was also often lacking, either indicated with arrows or described in the written section and sometimes the shot types were identified incorrectly. The detail of mise-en-scene does need to realistically reflect the screenplay as far as possible, there were some excellent examples of deliberately constructed mise-en-scene. Many storyboards had no sound other than dialogue; for the higher bands, candidates need to consider both diegetic and non-diegetic sound.

There is still an issue with over-long shot lengths and dark images, these do limit the marks that can be awarded for key elements.

A number of storyboards didn't have the correct number of frames and were over-assessed, candidates should create their storyboards alongside their screenplay writing to avoid this problem in future years.

### **Evaluative Analysis**

The Evaluative Analyses in the higher levels were excellent, the depth of knowledge and perceptive insight impressive. More noticeable this year in some centres, and commendable, was the close analysis of the short films as the inspiration for candidate work, consequently resulting in a coherent creative and successful outcome. Lengthy introductions which describe the process, or the plot of the film are not required and wasted valuable words which were needed for detailed textual analysis of their own work and links to the short films and other film influences.

The analysis of candidates' own work should be the focus for the entire analysis with influences interwoven, please see exemplars with commentaries on the secure portal and the up-dated Guidance for Teaching on the WJEC website. It is inadvisable to restrict candidates to the same short films as it often led to tenuous links being made between the short films and the candidate's own work.

There is still some misunderstanding about the use of the eighty minutes' worth of short films. Some candidates listed short films watched or studied, but then they were not mentioned in the evaluative analysis in any meaningful way or at all. All eighty minutes (which must be comprised of a minimum of three films) must be linked into the analysis of the candidates' own work, some of these can be considered in more detail and referred to as more influential. It is not required to say how the short films did not influence the productions.

The cinematic influences must be films, and this seemed to be mostly the case this year, with only a few candidates writing about television or computer games.

There is a requirement in the marking criteria for screenwriters to reference professionally produced screenplays, including those for short films. This was something still missed by many centres; screenwriters need to explore the art of screenwriting in their evaluative analyses, reflecting their learning from studying professionally produced screenplays. Where this was done, it tended to be done well, incorporating screenshots from the screenplay studied and the candidate's own work in an effective way.

The use of screenshots is to be encouraged to show the influence alongside the work of the candidate for both types of production and this technique is employed by many centres which is excellent practice.

### **Task marking**

#### **Comments on approaches to internal marking**

Where centres had offered both the filmmaking and the screenplay/storyboard option there was sometimes a tendency to assess the screenplay/storyboard option more generously and this sometimes resulted in a disruption to rank order. One common problem was too many marks allocated for key elements where storyboards were missing or unfinished.

Use of portrait to either photograph or film limits the use of the frame, and this wasn't always considered when awarding a mark for key elements.

There are no marks available for hand drawn or computer-generated storyboard images, these must be digital photographs and the use of Lego or toys as stand ins for human characters is not advised as the opportunity for alignment and visualisation of the screenplay is limited. Animations must be filmed pieces.

There is still a problem with the Assessment Procedures for too short or over-long work on page 45 of the specification not being applied and recorded on the coversheet.

Annotations and word counts were often missing from the screenplays and evaluative analyses, and these do need to be included.

## Supporting you

### Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4301

Email: [film@eduqas.co.uk](mailto:film@eduqas.co.uk)

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WJEC  
245 Western Avenue  
Cardiff CF5 2YX  
Tel No 029 2026 5000  
Fax 029 2057 5994  
E-mail: [exams@wjec.co.uk](mailto:exams@wjec.co.uk)  
website: [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)