

A LEVEL

Moderators' report

FILM STUDIES

H410

For first teaching in 2017

H410/03/04 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by our moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements; identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation and comments on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. This report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost to other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks are detailed on the Moderation Adjustments report, which can be downloaded from Interchange when results are issued. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

General overview

This was the first session of H410/03/04. Teachers and candidates are to be congratulated on the way in which they have delivered and creatively produced work for this NEA component. Most centres have engaged enthusiastically and creatively with the demands of the specification. It is clear that candidates have enjoyed their experience and have, as a result, produced some excellent products. Moderating their work has been a joy and at times it was difficult to remember that we were viewing student work.

Most candidates demonstrated skill in the application of the micro-elements of film form and centres are encouraged to continue to create opportunities for candidates to learn and practice effective use of these. In the best work, candidates engaged in thoughtful critical analyses of the set short films, carefully planned their productions based on the knowledge and understanding gained from their research, used their creativity and technical skills to produce artefacts demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the micro-elements of short film and its distinctive narrative form, and then critically evaluated their productions in relation to their analyses of the set short films.

The majority of centres submitted hard copies of work, including scrapbooks, ring binders, DVDs and memory sticks. Some centres used blogs to present work for moderation which proved to be effective. The use of a blog enables both teachers and moderators to see the development of the candidate's work and makes it easier to justify and agree marks. In accordance with recent data protection laws online materials can be locked and a master password sent to the moderator. Some centres opting for the 03 option also sent physical materials despite opting for the OCR Repository upload route. If entering H410/03 there is no need to send materials to the moderator as it should all be uploaded to the repository.

Administration of the component was generally good, however, a number of centres needed to be contacted after the deadline for submission due to missing cover sheets, missing work or links to final products, clerical errors etc. This may be because this is a new specification and centres may still be getting used to the required processes. In future it is hoped that centres will become more familiar with these processes and moderators will not need to make contact asking for materials.

Centres are to be congratulated on the way that they have taken on board and applied the marking criteria for this component. Many centres have applied the criteria accurately; however, some centres seem to be unclear about the assessment of the screenplay with storyboard option. When assessing this option both the screenplay and storyboard should be assessed for knowledge and understanding of short film and its narrative form and micro-elements. Some centres are marking the screenplay for knowledge and understanding of short film and its narrative form and marking the storyboard for knowledge and understanding of micro-elements.

Teacher commentary on the candidates' cover sheets tended to be really helpful with personalised comments reflecting the marking criteria. It is important that these comments are as clear as possible and refer to the candidate's work in relation to the appropriate mark descriptors.

Preliminary activities

Whilst preliminary activities are not assessed it is a requirement that they be submitted for moderation; this allows both the teacher and moderator to authenticate the candidate's work. The majority of centres are thanked for adopting good practice and encouraging candidates to engage with this essential process. Whilst candidates are not marked down for non-submission of research and planning, they effectively self-penalise as their products do not demonstrate the required knowledge and understanding.

The most effective presentations of research and planning were online showing a clear sense of process. Some centres submitted a few printed pages describing either the planning completed or the final production process. Centres could consider doing more research and planning to inform better end products. Preliminary activities could also include opportunities to acquire and develop the skills required to accomplish the technical aspects of production. Research, especially in relation to the set short films, is a requirement of the specification and essential to informing candidates' knowledge and understanding of what they are producing. Centres should discourage research, for this component, into feature films and their narrative forms as this often distracts from the distinctive short film form. Candidates should also avoid relying on class work focussing on other areas of the specification for their research. There were a number of examples of surrealism based on studies for the Film History component which were unrelated, or loosely related, to the set short films.

Production work

Submissions were divided fairly equally between the short film and screenplay with storyboard options with many centres offering both. Centres seemed to cope well with assessing both options in parallel and comparability was confirmed. Much of the production work submitted demonstrated varying levels of understanding of the short film and its distinctive narrative form, but some showed little or no understanding of short film form informed by the study of the set films. Some contained narratives that were snapshots of larger narratives, some were music video-like, and some excused a lack of narrative as being "surreal".

On the whole this element was assessed accurately but there were some issues especially the tendency to over mark for knowledge and understanding of micro-elements. This was a particular issue at the top end of the mark scheme, especially into Level 5, where marks were given for work that did not show 'sophisticated' or 'highly developed' use of cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing and sound.

Short film

There were some excellent examples of short films produced for this session. It was really heartening to see the level of creativity combined with genuine understanding of the narrative form. The most successful short films were clearly influenced by aspects of the set short films and had a clear three act structure with a narrative resolution. A dominant feature of the set films is that the story arc is complete and the most successful candidates recognised this. Following the three act structure is to be encouraged unless candidates can challenge the form in a sophisticated way and are able to articulate their understanding through their evaluation.

Centres should ensure that candidates follow industry practice by completing risk assessments on shoots. Some films contained scenes of dangerous behaviour and/or use of replica weapons in public places. These should be discouraged by centres as should the suggested use of drugs. Centres should remind candidates that they are producing work for assessment and that they need to work within the constraints presented by this situation.

Screenplays with digital stills

This option requires that candidates produce a "screenplay for a new short film (10 pages, equivalent to 10 minutes of screen time) including a digitally photographed storyboard of a key section of the screenplay, illustrating, through careful construction of mise-en-scène and shot selection, how the screenplay would be realised (20 digitally photographed key frames)". Candidates produced some creative and technically well-constructed work for this option. The most effective screenplays were easy

to read as complete narratives and included direction as well as clearly indicated dialogue. Candidates who used professional software (e.g. Final Draft, Studio Binder, Celtx) for this purpose were able to best present their ideas. However, some candidates tended to be more over-ambitious in this option than in the complete short film, with some including elements of mise-en-scene and action that proved difficult, or in fact impossible, to realise in the digital key frames of the storyboard. Even more so than in the filmed option there were some very violent scenes in the screenplays and centres should discourage this and depictions of the use of drugs, for the reasons outlined above.

Some storyboards were excellent representations of the screenplays and included a range of appropriate directions, including sound and dialogue, as well as the required digital images. The photography for this element should be equivalent to the cinematography of the filmed option, showing an understanding of framing, positioning, mise-en-scene (including lighting), colour, and direction of actors. Storyboards should be formatted appropriately with a maximum of two images per A4 page and images should be presented in landscape format, preferably 4:3 or 16:9, to represent a film still. Some candidates did not seem to understand the importance of aspect ratio and presented their key frames in a variety of ratios, the most common being 3:4 or 2:3 as this is what their phones produce in portrait mode.

Evaluation

On the whole, evaluations were detailed and enabled candidates to reflect on the set short films and how they had influenced the development of their own work. The majority of evaluations referred to the influence of at least one film from the set list, but often more. However, in some cases, the way the set films had influenced the candidate's production seemed superficial or only relating to vague general points. Some candidates referred to one or more of the set films but then spent too long describing the process and problems encountered during production rather than discussing the finished product in relation to the set films. Others spent too long analysing the short films in detail but then did not successfully relate them to their own productions. Some candidates misinterpreted some of the short films and then referred to their own work in relation to the misinterpretation; for example, "Over" as having no resolution or "Fly" as using no sound/dialogue (justifying the use of a musical soundtrack). Stronger evaluations often used stills from the set short films and their own productions to support their written analysis. This is good practice and should be encouraged.

The evaluation element tended to be the most accurately marked with teachers appropriately rewarding candidates when they wrote with precision and sophistication and giving lower marks to work that was descriptive, repetitive and lacking in detail.

Most common causes of centres not passing

Where candidates lacked understanding of the distinctive narrative form of short films they were less successful. Candidates need to complete relevant research into the narrative form of short films, including through the required analysis of the set short films, and apply this knowledge and understanding in their production work.

Common misconceptions

Where candidates had completed the screenplay option, some centres had assessed the screenplay in relation to narrative form and the storyboard in relation to micro-elements only. Both the screenplay and storyboard should be assessed through marking criteria 1 (knowledge and understanding of the short film and its distinctive narrative form) and marking criteria 2 (knowledge and understanding of micro-elements of film form).

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