OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCE

Film Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 H467**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H067**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

F631 Film Text and Context

General Comments:

The quality of candidates' responses, the range of questions attempted and the range of films studied has grown considerably from the first sitting of this unit in summer 2013 and has again developed from summer 2014 – all of which was very pleasing to see. There was very considerable diversity of films studied as the basis for responses to the questions in Section A, demonstrating that centres and candidates are using the flexibility that the specification affords. As was mentioned in last year's report, this again shows a very pleasing engagement with the letter and the spirit of the specification. Texts used for discussion included *V for Vendetta, Children of Men, 2012, Fish Tank, My Brother The No Country For Old Men, The Proposition, Inception, Looper, This Is England, Inglourious Basterds, Slumdog Millionaire, Hot Fuzz, Sherlock Holmes, District 9, Avatar, Moonrise Kingdom, Super 8, Avatar, Skyfall, Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy, Hanna, Submarine, The Bourne Ultimatum, The Great Gatsby, Juno, Stardust, Brighton Rock, Bullet Boy,The Dark Knight, The Woman In Black, Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark, Sin City, Brick, Kick Ass, Avengers Assemble, Kidulthood, Prisoners, The Fighter, The Hunger Games, Zombieland and True Grit.*

This list shows the considerable diversity of genres, and film-making styles which centres have embraced with this unit. This diversity – across the range of the whole cohort and centre level - has enabled candidates to answer the questions in Section A with conviction and knowledge, as will be discussed further below. The diversity of films studied is made clear above, however, as advice / reminder for centres and candidates, due care should be exercised in determining what combinations of films are taken forward as the basis for examination responses. Some of the more effective combinations of films in this session included Inception and Looper; Sin City and Brick; Skyfall and Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy; Fish Tank and My Brother The Devil; Hanna and Submarine and Zombieland and True Grit. Centres and candidates are advised to be clear about the rationale they employ for choosing the films they study.   With the combinations named immediately above, there are clear areas in common between the chosen films – with some it is genre, with others it is character types and others it is setting and social context. This demonstrates that there are a variety of possible approaches to selecting films for study for this topic.

In Section A, there was a preference for Q1 over Q2. Regardless of choice here, when candidates firmly addressed the terms of the question and directly used evidence from the films they had studied, high quality work emerged. This is a point of examination housekeeping which centres and candidates should fully bear in mind as they prepare for future examination sessions. With regard to Section B, the most popular topics were the rise of the blockbuster, format wars and multiplexes and developments in 21st Century cinema and film. However, it is very pleasing to report that both of the other two topics available - Early Cinema and The Impact of World War II on British cinema have both retained the increased popularity that was evident from last year's examination session. The strengths and weaknesses of different approaches taken to the different questions and topics are discussed below.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Question 1

The question addressed two of the seven Frameworks For Analysis described in the specification, namely genre and narrative (through the reference to character types). On the

whole, the question was proficiently handled by candidates – the majority of candidates who responded to this question were able to engage with the generic codes and range of character types which populate their focus films. Many candidates could also situate their knowledge of the character types of their chosen fields into wider contexts connected to genre and narrative particularly. While the majority of responses was able to offer frequent textual evidence, the ability to apply technical knowledge and understanding of the elements of film language to these chosen aspects remains a more variable quality. Centres and candidates are urged to remember that this skill is vital in determining level of success in the examination. Where candidates could discuss a range of technical terms and sustain such an approach across their response, they were appropriately rewarded for this essential element of a film studies response. An area for development with some candidates is the spread of their analysis across the films – seeking to focus on two or three key sequences within each film in the examination, and seeking to move away from descriptive writing and/or focusing on one part of the chosen films.

Question 2

This question also addressed two of the seven Frameworks For Analysis described in the specification, namely authorship and messages and values. With this question, the critical factor in determining the success of candidates' responses rested upon the degree to which candidates engaged through being able to articulate their beliefs of what the messages and values expressed in chosen films were, and furthermore, to be able to analyse authors' contributions to communicating those. The best responses to this question were able to explore a range of potential authors for films and offer points of view on what contribution to the process of making meaning different potential authors can offer. In being able to do so, it would seem that advice offered in the report for last year's session has been adhered to on this issue. As with Q1, there was a more variable quality across the cohort due to the differing ability of candidates to apply technical knowledge and understanding of the elements of film language to these chosen aspects. Where candidates could discuss a range of technical terms and sustain such an approach across their response, they were appropriately rewarded for this essential element of a film studies response.

Section B

Early Cinema (1895–1915)

For those centres whose candidates offered responses to this topic, Q3 proved to be a popular choice. Pleasing features of such responses were the degree to which candidates could discuss the range of audience responses to films from this period – from the initial shock in reaction films such as 'Workers leaving the Factory' to an increased audience knowingness with the editing techniques displayed in films such as 'The Great Train Robbery'. With regards to Q4, candidates were on the whole able to demonstrate a good, accurate command of relevant historical knowledge – balancing, with accuracy, industrial developments with more micro level developments in respect of early genre films. Films such as Life Of An American Fireman, The Great Train Robbery and A Trip To The Moon were again the cornerstones of many successful responses. The better responses were ones which could fully situate the films within their industrial context. This was pleasing to see and enabled candidates to marshal coherent responses to the question. A characteristic of less successful responses was to omit this type of debate and fall into a more descriptive account of aspects of the films, thus losing sight of how Section B differentiates from Section A.

The impact of World War II on British cinema (1939–45)

A pleasing feature of some responses to Q5 was the ability to enter into a debate about the role of the government in the cinema industry. Q6 elicited many responses where candidates were able to discuss the details of films studied to help further understanding of the topic and the time period. However, there was a tendency for responses to this to drift into textual description. Centres following this topic need to ensure that the work to prepare candidates for the examination is rounded enough to facilitate the development of knowledge and understanding of the workings of the film industry. This was an issue flagged up in the report from the previous session. It was clear that the majority of the candidates who responded to this question were well prepared to do so and it was very clear that many candidates had watched films from the period – a useful part of teaching and learning for this topic. To re-iterate a point from the 2013 report - "While it is important that candidates have some means to exemplify the points made in their responses by discussing certain films, wholesale textual analysis does not enable candidates to achieve marks easily, as the application of the mark scheme does not allow for such responses. The difference between the two sections of the unit are delineated in the specification and, where necessary, centres should re-familiarise themselves with the relevant details in this regard."

The rise of the blockbuster, format wars and multiplexes (1972–84)

As was the case in the previous session, this was one of the more popular topics in this section. Q7 proved to be a very popular choice with candidates, and their responses made clear that they had been generally well prepared for this topic. On the whole, candidates were clear on the key factors here and many candidates could clearly demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of relevant films from the period. Many candidates were able to offer a very good level of detail on key developments in the American cinema industry and the knock on effects for exhibition. For example, it was well noted about the shift in exhibition practice from winter to summer for what would now be called 'event' or 'tentpole' films such as Jaws.   Films such as The Godfather, Jaws and Star Wars and the conditions for the success of these underpinned many strong responses to this question. A key feature of better responses was the ability to link the success of one film to another – identifying causal correlations between success of one film to another, showing how distributors and exhibitors learnt successful approaches from one film to another. Candidates who responded to Q8 were generally able to marshal a range of relevant facts – such as the declining physical conditions of the 'fleapit cinemas' and the destabilising factor of the phenomena of mass unemployment in the early 1980s as being contributions to the rise of home video in this time period. This linking of macro to micro factors was very pleasing to see, and shows that advice offered in the previous sessions' report in this regard have been utilised.

Developments in 21st Century cinema and film (2000 – present)

As with the previous session, this proved to be a very popular topic area. Q9 proved to be a very popular choice with candidates. Many candidates centred their response around the shift to digital in cinema exhibition – the role and legacy of the UK's Digital Screen Network was a major factor in many responses. In addition, some candidates were also able to discuss the shift to digital exhibition by cinema chains such as Odeon. Many candidates recognised how 'Event Cinema' has facilitated a new business opportunity in the industry, and there was much good coverage of this, and some centres had obviously carefully prepared their candidates because of the level of detail of cinema programming and pricing details that were evident in responses. However, there was a blind spot with regard to business opportunities to small scale independent filmmakers. Platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo and VHX are offering a way to market for small scale independent filmmakers – as the recent case of crowd-funded, Twitter cast film 'Drunks Like Us' shows. With Q10, the quotation worked well in inspiring candidates to

open up a debate, with candidates offering some firm opinions on both sides. The shadow of Avatar continues to loom large, with the vast majority of responses to this question mentioning the film somewhere in the answer. It was near universally noted about the financial success of Avatar and this was a key tool in almost all responses to argue that 3D has not been a commercial failure. A demarcation line between weaker and stronger responses was the degree to which candidates could bring their responses closer to the current day than Avatar. While there is useful academic material available on Avatar, centres and candidates should also make use of websites such as www.boxofficemojo.com in searching for statistics about film box office receipts. Using sources such as this will enable candidates to keep their responses as current as possible.   Other aspects of strong responses noted how that film used production technologies in different ways to other films which are 'retro-fitted' for 3D (a good example in many responses here was of Alice In Wonderland) and how this process leads to an unequal finished product for 3D films and how this is then perceived by consumers. Other candidates discussed the pricing structures for 3D films – many candidates expressed the view that such ticket prices are too high and thus a deterrent to consumers and that this might act as a long term threat to 3D, thus risking the commercial failure of 3D.

Sociological / Economic / Technological contexts

While it is an element of good practice in teaching and learning to be rounded in looking at issues through a variety of the above contexts, candidates should be very cautious of employing an approach to the examination whereby they inject bits of every context into their answer. Instead, candidates need to look at the question carefully to determine what is the relevant context from which to draw upon in framing their answer. The ability to do so should have a marked positive impact on candidates' performance in the Section B responses.

The advice below is a re-iteration of the same advice as from the previous reports; centres and candidates who have responded to this advice have improved the quality of the responses offered in this session. The better answers across all of the Section B responses explicitly addressed one or more of these contexts, as candidates determined what was most relevant from their learning and adapted to answer the questions set. Centres are advised to use these contexts to help frame tasks inside and outside of the classroom and in so doing, candidates will then begin to generate material from their research which can help them better contextualise issues and perhaps personalise their learning more. Some practical ways that this aspiration can be put into practice is signposted in the scheme of work available on the OCR website.

General Advice to Centres

Section A – develop the candidates' technical knowledge and understanding alongside their understanding of the films and the seven Frameworks For Analysis. Technical prowess is integral to high performance in the examination. Also, ensure that candidates are able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the films studied through being able to write about different aspects of those films. One tool in achieving this is through regular use of timed responses.

Section B – enable candidates to personalise and make concrete the work of the topics – regardless of which of the four topics they study. Candidates need to be able to construct arguments in the examination, and to enable them to do so fully, they need greater personal/local evidence to help over and above to what may be learned from reading books and websites. Whilst watching films or extracts from film from the periods being studied will help to consolidate candidates' knowledge and understanding, it needs to be remembered that such work is a dimension of study for this topic, but detailed textual analysis is not required for questions to this topic and the mark scheme offers no facility for rewarding textual analysis in this section.

F632 Foundation Portfolio in Film

General Comments:

Administration

The administration of this component by most centres was very good, with marks and work being submitted on time. Almost all centres completed coursework cover sheets thoroughly, with detailed comments outlining how and why the marks were allocated. A number of centres would still benefit from being more explicit in justifying why certain marks were awarded. The majority of centres submitted work as physical folders which were suitably presented; the centres which submitted work online did so using a blog hub which is good practice.

Most centres were very clear about how and why marks had been awarded and avoided using subjective comments or just statements copied and pasted straight from the assessment criteria. Comments should clearly indicate how the individual candidate's work meets the assessment criteria, as this makes it clear as to how the centre has applied the criteria.

It would be ideal if the complete work of a centre could be put onto a single disc. Please continue to make sure that video work is submitted in suitable formats.

Quality of marking

Application of the criteria was generally close to the agreed standard, though some centres tended to be over-generous with specific elements. Harsh marking was very rare. In terms of the textual analysis most centres are assessing candidates in the right levels. Centres now appear more confident in marking the planning. It was clear that if candidates had completed set tasks then this, alongside the actual quality of the work, allowed them to access the higher level marks. Moderators saw less basic planning being rewarded than in previous sessions.

The variety of the creative artefacts produced was pleasing and the majority of centres accurately rewarded the highest quality work. The centres producing the script and key frames still need to make sure that candidates demonstrate consistently high levels of appropriate production skills to justify awarding level 4 marks. This includes the ability to frame and focus still images as well as using appropriate landscape formatting. The video work produced was mixed but was often accurately awarded the correct level. Again, where work was over marked, it was due to over rewarding production skills.

Evaluations varied in approach with the majority of candidates submitting an essay style write up of their work and progress. Centres need to make sure that candidates address all the set questions.

Candidates' work

Given that this is the third year for the specification, moderators were pleased that there is still a diversity of work produced and the choice of films being used in the textual analysis work. The wide range of films selected is in keeping with the spirit of the specification. All candidates would benefit from clear guidance being given on the correct ways to format planning and the importance of this being carried out prior to the production of the creative artefact, as opposed to after the production.

Textual analysis

Candidates chose a wide variety of films to analyse and these were often carefully chosen and facilitated the textual analysis. The most successful work demonstrated a clear sense of engagement with the texts and made insightful links between the micro-technical elements and the contextual macro elements. This was supported by the use of screen grabs to help illustrate the point being made and this visual stimulus proved to be useful in allowing candidates to make direct links between the two films.

The candidates whose textual analysis focused on small extracts from the whole film were able to gain appropriate marks for terminology due to the close analysis of micro-technical elements. As with the close focus on an extract, the candidates who used one or two frameworks of analysis tended to produce more coherent and focused pieces of writing. This approach should be encouraged.

A number of candidates had tried to shoehorn in specific film theory, often rather clumsily. It is better if candidates are aware of the broader concepts of film theory and use these as a looser framework as opposed to trying to fit in theory.

It was clear that where centres and candidates had considered the whole portfolio from the start, the choice of films for the textual analysis provided a clear and constant thread which linked all the elements together and allowed a cohesive portfolio of work to be produced. Both centres and candidates should be aware of the need for one film to be non Hollywood and make this choice very clear.

Planning

The range and quality of planning was varied with some candidates producing lots of focused and detailed material whilst others had obviously produced much more limited planning material. The better work made explicit links to the impact of the textual analysis and how the candidates work had been influenced by the films analysed. Candidates producing a location report often seemed to ignore them when making the creative artefact or chose to include badly focused and framed images. It is vital that candidates realise the importance of planning and the need for it to be presented in a suitable format. A number of candidates who produced hand drawn storyboards did not always use appropriate figure shape to illustrate blocking within the frame, stick figures do not constitute good planning.

Creative artefact

There was a fairly even split between centres submitting filmed sequences and script and key frames. The quality of work produced in both areas was mixed.

The best filmed sequences had benefitted from clear planning and an understanding of technical conventions linked to the textual analysis. Where this was evident candidates had produced excellent work which was sophisticated and also demonstrated excellent application of production skills. The film sequences that were less successful did not demonstrate the same technical excellence and in some cases did not frame shots properly or manage to hold a shot steady. If centres choose to offer the filmed sequence they would benefit from highlighting the need for basic technical competence. In a number of cases the filmed sequences were marked generously and into level 4 when the work did not always merit it.

As with the filmed sequences there was excellent work produced in the script and key frame approach. Again as with the filmed sequence, candidates who used the appropriate formatting for the script, tended to produce work of a higher standard. These candidates also managed to

relate their key frames clearly to the prior planning. In a number of cases the marks awarded for the key frames tended to be over generous especially where frames were repeated or suffered due to poor composition and lighting. An area for improvement in both the filmed and non-filmed work is the use of mise-en-scene which can let down otherwise well planned and constructed creative artefacts.

Evaluation

This element has benefitted from more focus. It is important that candidates do more than just describe what they have done without much sense of evaluating its success or otherwise. A significant number of candidates now include screen grabs of their own work and compare this directly to the work from the textual analysis; this approach should be actively encouraged. The better candidates were able to make clear and insightful points about how all elements of their portfolio linked together.

All submitted evaluations were written and often presented as a continuous piece of writing. The specification does not state the format in which the evaluation should be presented, so it may be beneficial for centres to consider the way this is presented in future sessions. An evaluation could be presented as an audio commentary, a video presentation or through a mix of approaches. Centres would benefit from considering how the evaluation is delivered and structured in order to access the full range of levels. It is vital that all candidates answer all four questions in order to access the full range of marks.

Centres are reminded that all the elements are meant to interlink and inform each part of the process. It is also expected that differentiation takes place within centres, particularly in the marking of the individual elements.

F633 Global Cinema and Critical Perspectives

General Comments:

As the second sitting of the A2 paper for this specification it was pleasing to see improvements in candidates' responses from the previous session. There were also examples of excellent practice by some centres and clear engagement with the spirit of the specification.

A range of texts, case studies and approaches were undertaken. Many of these were similar to last year and for Section A a variety of texts from differing contexts *included La Haine, A Prophet, City of God, Tsotsi, Elite Squad, The Tin Drum, Goodbye Lenin, Metropolis, Hidden The Motorcycle Diaries, Battle Royale, À bout de soufflé and Pans Labyrinth*. In Section B, all sections were covered but Authorship was again the most popular with fewer candidates attempting the topic area of Film and Audience Experience.

Overall the quality of responses for Section A was again higher than those for Section B. Centres are reminded to take note of the case study approach to the topics in a contemporary framework. Many weaker candidates focused too heavily on theory without application and/or outdated texts which made it difficult to address fully the question set. Centres are reminded that in order to develop students' skills from AS, they should be engaging with wider contextual issues in Section A and debating contemporary issues underpinned by critical approaches in Section B.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

The question focused on the macro framework of genre and the role this played in conveying messages and values. Successful candidates were able to compare their chosen texts with clear reference to how codes and conventions have been employed. Where students had clearly engaged with a range of contextual issues, social, political and historical, they were able to confidently make links between these and the film genre and often achieved marks in level 4. Developing their skills from AS, successful candidates were also able to support their points with detailed micro evidence to gain high marks for evidence and terminology. Several candidates really engaged with the question and were able to discuss with confidence how important genre was in communicating messages and values. Some also discussed how useful the concept of genre is in reference to art house texts. Credit was given to candidates who discussed the hybrid nature of the texts they had studied and the wide ranging influences that affected the film genre. Some candidates chose to argue that other macro frameworks, such as narrative or style, were in fact more important than genre when conveying messages and values. This was valid when clearly argued and supported with micro evidence.

Weaker responses often did not sufficiently address the set question and/or support points with examples and evidence. Several candidates made no reference to wider contexts and ignored the focus of the question. Some centres appeared to focus heavily on skills of textual analysis but their candidates demonstrated limited understanding of messages and values linked to the macro frameworks and were unable to offer examples. Several weaker candidates also failed to understand and appropriately identify messages and values in their texts and confused these with themes. Examples of 'love, racism, poverty' were very generalised and therefore difficult to exemplify or link to a wider context.

Centres are reminded that they do not need to focus on more than two key texts for Section A, but these must be studied in their entirety and explored with reference to their wider historical, social and political contexts.

Centres are also reminded, as stated in the specification, that the texts chosen for study should be from two different countries or the same country, but different periods of time.

Section B

Regulation

This section was approached by a small number of centres with a fairly even split across the two questions.

Question 2

This question asked candidates to consider the impact of regulation on filmmakers' creativity. The best responses explored regulatory practices in several filmmaking contexts and could confidently compare and contrast case studies. Several discussed heavy censorship in Iran and the case of Jafar Panhi and his house arrest whilst making 'This is not a film'. Many candidates also discussed how filmmakers would compromise creativity and take cuts to their work to secure ratings and in turn box office takings. A range of countries were made reference to including the UK, US, China, North Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Weaker candidates failed to engage with the question and discussed regulation in much broader terms and gave outdated examples which had limited relevance to contemporary issues. Centres are reminded to be careful with the use of outdated case studies as there were some very detailed discussions of video nasties and the Jamie Bulger case, which have limited relevance to the question set.

Question 3

This focused on developments in technology and how this effects regulation for both institutions and audiences.

There were a few excellent responses which engaged well with the question and were able to address both aspects equally. More able candidates discussed how technology could allow audiences freedom in moralistically paternal systems such as Iran and China where filmmakers could produce and distribute films using technology. Internet access and the growth of streaming, both legally and illegally, were well considered as were audience roles in classification online with BBFC insight and the Red Carpet rating in the US. The Interview was a popular case study which many students successfully linked to the question. Good candidates considered how developments in CGI and 3D had created more immersive experiences for audiences and therefore institutions may need to regulate accordingly.

These candidates used a variety of contemporary examples of both texts and practices which were relevant to the question. Weaker responses were more common sense and opinion- based with perhaps out-dated examples and little relevance to the issue of technology. Once again, it is also good practice for candidates to engage with regulatory practices outside of the UK. The US, China, Iran, Australia and South Korea were all good examples of countries with regulatory practice which contrasted with the UK and to which the better candidates made reference.

Question 4

Very few candidates answered this question. Successful responses argued with the statement and gave examples of films such as the Hunger Games that proved very financially successful as part of a trilogy. Wes Anderson and The Grand Budapest Hotel were also discussed as something which found success in domestic and foreign markets largely due to authorship. Some also considered what is meant by the term 'success' and argued that international success can be in the form of awards and film festivals, not just financial.

Question 5

This was one of the most popular questions in Section B and many candidates attempted this with varying success. The role of stars was the focus of the question and better candidates engaged well, offering a sense of debate and a wide range of relevant examples. Brad Pitt and Leonardo Dicaprio were popular examples of 'star power' with many candidates referencing the success of their films over the years. Some candidates discussed the role of the 'actor-director' in contemporary cinema with examples such as Ben Affleck and George Clooney. Many argued that the role of the 'star' had shifted in contemporary cinema and that other factors were more important in achieving success. The developments of CGI/3D and superhero franchises in contemporary cinema were discussed in some level 4 responses. Candidates argued that these were driving box office figures today, as opposed to stars. Many candidates also discussed the role of the director with reference to Wes Anderson and David Fincher amongst others. Whilst this was credited, too many candidates focused solely on the role of the director and therefore failed to address fully the set question. Centres are reminded that there are a number of bullet points in the specification for this section and that the role of the director as auteur is merely one of these. Weaker candidates failed to engage with the issue of 'contemporary' and some dated examples were offered. Others used a limited range of examples and seemed to textually analyse the films of certain directors, which is not required in Section B. Centres are reminded that Section B is about engaging in contemporary debates and using relevant examples from films to support the arguments which candidates make.

Film and Audience Experience

Question 6

Very few candidates answered this question. Some of those who did offered common sense responses and offered a limited range of examples and evidence.

Question 7

This question prompted a wide variety of response. The application of critical approaches was confident and helped candidates to engage with the question. Some candidates successfully discussed how emotional responses to film, in particular to violence, could be affected by previous viewing experiences. Other responses discussed the impact of gender and/or ethnicity on spectator response with Spike Lees response to Django Unchained linked well by some candidates. Bell Hooks was also a good example when discussing issue of ethnicity and response. Successful candidates were able to link their points and examples to critical approaches and confidently discuss the issues in the question. Weaker responses lacked critical engagement and used a limited range of examples to discuss the question set. Centres are also reminded that candidates must understand how particular audiences have responded to texts and have specific examples to which to refer, rather than rely solely on their own readings.

General Advice to Centres:

Section A **-** Ensure that candidates are fully prepared to discuss the wider contexts which influence the message and values in the films studied. Historical, social and political issues in the country at the time of production are fundamental to candidates' understanding of the texts and how they operate.

Ensure that candidates understand the key messages of their films and are able to link these to wider context and the macro areas.

In class, candidates should cover all macro areas so they are able to link messages and values to each of the potential question areas.

Comparison is key, and film texts should be selected with this in mind.

Section B - Exploring the key issues detailed in the bullet points of the specification for each area and ensuring that candidates have relevant, detailed and up to date knowledge is essential. Some candidates seemed prepared for questions from the previous session but struggled to address other areas in the bullet points.

Critical approaches must be applied to contemporary examples and not just regurgitated. Long paragraphs of theory are difficult to credit as the relevance to the question together with application is not clear.

F634 Creative Investigation in Film

General Comments:

There was an interesting range of research projects this session, with most centres encouraging candidates to pursue their own interests. Candidates who had fully engaged with their research topic were able to produce high quality creative artefacts which demonstrated clear links to their research and planning. Marking was mostly in line with the national standard set for this unit although there were instances of over generous marking for the research and creative realisation elements.

Administration

Portfolios were well presented and for most candidates, each element was easy to identify.

Some centres made use of blogs and free websites to present their candidates' work and these worked well. Some blog addresses, however, were incorrectly written on the cover sheet which made navigation difficult. Centres are encouraged to use the interactive cover sheets available on the OCR website, and to check that blog addresses are correct before sending off the sample. Comments on the cover sheets were detailed and in nearly all cases, teachers made clear reference to how marks had been submitted. Annotations on the coursework also helped the moderator to see how work addressed the assessment criteria. Centres which produced a film sequence for the creative realisation submitted work on DVD or through a central blog hub.

Both formats were problem-free this session. DVDs were clearly labelled with the candidate's name and were in an appropriate format. Films submitted on blogs were presented through a YouTube link which made them easy to access.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Research

There was an impressive quality of work in the higher mark bands and it was pleasing to see personal engagement in the research areas. As a result, there was a wide range of research topics in this session. Some of the topics investigated were: voyeuristic style filmmaking, Wuxia films, social divide and inequalities of class, societal fears in futuristic films, the representation of women in post-apocalyptic cinema, human suffering in the films of Steve McQueen, and an investigation into the development of CGI. Candidates explored their chosen area of research through a single hypothesis or a series of research questions. Both approaches worked well. Some of the best presented projects were those which clearly signposted each bullet point from the specification. This enabled candidates to carry out clear and focused research. A small number of centres appeared to have prescribed an area of investigation as candidates researched very similar topics. This approach does not enable candidates to follow their own interests and in some cases, resulted in the production of similar creative realisations.

Some of the research topics were primary-source heavy with underdeveloped reference to secondary source material; and at times the secondary source material was not relevant to the area of investigation. To achieve secure level 4 marks, candidates need to demonstrate 'excellent contextualisation of their investigation in terms of secondary sources' and 'excellent understanding of the ideas and theories of established critics.' Analysis of the secondary source material in relation to the investigation should therefore be more explicit. Candidates who carried out detailed research into secondary sources typically produced more sophisticated

reports. Higher mark candidates were skilled in using secondary source material to inform their own primary research. As in the previous session, it was still difficult to identify the description of key texts for some candidates. Many candidates included their descriptions in the body of the text but often missed out descriptions of their secondary sources. Some candidates produced a mini-catalogue at the beginning of their research projects with a brief description of each key text. This approach worked very well and enabled candidates to focus on their secondary sources. Candidates continued to refer to historical critical perspectives such as Laura Mulvey's theories from the 1970s and 1980s. As mentioned in the previous Principal Moderator's report, candidates should be encouraged to put these theories into historical context, and to weigh them against more recent ideas rather than using them without question.

Planning

Planning was well presented by most candidates with all the listed materials included. Most candidates produced their planning materials as written documents and made effective use of templates for the recce and risk assessments. Some candidates used test shots to show how they had developed ideas for their filmed sequence and this worked well. Candidates made effective reference to their research project and it was clear to see how their ideas had been influenced. It was pleasing to see that, for most candidates, the creative realisation had been considered when carrying out the research project. Most risk assessments were produced on a proforma and these worked better than those which were presented as a paragraph. Some recce reports and casting considerations lacked detail. Some candidates referred to well-known actors as ideal casting and this was a nice touch, however, candidates should also make reference to the actual people they are going to use when considering casting. Those candidates who considered more than one actor, and made specific comments relating to their suitability gave detailed responses to this task. Recce reports varied in detail. The most effective reports used still images of each location and made specific comments on suitability in relation to their script ideas. For some candidates, it appeared that the planning had been produced after the artefact had been made, as images in the storyboard appeared to be stills from the finished product. It is important that all planning materials are produced prior to the construction of the filmed or non-filmed sequence. Centres are encouraged to continue to teach candidates script writing techniques.

Creative Realisation

The non-filmed option continued to be popular in this session, but there was an increased number of candidates producing filmed sequences. There were some examples of excellent films in the higher mark bands, especially where candidates had adopted the stylistic features of their primary texts. Actors were well directed and there was careful consideration of micro elements to effectively communicate meaning. Some candidates tackled issues such as same-sex relationships and domestic abuse with maturity and insight. Weaker responses tended to be dialogue heavy without clear consideration of micro elements, especially mise en scene and camera. Candidates who chose locations other than the school/college grounds tended to produce more successful films in terms of mise en scene.

There were some issues with the screenplay and key frames option this session. It is important that candidates produce **both** a screenplay and 20 key frames and that the key frames are clearly identified. Some candidates produced more, or less than the required number of key frames and some were presented as small, almost thumbnail images. The best key frames had clear annotation which linked the frame to the screenplay, and were presented with no more than two images to an A4 page. When images are too small, it is difficult for the moderator to see the quality of the candidate's technical skills. Some candidates copied the specific extract of the screenplay which matched the key frame and this worked extremely well; the key frames

should accompany the screenplay and this practice makes a clear link between the two. There was some creative use of Photoshop to add visual and lighting effects, which worked very well.

Within the 20 key frames candidates should aim to use a variety of shot types to demonstrate creative consideration. Some candidates produced a series of shots which were similar in framing and composition. Most candidates produced their key frames in landscape format but there were still examples of portrait configuration. This does not reflect cinema framing and should be discouraged. If a candidate has made good observations on the cinematic techniques employed by a director it is worth encouraging them to using similar techniques in their creative realisation.

Those candidates who made definite stylistic choices based on their research produced some high quality work.

The screenplays produced by some candidates were quite short. Although there is no minimum time limit, it is expected that candidates working at A level should produce more extensive sequences than those produced at AS level. Most candidates used the correct screenplay formatting. One centre produced hand drawn key frames. This format does not enable candidates to access the full range of marks for the creative realisation. Although it is not explicit in the specification, candidates should produce still photographs for their key frames so that they are able to demonstrate skills in composition, framing and mise en scene; and show how their creative realisation links to their planning materials.

Evaluation

Evaluations were presented as a continuous essay. A few candidates evaluated their research topic. This is not a requirement. As mentioned in the previous report, candidates should concentrate more fully on the finished artefact rather than the process of making it. Comments relating to the process should focus on how their research led to the artefact's construction. Level 4 evaluations demonstrated clear reference to the finished artefact through detailed analysis of the use of camera, sound, editing, mise en scene and special effects.

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