# GCSE Examiners' Report

Film Studies

GCSE

Summer 2026

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## 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.[1]

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.

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[1] ***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.***

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**Contents**


| | Page |
|---|---|
| Executive summary | 5 |
| Component 1 – Key Developments in US Film | 6 |
| Component 2 – Global Film | 11 |
| Component 3 - Production | 14 |
| Supporting you – useful contacts and links | 17 |


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## Executive Summary

### Component 1 – Key Developments in US Film

Candidate performance in Component 1 was strong overall, with most learners able to access the full range of questions and demonstrate secure knowledge of film form, context and specialist film writing. Strengths included analysis of camerawork, sound, contextual influences and engagement with specialist film writing, with many candidates producing sophisticated comparative and evaluative responses. The most successful candidates supported their ideas with detailed sequence-specific evidence and made effective comparisons between films. Areas for improvement include a clearer understanding of editing, particularly when identifying specific examples, stronger use of comparative skills in contextual questions, more accurate recall of film history timeline content, and greater flexibility in responding directly to the demands of extended questions rather than relying on prepared answers. Centres should continue to develop candidates' confidence in all aspects of film form and encourage detailed analysis of key sequences.

### Component 2 – Global Film: Narrative, Representation and Film Style

Across all sections, many candidates demonstrated increasing confidence in applying knowledge of film form to narrative, representation and style. Lower-tariff questions were generally answered successfully, particularly those requiring identification, definition and description. Higher-attaining candidates distinguished themselves through detailed analysis of specific sequences and clear application of film language. Strong performance was evident in discussions of mise-en-scène, cinematography, gender representation and visual style. The main areas for development were ensuring candidates engage fully with sequence-based analysis in extended responses, make effective use of all question prompts, and maintain specificity when discussing costume, representation and film form. Continued emphasis on applying knowledge rather than describing content will help learners access the highest bands.

### Component 3 – Production

The production component again showcased creativity, originality and a broad range of genre choices across both filmed productions and screenplays. Candidates generally demonstrated a strong understanding of genre conventions, with evaluative analyses remaining a particular strength. Many learners successfully drew on a wide range of professional films or screenplays and produced thoughtful comparisons between their own work and existing films. Filmed productions frequently displayed secure application of cinematography, sound, mise-en-scène and editing. However, shooting scripts for the screenplay option were often less detailed, with some candidates omitting key elements of film form or demonstrating limited understanding of how production decisions create meaning onscreen. Centres largely applied the marking criteria accurately, although moderation identified some generous assessment, particularly where annotation was limited or screenplay formatting fell below expected standards. Centres should ensure detailed annotation of work, rigorous application of the mark scheme and greater emphasis on comprehensive shooting-script planning. Overall, the component continues to provide an effective opportunity for candidates to demonstrate both creativity and analytical understanding.

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**FILM STUDIES**

**GCSE**

**Summer 2026**

**COMPONENT 1 – KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN US FILM**

## Overview of the Component

Once again, this year centres should be commended for how well candidates have been prepared for this year's paper. In the main most candidates were able to access the full range of questions. They largely responded with appropriate levels of knowledge both in terms of the theoretical requirements and detailed knowledge of the films themselves.

Overall, there appeared to be few 'not attempted' or incomplete answers, which suggests candidates are coping well with the demands of the paper in the time set. There were very few rubric infringements where candidates tackled a section or question with reference to the wrong film. The preparation of candidates for the specific requirements of the questions is generally strong and continues to improve. Although there was less evidence of pre-prepared responses, particularly for Q5, and this did not serve the candidates well particularly in accessing the higher bands.

The paper assessed AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of elements of film and AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding of elements of film.

In terms of candidate response AO1 was reflected in their recall of both key elements and structural aspects of film form. AO2 reflected how they were able to apply AO1 to analysing, interpreting and understanding the meaning created by their chosen films.

The paper did produce a full range of responses across the whole attainment range. The candidate responses proved overall varied and strong.

This session examined what is now the fully embedded updated specifications. Performance was broadly in line, with perhaps a marginal improvement, with previous sessions.
I would again like to take the opportunity to thank the teachers involved in the delivery of Film Studies and the preparation of their candidates. Your hard work was apparent in the way that most candidates were able to approach the paper with an evident degree of confidence.

## SECTION A: US Film Comparative Study

### Question 1

Popular choices were *Dracula*, *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. There were more *Singin' in the Rain* responses this year, and still very few on *Pillow Talk*.

**Q.1** (a) Proved to be the more problematic of the 2 initial 1 mark questions for many candidates. The problem encountered in previous years with the correct interpretation of the word 'identify' emerged again. This paired with candidates' confusion as to what constituted editing meant there were significant numbers of incorrect responses.
When asked to identify an example this clearly requires the candidate to give an example that is specific to their chosen film. Many candidates are still just stating a term e.g. cut and but not the specific usage.

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Centres should note that editing is a central aspect of film form. As a result, some candidates registered no marks because they had not actually identified or discussed an example of editing.

Candidates are advised to read through all the questions in each section in full before completing the first one, as this choice can have an impact on how they approach subsequent questions.

(b) Where candidates had given a relevant editing term responses here were of a generally good standard. They were able to discuss the how and the why the example of editing had been used. There were a range of responses that dealt with it in terms of narrative, character, genre and spectator impact. Where candidates faltered was in a lack of detail in their explanation and repetition. Candidates should be encouraged to consider as to whether they have made 4 mark worthy points within their explanation. Candidates should also avoid being too general in their response here. Many candidates self-penalised because of their incorrect choice in part a). A detailed explanation of any non-editing based aspect was very difficult to reward in any meaningful way here.

(c) Responses varied depending on two factors: the detail from a chosen sequence and the variety of the aspects of editing and camerawork at the candidate's disposal. Candidates who had thoroughly prepared 1 (or more) sequences were able to access bands 4 and 5 more readily as they had plenty of examples and a wider variety of editing and camerawork to discuss. This detailed knowledge of specific sequences also facilitated a wider use of terminology. The weaker candidates tended to repeat what they had done for question b) with some additions, which is rewarded but rarely in the higher bands. Weaker candidates were often limited in their response by only being able to address a limited range of camerawork with no reference to editing. Some candidates were not clear in what editing or camerawork is. In these cases there were discussions of mise-én-scène and even sound. Centres are reminded that editing and camerawork should be considered in the following main aspects: style and pace of editing and shot types, angle and movement. Discussing 1 example from 2 or 3 of these aspects should enable candidates to access Band 4 & 5 more readily. Those candidates that considered the collective influence of the relevant elements of film produced almost exclusively examples of level 5 answers. Candidates are well served if they can remember this when called upon to produce a detailed 10 mark analysis. Many of the exemplary responses were able to deal with a range of aspects of both editing and camerawork and how they combined with other elements to make meaning, sometimes exceeding the expectations of GCSE.

Overall camerawork proved to be the more accessible, as the vast majority of candidates were able to access satisfactory or better marks in explaining the use of camerawork in their chosen film. There were many strong responses with candidates confidently discussing camera shots.

Generally, this question emphasised the need to thoroughly prepare the topic of editing in all its aspects.

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## Question 2

Popular film choices: *The Lost Boys*, *E.T.*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off.* There were more on *Grease* this year and still very few on *When Harry Met Sally*.

**Q.2** (a) This question proved relatively straightforward for most candidates. Most candidates were able to give a specific example of a diegetic sound from their chosen film. Candidates who struggled tended to mistakenly give examples of non-diegetic sound. Most candidates were able to successfully identify a relevant sound.

(b) Responses to this question were good. There were a variety of approaches, from contextual symbolism, narrative role, character development and industry and audience. Where candidates faltered was again in a lack of detail or examples in their explanation, repetition and failing to make the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Candidates should be encouraged to consider as to whether they have made four-mark worthy points within their explanation.

As with question one, centres should remind candidates to be careful in selecting their example.

(c) This question was answered well overall despite the issues identified in part a, as both diegetic and non-diegetic sound was credited in responses. Candidates produced responses that dealt with a range of appropriate sounds and their usage. Candidates considered their chosen film in terms of how sound was used to make meaning and evoke a specific spectator response. Candidates who had thoroughly prepared one (or more) sequences were able to access bands 4 and 5 more readily as they had plenty of examples to discuss. This detailed knowledge of specific sequences also facilitated a wider use of terminology. Band 4 & 5 responses successfully discussed how the film makers employed a variety of sound to control spectator response. The discussion of how different sounds worked together to, for example, establish the narrative were effective. For example, the use of contrasting sound in the opening of *ET* to establish which parties were the protagonist and antagonist. Satisfactory responses were able to engage with sound in terms of its presence and usage in typical and expected ways. The weaker candidates tended to repeat what they had done for question b) with some additions, which is rewarded but rarely at the higher levels. Weaker candidates were often limited in their response by only being able to address a limited selection of examples of sound or poor recall of specific sequences. Centres are reminded that sound includes both diegetic and non-diegetic, onscreen and offscreen, parallel and contrapuntal and a range of effects and foley based sounds. Many of the exemplary responses discussed three or more of these aspects and how they combined with other elements to make meaning, sometimes exceeding the expectations of GCSE.

Overall, this question proved accessible to most candidates. There remains some confusion between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, meaning that some candidates did not gain marks where they could have done.

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## Question 3

Popular film choices: *Dracula* & The *Lost Boys*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* & *E.T.*, *Rebel without A Cause* & *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Singin' In The Rain* & *Grease*. There were very few on *Pillow Talk* & *When Harry Met Sally*.

**Q.3** It was pleasing to see many strong responses with a clear understanding and engagement with contexts. Candidates who made a clear choice of comparable elements between the two films more readily accessed the higher bands. Careful selection of relevant contexts supported a successful response. For example, dealing with the change in gender roles and expectations between the two eras was a successful source of comparison. Many exemplary answers dealt well with the required one or two areas prompted by the bullet points. Where candidates chose to discuss more, this often led to a dilution of their response, and these were awarded based on their strongest two areas of response. The most sophisticated responses were able to compare the films within their contextual era - some of these responses went beyond what we would expect at GCSE level. Some excellent teaching of content and technique was apparent in many responses.

Where candidates were weaker was through a lack of a clear comparison or an imbalance in discussing the two films. They either chose elements that did not readily lend themselves to comparison or merely considered each film in isolation. Several comments incorrectly attributed historical limitations to budget constraints. For example, some candidates noted that a 1930s film lacked CGI or colour due to a low budget. Because these technologies did not exist at the time, these comments are irrelevant, even when analysing the film's production context. There were some examples where there was clear recall of the historical eras of the films but the link between this and the films was not explored or compared.

Candidates should be reminded that clear comparison of their two chosen films is the key to success.

Overall, there were some excellent responses with candidates able to explore how and why context had influenced their chosen films. Weaker candidates struggled to recall relevant aspects of context and or failed to use contexts to make an effective comparison.

## Section B: Key Developments in Film and Film Technology

## Question 4

This section generated responses across the full range of marks. Candidates are reminded to consider the question carefully and prepare as thoroughly as they can, with accurate recall of dates and names.

Questions a) and b) proved to be a relatively straightforward matter of recall. Part c) did prove problematic in terms of recalling the correct bullet point that was being examined. The bullet point in question is clearly labelled with the date range of '1895-1927 Development' and we were looking for any of the 6 separate items listed in that bullet point. Centres are reminded that a single question here only examines the content of a single bullet point.

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## Section C: US Independent Film

### Question 5

It was pleasing to see a much wider spread of chosen films in question 5 this year. Very few candidates this year failed to engage with the specialist film writing, a problem that centres seem to have thankfully consigned to the history books. A minority of candidates did not refer to the specialist film writing, due to a lack of knowledge or preparation rather than misunderstanding of the question.

The request to discuss their 'disagreement' facilitated clear and personal discussions from most candidates. Candidates who agreed with the specialist film writing were able to frame this in such a way as to access the higher bands. The stronger responses were able to discuss the specialist film writing in a nuanced way that dealt with both disagreement and agreement, fully addressing 'how far'. Candidates who produced strong responses were able to make arguments rooted in detailed evidence drawn from the films. Where candidates produced weaker responses, they tended to describe the writing and recall the film rather than responding to it.

While thorough preparation for these extended response questions is good practice, candidates should also answer the question set.

There was evidence of effective time management, with a reduction of truncated or 'not attempted' responses. Candidates who choose either of the two general writings - 'Finding the Frame' by Gustavo Mercado and 'What Makes a Film Independent?' by Rona Murray, should be encouraged to be critical in their application of key ideas to their chosen films.

It was pleasing to see wide range of film choice and the good level of engagement with the specialist film writing. It is good practice for candidates to state their chosen piece at the outset of the answer. Most candidates were able to engage on an informed and personal level with the chosen specialist film writing. The better responses were both varied and strongly personal in their arguments and clearly backed this up with evidence from the film. For example, there were some excellent and interesting discussions of the lack of women in *Whiplash* to reinforce Mile's hyper-fixation on drumming and the point of the film rather than a representational weakness.

## Component 1: Summary of key points

Credit and thanks are due to teacher's professionalism in preparing candidates for this session and their effective delivery of the content.

- Candidates should be familiar and conversant with all aspects of film form which includes editing.
- Candidates need detailed sequence analysis and specific knowledge and examples of the key elements of film form.
- A good general understanding and appreciation of the films, particularly in terms of genre and context, is also important.
- In question 3 the ability to compare as a practiced skill is as important as content-based knowledge.
- In question 4 knowledge of the individual and specific bullet points from the timeline is essential.
- In question 5 a personal and informed response, guided by the approach set out in the question is required.
- Efficient planning and timing is essential.

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**FILM STUDIES**

**GCSE**

**Summer 2026**

**COMPONENT 2**
**GLOBAL FILM: NARRATIVE, REPRESENTATION AND FILM STYLE**

## Overview of the Component

Component 2 is divided into 3 distinct sections – each of which focuses on a particular aspect of the specification. Section A requires candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of narrative in relation to one of the global English language films; Section B focuses on representation in a film not in the English language; Section C pertains to film style in a contemporary UK film.

Each section of the examination is sub-divided into parts. AO1 and AO2 are assessed across all sections of the examination – either in isolation in the case of lower tariff questions (such as 1a, 1b etc.) or together in the higher tariff question such as 1d, 2d and 3c.

The most frequently used films for the three sections were as follows:

- Section A – *Slumdog Millionaire/District 9*
- Section B – *Tsotsi/Wadjda*
- Section C – *Attack the Block/Skyfall*

All films from the specification were used by candidates.

This year, the focus of each section was as follows:

- Section A – narrative and film form
- Section B – costume and gender
- Section C – sound and visual elements of film form

For the most part, candidates are well prepared for the demands of this paper. Many responses demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of film form, applying it with growing confidence to sequences from their respective films. The demand of this paper was consistent with that of previous series.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### Section A

Section A focused on narrative and film form. This was a four-part question. 1a required candidates to define the term ‘narrative’. Examiners were encouraged to credit candidates who explained that ‘narrative’ was the film’s storyline (or similar) with one mark; a second mark was awarded for addressing how the storyline is presented i.e. the structure or order of the film. Many responses were precise whilst others were less exact.

For 1b, candidates were required to briefly describe a key moment in their chosen film’s narrative. As with previous series, centres should take note of the fact that ‘describe’ simply requires candidates to identify appropriate features. Given that this is the case, many candidates achieved the maximum three marks for pointing out three details about their identified key moment. Overall, this was a successfully answered question with many candidates achieving the maximum marks.

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For 1c, candidates were asked to briefly describe how this moment affects the rest of their chosen film's narrative. Again, many candidates were successful in outlining the implications of this key moment and therefore successfully met the criteria. Where candidates were less successful, it was largely because they identified a moment in their film's narrative which was less of a pivotal scene and therefore had fewer implications to discuss.

For 1d, candidates were required to discuss how key elements of film form are used to create meaning in one important sequence from their chosen film. Candidates were often confident in discussing mise-en-scène and cinematography and did so to a high standard. As AO1 and AO2 are both assessed here, it was essential that candidates demonstrated an understanding of film form and applied their knowledge when analysing a key sequence. The strongest candidates were able to articulate how elements of film form (very often including costume, props and camera angles) help to construct meaning for the audience in a specific sequence; less-assured responses often neglected to discuss sequences in detail or at all. Centres are reminded that they should make it explicit to candidates that sequence analysis is an essential part of the higher tariff questions.

**Section B**

Section B focused on costume and gender. For 2a, candidates were required to identify a character from their chosen film and an element of their costume. Most candidates scored the maximum two marks for this question. When candidates were less successful, this was largely a consequence of being non-specific with their identification of costume. For instance, if a candidate says a character is dressed casually, this would not be credited; a candidate must identify a specific aspect of a character's costume (i.e. leather jacket, trainers etc.) to achieve two marks.

For 2b, candidates were required to briefly describe what this element of costume tells us about the character. For most candidates, this was a question that they were able to confidently answer. Candidates were rewarded for either pointing out the implications of the character's costume (for example, what it tells us about their personality, the beliefs, their role in relation to others etc.) or for giving more detailed explorations of one or two implications.

For 2c, candidates were required to discuss how costume, hair and make-up establish differences between two key characters in their chosen film. Again, this was largely a successful question in that candidates were able to compare and contrast their understanding of characters and the implications their appearances have on the audience's perceptions of them. Candidates who were less successful often neglected to compare characters meaning that they could only achieve a maximum of four marks for this question.

Question 2d required candidates to explore how gender is represented in their chosen film – referring to at least one key sequence. Whilst last year's focus on ethnicity and identity proved challenging for some candidates, most showed greater assurance when discussing gender this year. As mentioned in previous years, using the bullet points provided to support candidates would have been beneficial to those whose marks were in Band 1 and 2 as, oftentimes, these candidates were hindered by a lack of specificity in their responses, often neglecting to discuss film form as part of their analysis. Centres are encouraged to inform candidates to read all instructions provided on the question paper.

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**Section C**

The lower tariff questions focused on sound. 3a required candidates to define the term 'non-diegetic sound'. Most candidates did so accurately and so were awarded one mark accordingly.

For 3b, candidates were asked to briefly describe the effect of an example of non-diegetic sound from their chosen film. Most candidates discussed the use of music and were able to achieve marks.

For 3c, candidates were required to explore how visual elements of film form are used to create the look or style of their chosen film. As with 1d and 2c, it was essential that candidates underpinned their analysis of sequences with a knowledge and understanding of film form. Many did so with great success, exploring the meaning behind colour, lighting, props, costume, editing styles, and cinematography. It is pleasing to see that the growing confidence when exploring aesthetics in recent years continues at pace.

**Component 2: Summary of key points**

- **Candidates were generally well prepared for the paper**, showing secure knowledge of film form and applying it confidently across all three sections.
- **Section A was answered successfully overall**, but the highest-mark responses were those that analysed specific sequences in detail and explained how film form creates meaning.
- **Candidates demonstrated stronger understanding of gender representation than in previous years**, often using costume, hair and make-up effectively to discuss character representation.
- **Specific and precise examples were key to success**, with stronger responses referring to particular scenes, costumes and film techniques rather than making general points.
- **Confidence in analysing aesthetics continues to grow**, with many candidates effectively exploring visual and sound elements such as colour, lighting, cinematography and editing

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## FILM STUDIES

## GCSE

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## COMPONENT 3 PRODUCTION

### Overview of the Component

This component assesses candidates' ability to apply knowledge and understanding of elements of film to the production of a genre-based film or screenplay (AO3) as well as applying knowledge and understanding of elements of film to analyse and evaluate their own work in relation to other professionally produced work (AO2).

The work consists of a genre-based film or screenplay option, a shooting script (for the screenplay option) and an evaluative analysis.

The genres for last assessment in Summer 2026 were outlined in the specification and reflect the genres studied throughout the course. **Centres should note that the new brief is applicable from Summer 2027 and are available on the NEA section of the Portal.**

It is always a pleasure to see the range of responses in this component – candidates and centres are embracing this creative opportunity in response to the briefs set out for this component. Again, there continues to be a rise in the centres offering the genre choice to candidates and it is encouraging to see the balance of both filmed and written productions both across the cohort and within centres.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

- There continues to be a wide range of genres chosen for both the screenplay and filmed options and it was encouraging to see in the evaluative analyses that candidates had gone beyond just using core exam film options as their basis for their own work. Often candidates demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of their chosen genre, particularly so for teen submissions this year. Centres are reminded sub-genres are allowed if these are supported by, and in line with, the professional films outlined in the Evaluative Analysis.
- In filmed productions, candidates (even in the lower bands) often showed a sound grasp of all the key elements of cinematography, sound, mise-en-scène and editing. However, in the comparable shooting script for the screenplay option, this was often not the case. Candidates in the lower Bands often still omit whole areas or demonstrate a lack of understanding (such as extended shot times). In some cases, these shooting scripts are generously awarded despite these gaps or issues.
- For the shooting script option, candidates should submit a detailed plan of how their chosen section of would look on screen. This should demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and application of all key elements and beyond. They can use the template available but can go beyond this. The top band examples demonstrated an understanding of how a range of key elements will create meaning on screen, such as special effects, key props, score, lighting, positioning, camera movement, angle, shot and pace; it should show how all these elements will work together to create meaning for the spectator. The lower band examples merely listed a series of camera shots with durations and possibly the use diegetic sound. It was difficult to envisage how this would appear on screen and therefore 'basic' or 'limited' in scope.

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- The evaluative analysis element continues to be a strong element of the component. Most centres encourage wide and independent study of professional texts, beyond the core texts offered by the curriculum, and genre and narrative are carefully considered in comparison. The higher band submissions also consider the technical aspects of the professional texts chosen and analysis goes beyond simple comparative comments.

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## Task marking

### Comments on approaches to internal marking

Overall, most centres continue to have a very good grasp of the marking criteria, particularly for the production element of the NEA.

Centres demonstrate good practice in clearly annotating all written work, including the evaluative analysis, and linking detailed summative comments on the coversheet. This clearly demonstrates how and why the final mark was awarded. Although, not always possible, it was clear some centres had completed internal moderation and this does seem to support more accurate final assessment.

In some cases, written work had not been annotated at all, and this often resulted in work being inaccurately assessed. Without any annotations, it is difficult for the moderation team to understand how and why the final mark had been awarded. In many cases, the work had been generously assessed because the centre assessor did not track the final mark using annotations.

The best practice showed, with very specific references to the work, how and why the final mark had been awarded using the language of the mark scheme, referencing specific bands. Some centres used the coversheets very effectively, using time stamps from the filmed productions and explaining on the coversheet how this matched the mark/band awarded.

Centres are encouraged to annotate all written work, along with the coversheet, using references to the specific elements of the submission and the language of the marking criteria. Exemplars can be found on the Portal.

Centres are reminded that formatting for screenplays is stipulated in the specification and therefore Band 5 submissions should have an ‘excellent’ grasp of formatting. In a few submissions, screenplay productions had been marked in the top bands but the coversheet had noted serious lapses in formatting. These would not usually occur in the top bands and, therefore, any lapses in formatting should result in a mark awarded from a lower band.

As noted above, assessment of the shooting scripts tended to be generous in some cases in relation to the amount of detail included from the key elements. It should be comparable to the filmed productions.

Centres are reminded that, although the new briefs are being used for submissions from 2027 onwards, the mark scheme and marking criteria remain the same.

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## 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
Qualification webpage:
https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/film-studies-gcse/#tab_keydocuments

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