



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE (NEW)
FILM STUDIES**

SUMMER 2019

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Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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FILM STUDIES

GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2019

Component 1 Key Developments in US Film

General Comments

- This was the first cohort of students to take GCSE Film Studies Component 1, comprising of questions relating to their study of two US Films, a key development in film history timeline and one independent US film.
- In comparison with previous examination series, candidates were expected to complete five sections in 90 minutes, with sections 1 & 2 consisting of 3 stepped sub-questions.
- The new specification has a different emphasis compared to the legacy specification. Candidates are still expected to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of elements of film form alongside other specialist knowledge. For Section A they must demonstrate the ability to compare films and show understanding of context, not previously tested. Section C requires candidates to study Specialist Writing on the film studied and apply this to the question.
- The new examination is longer and more challenging than previous papers and it was extremely encouraging to see that the majority of candidates tackled all the questions in the time available. Most candidates attempted all questions with very few incomplete scripts.
- There were very few rubric infringements where candidates tackled a section or question with reference to the wrong film though some candidates had confused film choices in Section A – two films from the same group or films not in a comparison pair (i.e. E.T & King Solomon's Mines).
- Some centres may not be aware that a timeline exists for Section B on pp. 31-32 of the Specification as some of the responses here were rather random!
- Some centres did not use the Specialist Writing set by the exam board and available at eduqas.co.uk
- Many candidates displayed a good knowledge and understanding of their chosen films however often wasted time and effort by writing very lengthy answers to lower tariff questions. Centres should reiterate to candidates what is expected from the question stems i.e. shorter answers for a 1 or 4 mark question, longer for the 15 and 20 mark question.
- Centres should be commended this year for how well candidates have been prepared for this first session of the new specification. Most candidates were able to access the full range of questions. They largely responded with the appropriate levels of knowledge both in terms of the theoretical requirements and detailed knowledge of the films themselves.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A: US Film Comparative Study

Q.1 (a) Identify one example of costume used in your chosen film

Virtually all candidates were able to respond in a productive way to this first question. If there are any observations to be made here, it is that candidates should be reminded to be specific - generalised responses such as “clothing” cannot be rewarded.

Additionally guidance to candidates would be to carefully select the example in 1a since this question is often linked to 1b. Candidates are advised to read through the questions in each section in full before completing the first one.

(b) Outline what this costume tells us about the character

Responses again here were of a generally good standard. Where candidates faltered was in a lack of detail, repetition and failing to make direct links between the character and the chosen costume.

(c) How is mise-en-scene used in one sequence from your chosen film?

The standard of response here tended to vary depending on how the candidates managed the different aspects of mise en scene. The better responses either discussed the meanings made in detail around some aspects or took on all the aspects of mise en scene with clear and relevant references to meaning. Candidates who could refer to their chosen films in detail were inevitably served well by this question. Many of the exemplary responses were able to deal with aspects such as positioning to a high degree, often exceeding the expectations of GCSE.

Q.2 (a) Identify one character type featured in your chosen film

Problematic responses to this question often echoed those of the old specification question 1a. Where candidates are required to identify an aspect, in this case character type, then for 2 marks it should be a specific example. If their chosen character type is “the hero” then they must state who this hero is.

(b) Outline the role of this character types in your chosen film

Despite the occasional issue with their responses to 2a, candidates managed this question well with a range of approaches. It was productive to talk about the chosen character’s role in the narrative, which many did, but it was equally acceptable to discuss the character’s role in a more general sense provided there was sufficient detail from the film as part of their discussion.

(c) How are genre conventions used in one sequence from your chosen film?

There was a greater range of responses to this question. Candidates who made a clear judgement as to their chosen film’s genre from the offset and then went onto structure a response on this fared well. Many candidates were not clear on the genre they were discussing and this led to their responses lacking the necessary focus to be rewarded at the higher levels. Many exemplary answers dealt well with either the concept of sub-genre or genre hybridity in their approach. The very best responses considered degrees of typicality within their chosen film’s use of genre conventions.

Q.3 Compare the contexts of your chosen films

As one might expect, many candidates found the 20 mark question more challenging than questions 1 and 2. Although, as previously mentioned, the bulk of centres should be commended on how thoroughly they have prepared candidates for this question. Candidates were well aware of the differing contexts of each of their films and how they had had an influence on, or were reflected in their chosen films. Centres are reminded that a high level of response need not discuss every aspect of the contexts listed; as each will have varying levels of relevance depending on both the era of and the films they have studied. What candidates must be prepared for is a clear comparison of contexts within and without of each film. Some answers were limited in their reward as they approached each film separately and discussed a different context or contexts for each. While this often demonstrated clear study and contextual knowledge it limited the candidate's ability to actively compare the two films and eras. In terms of the pairings it was pleasing to see that centres had chosen across the range of those on offer. Most were handled well although on occasion there were problems with King Solomon's Mines and Raiders of the Lost Ark when a few candidates compared aspects of wildlife and geography without direct contextual references.

Section B: Key Developments In Film and Film Technology

This section generated responses across the full range of possible marks. Other than the need for candidates to practice responding to the content of the timeline the only other observation to be made is the time-honoured guidance to read the question carefully. Some candidates responded to part c) with aspects of technology that were not film technology.

Section C: US Independent Film

Q.5 Explore how one example of specialist writing on the chosen film you have studied has deepened your understanding of the film. Refer to at least one sequence from your chosen film to illustrate your answer.

It was pleasing to see not just the wide range of film choice here, but also the general level of engagement with the specialist film writing. Most candidates were able to engage on an informed and personal level with the materials in question. The better responses were varied in their argument and clearly backed this up with evidence from the film. Those candidates who were working from either of the 2 generic pieces did well when they maintained their focus on the film rather than going into too much detail about the examples the writer had given. Those candidates who discussed the writing specific to each film did well when they clearly matched aspects of the writing with their own ideas and evidence from their chosen film. Responses that were either in agreement, in opposition to or both with the specialist writing were equally rewarded. The writing for the Little Miss Sunshine, Hurt Locker and Juno seemed to be most accessible to candidates.

Despite the greater majority of candidates having been well prepared to respond to the specialist film writing there were a small minority of centres where candidates failed to recognise that this is where they had to discuss this or seemed not to have been briefed at all. In an even smaller amount of cases a few centres discussed either non set pieces or the exemplar piece from the textbook. If this is the case centres should consult the digital resources on the Eduqas website for further guidance.

Summary of key points

Credit and thanks are due to teacher's professionalism in preparing candidates for a very different kind of specification in its first session.

In conclusion:

- Candidates need detailed sequence specific knowledge and examples of the key elements of film form.
- A good general understanding and appreciation of the films, particularly contextually, is also important.
- In a very demanding component efficient planning and timing is essential.
- In question 3 the ability to compare is as important as the contextual knowledge.
- A personal and informed response to section C is recommended.

FILM STUDIES

GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 2: GLOBAL FILM: NARRATIVE, REPRESENTATION & FILM STYLE

General Comments

- This was the first cohort of students to take GCSE Film Studies Component 2, comprising of questions relating to their study of one global English language film, one global non-English language film and one contemporary UK film.
- In comparison with previous examination series, candidates were expected to complete three questions in 90 minutes, with each question consisting of three or four stepped sub-questions.
- The new specification has a different emphasis compared to the legacy specification. Candidates are still expected to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of elements of film form. However each section also has a specific area of study that is assessed – narrative for section A, representation for section B and aesthetics for section C.
- The new examination is longer and more challenging than previous papers and it was extremely encouraging to see that the majority of candidates tackled all the questions in the time available. Most candidates attempted all questions with very few incomplete scripts.
- There were very few rubric infringements where candidates tackled a section or question with reference to the wrong film.
- It was noted that some candidates had answered all parts of a question (a,b,c and d) in one. When this was the case, it was not clear where one answer finished and the next began and it was difficult to award because of this. Centres are asked to remind candidates that they should answer each question in turn and clearly label their answers with the corresponding question number.
- Similarly, candidates should aim to work through the sub-questions in order. Some candidates started with part D of a question and worked backwards. Whilst I understand the thinking behind this in terms of timing and marks awarded, working in this way does not allow for candidates to build upon their former answers and this often resulted in repetition across sub-questions which limited the marks available.
- Many candidates displayed a good knowledge and understanding of their chosen films however, often wasted time and effort by writing very lengthy answers to lower tariff questions. Centres should reiterate to candidates what is expected from the question stems i.e. short answers for a 2 mark question, longer for the 15 mark question.
- Overall the exam paper appeared to be received well, with candidates appearing to be well prepared and confident.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1

- All films in this section were covered across the centres. However the most popular by far were *District 9* and *Slumdog Millionaire* and these were also the most successful.
- In many ways, the knowledge, skills and demands of this question echo what some centres may recognise from the legacy specification.

Q.1 (a) Name a main character from your chosen film.

The majority of candidates named a main character correctly. Whilst, as a whole, question one was answered well, it was in the lower tariff questions such as this where candidates lost marks. Some candidates did not seem to know the characters names or got characters confused e.g. identifying Salim in *Slumdog Millionaire* in question 1a and then describing and talking about his brother Jamal for the remaining sections of question one. Some candidates did not name a character, putting 'the protagonist' or 'the alien' as their answer. Such answers did not receive marks. Attention to detail on these smaller mark questions is advised for the future.

(b) Briefly describe this character at the start of the film.

This question asked candidates to focus on their character at the start of the film and almost all responses did this. Some responses focused on the character's physical appearance whilst others discussed the character's personality at the start of the film. Both approaches were equally acceptable. The best answers tended to look at both aspects of the character however full marks could be achieved without doing this. Detailed descriptions were key here in order to obtain higher level marks. Some candidates had a tendency to explain the story of the film, which did not achieve marks. Bullet pointed answers were unable to achieve full marks as they were not describing as the question asked and were instead listing. There was no need for scene analysis here due to the number of marks available. An overview of the character at the start of the film was sufficient.

(c) Describe an important problem or conflict involving this character.

The best answers here outlined what the problem or conflict was and how it involved / affected the main character and other characters / the narrative. Discussions often focused on what the character needed to do to solve the problem and many candidates looked at narrative theory here as well as how the problem or conflict linked or introduced wider themes or issues. Answers that retold the story or simply stated the problem / conflict were not able to access the higher marks. Some candidates discussed a problem or conflict that did not really involve their chosen character. Although this was an infrequent occurrence, centres should remind candidates to read through all parts of a question before deciding on their answer.

(d) Explore what happens to this character at the end of your chosen film.

The question here directs candidates to the end of the film and asks them to explore what happens to the main character at this point. The best answers here analysed key scenes in detail in order to explore how their character had changed / developed and how he or she had affected the narrative. Answers that did not refer to any key sequences struggled to achieve higher than a band 3. Many candidates, especially for *District 9*, compared their character at the end of the film to that character at the start of the film and this worked well. Again, a select few retold the story without analysis, which was reflected in the marks. However, the majority of candidates handed this question well and with confidence; discussing whether problems and conflicts had been resolved, whether this was a satisfying resolution for the audience and how much the character had grown or changed (if at all) by the end of the film.

Q.2

- All films were looked at across the centres. The most popular by far were *Tsotsi* and *Let the Right One In*.
- This appeared to be the most successful question of the paper with the majority of candidates achieving well.
- Akin to question 1, this question has elements reminiscent of the legacy specification. However, part C allows students to really engage with the text and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding to much higher levels.

Q.2 (a) Identify a key location or setting in your chosen film.

All candidates were able to identify a setting or location. Some were more general or vague (for example giving the country as their answer) whilst the best answers were more specific and pinpointed a particular location such as 'Tsotsi's shack' in *Tsotsi* or the playground in *Let the Right One In*. Some candidates wrote lengthy answers for this question which was unnecessary and did not achieve any extra marks.

(b) Briefly describe this location or setting.

Candidates were able to describe the location or setting chosen. The best answers here described in detail the sights and sounds of the location and created a mental picture for the examiner. Some lower ability candidates tended to describe the action in the scene rather than the location. Where candidates had chosen a general or vague location in part A (such as an entire country) the descriptions in part B also tended to be generalised and vague and struggled to achieve the higher marks. Again, students would benefit from reading all parts of the question before deciding on their initial answers.

(c) Explore how ethnicity or culture is represented in one key sequence from your chosen film.

The best answers for this question demonstrated real engagement with the text and the use of specific references or detailed analysis of scenes was often very good. Some candidates appeared to struggle with the terms 'ethnicity' and 'culture' – in some instances where this was the case, candidates used the bullet points well to aid their answer, in others they instead discussed the representation of gender or age which was reflected in the marks. Where candidates failed to look at a key sequence, answers were not awarded above a band 3.

Q.3

- The most popular films in this section were *Attack the Block* and *Skyfall* with *Submarine* coming second.
- There were few to no entries looking at *My Brother the Devil* or *Brooklyn*.

Q.3 (a) Identify a camera angle used in your chosen film.

Many candidates lost basic marks here as they misread the question and identified a camera shot instead of an angle. This was a very common error and candidates should be advised to carefully read the question in future.

(b) Briefly describe how this camera angle is used in a scene from your chosen film.

Unfortunately, where candidates had not identified an angle in part A, they often did not achieve any marks in part B unless they discussed the angle of the shot they had identified. Where candidates had correctly identified an angle in part A, they described how this was used and why to a good standard explaining the meaning created for the audience or the response generated.

(c) Briefly explore how other aspects of cinematography create meaning in this scene.

This question was approached well with the majority of candidates analysing the cinematography within the scene. Some candidates appeared to struggle with the term 'cinematography' and discussed other aspects of film form which did not generate any marks. Centres should ensure that candidates are well versed with film specific language and know what to discuss for each aspect of this. Lower ability candidates described the scene or retold the story here whilst higher ability candidates analysed the scene in detail using subject specific language and discussing the meanings and responses generated.

(d) Explore how elements of film form help to create a certain 'look' or 'feel' for the film. In your answer you may consider aesthetics and visual style, lighting and colour, meaning and response.

This is a new area of study for this specification and whilst more challenging, was handled well by candidates across the board. The best answers looked at how elements of film form combined to create a certain look or mood and discussed what this look or mood was and what it communicated to the audience, whether that be genre, themes, issues or feelings. Lower ability candidates tended to discuss characters rather than the 'look' or 'mood' created and were more descriptive than analytical in their answers. This was particularly the case for *Submarine*. Some sophisticated answers for this question came from *Attack the Block* via the discussion of the urban, gritty London environment, the realism and the hybrid sci-fi, action, crime genre.

Summary of key points

- As the first year of the new specification it was pleasing to see so many centres choosing Film Studies and candidates appeared to have been prepared well for the more challenging and lengthy paper.
- There was an encouraging level of confidence and sophistication amongst the higher ability candidates and I look forward to this continuing as the specification becomes more familiar and develops.
- Candidates generally used their time well - a minority writing too much for the lower tariff questions which then left them short of time for the longer questions.
- There was sometimes a tendency to repeat answers from the shorter questions in the lengthier questions and this was reflected in the marks. Candidates should use the stepped questions as building blocks and build on their former answers as they move through each sub-question.
- Most candidates appeared well prepared with key sequences they could discuss / analyse – these were awarded higher marks than candidates that did not look at key sequences as this limited the marks achievable in the higher tariff questions. Where key sequences were analysed, the use of film language was good and examples given backed up points made therefore strengthening answers.
- Some candidates appeared to have a ‘set’ answer / analysis planned which did not always answer the question at hand. Whilst this was a select few, candidates should be advised to steer away from a ‘downloaded’ answer and instead engage with the question set.

FILM STUDIES

GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2019

COMPONENT 3: PRODUCTION

General Comments

The new specification provided a platform for some fantastic work and highly creative application of candidate's learning from elsewhere on the course. The moderation team were impressed by how well centres had embraced the new specification and there were few examples of centres where the brief had been misinterpreted.

Most centres understood the A01 / A02 mark split and allocated marks appropriately. For the screenplay and shooting script, these marks are broadly split between the two elements with the A01 marks (genre and character) coming from the screenplay and the A02 marks (film form) coming from the shooting script. Candidates can still achieve some marks for A02 across both screenplay and shooting script but these will be limited without a shooting script as marks for technical understanding are awarded here. In the filmed sequence candidates work is judged in terms of both A01 and A02 simultaneously.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Screenplay and Shooting Script

The screenplay / shooting script was the most popular option handled well across the entry. The best work seen balances detailed visual description with appropriate dialogue that advances the narrative. As a rule of thumb, those that have 75% or more dialogue struggle to do this.

The most successful were able to demonstrate their detailed understanding of the codes and conventions of their chosen genre through characterisation (description and dialogue), setting, mise-en-scene and indeed the type of situation the characters are in. This works best when candidates are working in the genre they know best from those specified and where the work has been produced later in the course as this allows for more developed understanding of genre and film storytelling devices.

Shooting scripts proved to be somewhat more challenging. This provides the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate that they understand how their screenplay (or a section thereof) would be visualised cinematically and is the opportunity to show application of their learning around film form in a way that the screenplay does not. Many chose to use the template supplied on the WJEC / EDUQAS website subject pages – which is encouraged – but too many approached this as a box filling exercise and therefore only really demonstrated that they knew the names of camera angles, movement etc. In some cases candidates submitted an amended version of their screenplay with detailed annotations which is also acceptable. The emphasis here should be on what is appropriate and how would this enhance the creation of meaning. The best candidates were able to select shots and movements and sounds which showed subtle appreciation of how film form creates meaning that goes beyond the screenplay. One key area of misconception that emerged across the cohort was shot duration. It is worth spending time looking at this aspect of editing as part of the course to identify what is appropriate for the type of shot and type of action taking place to – for example 15 second close ups are not common in mainstream cinemas.

Filmed Extract

The filmed extract was approached with enthusiasm by those choosing this option and it was encouraging that the requirement to work individually on this component had given candidates creative freedoms.

All work seen was from an appropriate genre, though the genre should be evident from the style, codes and conventions evident in the work. In most cases centres guided candidates to work in the same genre – with horror being the most popular choice – whilst other centres allowed candidates to choose a genre of their choice. The best work seen combined clear evidence of learning on genre with confident application of film form learning from elsewhere on the course. The quality of the work was generally very high and the best work showed high levels of competence in selection and construction of mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing and sound.

Title sequences are fine, but these should really be over the top of the filmed action or minimal. There were a few instances of white text / black background credits which took up almost half of the 2 minutes which is not acceptable.

Some extracts were also significantly below the 2 minute requirement. The specification clearly defines penalties for short work and it was not always apparent that these had been applied, centres are advised to include this on the coversheet to make this clear to the moderator.

Evaluations

Evaluations were generally of a good quality with candidates comparing their work to films encountered as part of their studies. The best examples were able to clearly pinpoint aspects of their film and draw comparison with a film or films from the same genre. Screenshots from candidates own product and other professionally produced genre films would work well here.

Audience was one area where some struggled and the work is needed in some centres to move candidates beyond audiences that are simply defined by age or gender.

Summary of key points

- On the whole this was a very encouraging first entry.
- Allow sufficient time for the shooting script. This is the only way candidates can demonstrate knowledge and understanding of technical codes of cinematography editing and sound meaning at least 15 marks are at risk for candidates not fulfilling this part of the production.
- Please be mindful of shot duration when creating the shooting script.
- Be aware that templates for the shooting script exist on the Eduqas website
- Be sure to adhere to the production briefs on p. 22 of the Specification. Some centres did not acknowledge a genre or sequence from this prescribed list.

- On the coversheet – please identify a brief from this list ‘Film Extract’ or ‘Screenplay’ is not the brief but the medium.
- Be sure to direct candidates to evaluate the success of their film in light of other professionally produced products. These can be films from the Specification.
- There is a 40 page screenwriting resource available on the Eduqas website under the Digital Resources menu for centres struggling with this element of production. Be sure to use the Master Script Layout for candidates studying this option.



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