Production Portfolio Subject Report

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The films showed a wide range of understanding and skill in terms of expression in film language, just as the commentaries showed a wide range of understanding of the artistic and logistic requirements of the individual production roles. For the most part, the commentaries presented a solid picture of both the production process and the individual work in the chosen role. It is important for students to remember that the assessment task is to create the best 4 to 5 or 6 to 7 minute movie possible. Many students, in their desire to create the best movie possible (instead of the best movie for assessment), conceive of a project which does not meet the descriptors of the criteria, requires inappropriate sound or visual design work, or is simply too long. It is important to support the commentary with graphic and photographic evidence, and many students did a good job of this, though many did not - particularly when it came to selecting specific evidence supporting their chosen role for assessment. One problem that occurred at times for students who did a good job of selecting evidence was when they used captions with the evidence to the degree that the word limit was exceeded. Captions should contain the minimum information possible to ensure the examiner understands the significance of the illustration and must not include commentary, as this will be considered part of the commentary and therefore included in the word count. To some degree, for some students and schools, the requirement of discussing 'inspirations' in the preliminary planning or pre- production sections are being focused on to such a degree that they are overshadowing the students' original work. While it is good to have an idea of films, ideas, and issues which were pivotal in the creation of the film, in some cases there are so many filmic 'inspirations' mentioned that the work begins to seem inauthentic. It is more important to talk about the student's personal creative process in their role, than spend too much time discussing work from other filmmakers. Though this can provide insight into the student's work if used wisely, it frequently seemed to be a distraction from focusing on what the student actually did, and occasionally leads to the suspicion that the student did more imitation than creation.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A
The most common problem in terms in attaining the highest descriptor levels here was failure to present graphic or pictorial evidence supporting the work in the individual chosen production role.   Focus should be on work done in the role at each production stage - and the best work did this clearly with good use of supporting evidence. At higher level, the failure to address the creation of the trailer in the body of the commentary was sometimes problematic here. (Films that were too short or too long also sometimes negatively affected this criterion because of poor planning.)

Criterion B
As in criterion A, the failure to use graphic or pictorial evidence to support the logistic or artistic decisions made in the student's chosen role was frequently problematic. As well, many students did not present a 'clear-eyed' critical evaluation of the final film, presenting instead a piece about how satisfied they were, or a simple consideration of the project in general terms and not specifically focused on the completed film. At higher level, as in criterion A, the failure to address the creation of the trailer in the body of the commentary was sometimes problematic here.

Criterion C
When the commentary was focused on the artistic and logistic decisions a student made in their role, the student's clear understanding of their professional and technical skills sometimes raised this mark higher than the mark awarded for criterion D (communication in film language, which also provides evidence for this criterion). Commentaries that lacked focus on role were unlikely to raise this mark above the mark awarded for criterion D.

Criterion D
Many students showed the ability to communicate competently in film language, even when their ability to explain and support their chosen role was limited. Frequently this was the highest scoring category for students.

Criterion E
At both higher level and standard level, the most common problem here was the use of visual or audio material created without the involvement of the student filmmakers (i.e. Copyright materials, stock footage, freeplay music, unaltered loops from music creation programs). This limited the mark for creativity. At the same time, frequently, students showed real creativity and originality in all areas of film creation, from planning and writing, to soundtrack and score, and to visual image.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should be careful to present the task as an assessment and help the student film makers focus on meeting the assessment criteria. That is, students should plan from the outset to make a 6 to 7 minute film at higher level and a 4 to 5 minute film at standard level, which can be accomplished competently with resources at hand. Throughout the course, teachers should build in experiences in which the students use evidence collected from production work (for short films used to teach skills for example) in order to practice gathering graphic and photographic evidence to support the artistic and logistic work in film production roles. If this has been practiced over the two years of the course, it will be much more natural when the student comes to final assessment. Further, students should practice at least one short film in which they created their own composition as a background and have some experience creating foley.

Further comments

The film guide requires that students have had significant creative input in all audio and visual materials present in their work. Students (and teachers) continue to confuse this idea with the idea of 'copyright' in general. Students should focus on the creation of their music and soundtrack, whether created by themselves or as a collaboration with local musicians using input from the group. Each student must briefly describe the creation of the music, or the interaction between the group and the musicians. (That is, "George created our music," is not enough detail about how the input was managed.) Students who do not do this are unlikely to be awarded higher marks in criterion E. Each student is individually responsible for a brief description of music creation.

It is also important that the student be free to structure the commentary in such a way that they can focus on their individual role (probably the most practical template here would be to discuss the pre-production, production, post-production, critical evaluation of the completed film, and at higher level, the trailer. In some cases, a template had been developed that was more general, which led to students spending a long time discussing production elements that were not related to their role. Acting was an example. In practical terms, the only role in which acting or role authorship is a focus is directing. Others - like semiotics - are of questionable value to some roles.

Work from some schools was so generalized that it was hard to understand what role the student had chosen, and too much time was spent going over other roles. When the assessment is based on work in a chosen role, this is extremely problematic. Finally, all schools should include the opportunity for students to watch short films and not just feature films as part of the course. The structure of the short film is fundamentally different from the feature film, and ultimately it is a short film which the students will make. Understanding the structural differences will avoid many problems.