



# **Media Production and Analysis ATAR course practical (production) examination marking key support document**

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## Introduction

The *Media Production and Analysis ATAR course practical (production) examination marking key support document* provides elaboration and examples of potential content that would be considered a part of each criterion in the *Media Production and Analysis ATAR course practical (production) examination marking key*. It includes suggested strategies for teachers and students to consider when addressing the marking criteria. This document is **not a checklist** of elements that must be included in a production, rather a clarifying guide as to what could be considered when marking student production work.

It is important that students have a clear understanding of the marking criteria in the practical (production) marking key. It is vital that teachers share and discuss the marking key with students prior to assessment. For students to achieve the best possible mark, teachers should employ a range of strategies to encourage students to consider the importance and function of each criterion in their productions.

## Section one: theme

### Media Production and Analysis Glossary definition of theme

An identifiable central message created by the media producer that regulates all production aspects (such as narrative, character development, conventions etc.) within a media work.

A media work may have more than one theme, though one theme is often more primary (e.g. the subject of a media work may be love, and its theme could be how love involves sacrifice or love can conquer incredible obstacles).

### Criterion 1: clarity of theme/s

The clarity of theme/s provides the viewer with an understanding of the candidate's pre-planned, intentional central idea and message throughout the production. The candidate should aim to consistently portray the theme/s in a clear manner. The theme/s should be stated in the candidate's *Practical production statement*. The theme is the issue that is explored in the work, and the thematic message is what the production expresses about the theme.

For example, a theme that a candidate might choose to explore is revenge. To ensure clarity of theme, the candidate needs to specify **what** they intend to say about revenge. At the conclusion of the film, the audience should clearly recognise the thematic message. Some examples of a thematic message linked to revenge may include (but are not limited to):

- the best revenge is success
- seeking revenge turns you into a monster
- revenge is justified (eye for an eye)
- revenge is a hollow endeavour
- in moments of pain, we seek revenge
- revenge is sweet
- revenge doesn't stop
- revenge is a strong motivator

- justice is revenge.

Evidence of a consistently clear theme/s may include:

- apparent and identifiable themes which are seen throughout the production and evidenced in every production decision
- a strong sense in the audience that the candidate has explored the theme and message
- inclusion of innovative or creative production pieces in a purposeful or meaningful way to add clarity to the theme
- thoughtful omission of sequences or choices that detract or are irrelevant to the stated theme (this may be evident in the *Practical production statement*)
- consistent and meaningful engagement with the theme and message, which ensures that the production does not come across as confusing or muddled
- information provided in the *Practical production statement* reflected in the production.

Suggested strategies to promote thematic exploration and consistency:

- Ensure students understand what theme and thematic message mean.
- Provide opportunities for students to research and explore themes that are meaningful, interesting, or relevant.
- Provide opportunities for students to analyse themes in different media works including short films.
- Build a layered pre-production process into the course outline that allows students to add value to a theme, such as building from a synopsis to a treatment, to a script, to a storyboard.
- Advise students to clearly state the intent and theme of their film very early in the pre-production process to ensure that they are building layers (such as storyboards and prop lists) towards their selected theme.
- Encourage students to consistently ask: does this production choice add to the clarity of theme?

## Criterion 2: genre/style/narrative in support of theme

Intentional use of codes and conventions to construct genre/style/narrative should effectively and consistently support the theme of the production. The expectation of this criterion is that the production shows an understanding and knowledge of **how** codes and conventions are used in certain genres/styles/narratives and **how** to effectively use them to support their theme, rather than aimlessly replicating learned conventions.

This criterion examines **one or more** of the key areas – genre, style and narrative – to allow for non-narrative work, mixed-genre work or work that solely subverts style. There should be no assumption that a candidate choosing to construct all three areas will do better than a candidate choosing to construct one. The importance of consistency in the construction of genre/style/narrative in support of the theme should not be overlooked.

Evidence of genre/style/narrative in support of theme may include:

- an alignment between genre/style/narrative and the theme of the production
- deliberate selection of codes and conventions that support the theme of the production
- an explanation of genre/style/narrative decisions in the *Practical production statement*
- an awareness of the impact that genre/style/narrative choices have on audience response

- consideration of what is expected or is conventional in terms of genre/style/narrative
- taking of creative or innovative risks to extend and explore new ways of constructing genre/style/narrative
- linking of all genre/style/narrative choices back to theme.

Suggested strategies for the development and construction of genre/style/narrative in support of theme:

- Ensure students become familiar with and understand how codes and conventions are used in the construction of genre/style/narrative.
- Provide opportunities for students to research genre/style/narrative and examine how these can be effectively manipulated to support theme.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore how themes are conveyed through a range of stylistic elements by specific directors or in genres or film movements.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore how similar themes are conveyed by various directors across a range of genres.
- Provide opportunities for students to research films that are useful in generating ideas for genre/style/narrative construction.
- Discuss with students how to manipulate narrative elements and narrative structures in a creative or innovative way.
- Provide opportunities for students to research the technical complexities involved in the construction of genre/style/narrative.
- Engage students in a multi-layered narrative process, such as building on synopsis, treatment, script and storyboard, to ensure theme is resonating throughout.
- Engage students in reflective practice to produce multiple drafts of pre-production documents to ensure genre/style/narrative supports theme.
- Encourage students to complete storyboards and scripts with enough detail to highlight stylistic elements, such as indicating specific camera movements, sounds, transitions, or future intended editing choices.
- Encourage students to include details of any subtle genre/style/narrative decisions within the *Practical production statement*.

### Criterion 3: purpose/context/audience

This criterion assesses the communication of theme for a specific purpose/context/audience. It covers **why** the production is communicating the theme and allows candidates to demonstrate their understanding of purpose/context/audience and its relevance to their production and theme. It is important for candidates to use the *Practical production statement* to support their achievement in this criterion.

This criterion examines **one or more** of the key areas – purpose, context and audience – to allow for a candidate’s personal purpose to be explored in their work; for work to be made within a specific or unique context; or for work to be created for a specific audience. There should be no assumption that a candidate choosing to communicate theme for all three key areas will do better than a candidate choosing to communicate theme for one of these key areas.

Evidence of communicating theme for a specific purpose/context/audience may include:

- intentional relation of the theme within the production to an identifiable purpose/context/audience (within the production and as explained in the *Practical production statement*)
- deliberate production choices that address a specific purpose, with the production successfully realising or meeting this purpose, e.g.:
  - achieving a goal with the creation of the production
- deliberate production choices that address or suit a specific context through the production, e.g.:
  - coverage of events or perspectives
  - conveying information or a sense of time or place
- deliberate production choices that attract and engage a specific audience, e.g.:
  - evoking mood or audience reaction and/or emotion, such as laughter, fear, discussion
  - appealing to, meeting or challenging audience values
- suitability or appropriateness of production choices to communicate theme for a specific purpose/context/audience.

Suggested strategies to communicate theme for a specific purpose/context/audience:

- Discuss and ensure students understand the way different media works communicate theme for a specific purpose/context/audience.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore the interconnectedness of purpose/context/audience and how these aspects might operate in isolation in a selected media work.
- Encourage students to be conscious of how the theme relates to the purpose/context/audience of their production.
- Encourage students to be intentional with production choices to build towards an overall purpose.
- Encourage students to consider the desired impact of their production on the targeted audience.
- Encourage students to conduct test screenings to judge the level of success in achieving the purpose of their production.
- If required, encourage students to use the information gained during test screenings to adjust elements within their production to ensure that communication of the theme/s in relation to purpose/context/audience is achieved.
- Encourage students to be selective and consider the impact of each production choice and why production content is included.
- Encourage students to prepare and rewrite the *Practical production statement* to support their production and substantiate production choices made in relation to purpose/context/audience.
- Encourage students to ask questions during all production phases, such as:
  - 'Does the planned technique/s draw the attention of the desired audience?'
  - 'Does the production meet the intended purpose?'
  - 'Does the production make sense within the selected context?'

## Section two: production roles

Section two of the Practical (production) examination assesses the consistency of the candidate's application of skills in the four production roles, as well as the quality of the skills demonstrated by the candidate throughout the production. The application of skills within the defined production roles is evidenced by viewing the candidate's production and is further supported by the candidate's *Practical production statement*.

The demonstration and evidence of role-specific skills will vary depending on the candidate's theme, genre/style/narrative, and purpose/context/audience within their production. The candidate's performance in these roles should appropriately link with the production's theme, genre/style/narrative, and purpose/context/audience. If production role decisions and/or role-specific skills are subtle or not apparent through viewing the production, they should be detailed and supported by an explanation and/or evidence in the *Practical production statement*.

The candidate is required to demonstrate the skills necessary to effectively fulfil the following production roles:

- art direction
- cinematographer/cinematographic elements (i.e. in animation work)
- editor
- sound design.

While candidates must address all four production roles, they will number their production roles in order of specialisation. More marks are allocated to the first and second preferences compared to the third and fourth preferences.

### Production role: art direction

In the context of this practical examination, evidence of consistent and skilful demonstration and fulfillment of the art director role may include:

- intentional and appropriate use of mise-en-scene and/or blending of multiple art direction elements within the production, such as props, costumes, hair, make-up and set design
- creative or innovative portrayal of time/place/context, such as effectively using art direction to create a period film or unique setting as appropriate to the production
- intentional and appropriate use of colour, objects, symbols and/or visual motifs as appropriate to the production
- purposeful decisions relating to location choices and the creation or acquisition of props and/or costumes
- effective combination of aesthetic elements to create mood or evoke emotion.

Suggested strategies to promote the development of consistent and high-quality art direction skills:

- Discuss and ensure students' art direction choices are meaningful in relation to the theme, genre/style/narrative, and purpose/context/audience of their production.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore and evaluate the art direction elements within media works (professional or past student work).



- Provide opportunities for students to research role responsibilities for an art director and encourage students to evaluate which areas are relevant for their production.
- Encourage students to create a mood board of images to visualise the look of their production.
- Encourage students to investigate symbolism such as the use of colour, objects and motifs as relevant to their production.
- Encourage students to experiment with different art direction techniques as relevant to their production, such as creative use of props, colours or make-up.
- Encourage students to investigate costuming ideas for characters and experiment with different looks or clothing items.
- Encourage students to document location scouting with photographs.
- Encourage students to produce lists of costumes, props, etc., including how/where these will be sourced.
- Encourage students to assess the suitability of sets/locations for both the film production and for the conveyed theme/s.
- Encourage students to provide examples of decision-making and choices made in the application of art direction skills to support theme/s.
- Encourage students to use the *Practical production statement* to provide evidence of art direction choices that may go unnoticed during the viewing of the production.

## Production role: cinematographer/cinematographic elements (i.e. in animation work)

In the context of this practical examination, evidence of consistent and skilful demonstration and fulfillment of the cinematographer role may include:

- visibly confident and meaningful control of the camera and/or cinematographic elements
- purposeful and effective framing, duration of shots, range of shots and angles, coverage of action, camera movement, focus, exposure, lighting, and camera operation techniques and conventions
- intentional combination of cinematography techniques or elements that are appropriate to candidate's theme, selected genre/style/narrative, and purpose/context/audience of production
- use of candidate's own creative or innovative choices of cinematography techniques or elements combined to achieve a desired effect
- use of cinematography techniques or elements that demonstrate skilful, expressive, and/or technical consistency
- explanation of subtle or nuanced cinematography decisions in the *Practical production statement*.

Suggested strategies to promote the development of consistent and high-quality cinematography skills:

- Provide students with the opportunity to develop their cinematography skills and competence with equipment through the delivery of workshops and time for experimentation and practice, such as:
  - learning appropriate use of stabilising equipment, e.g. tripod, gimbal
  - learning how to use correct exposure and the creative use of overexposure and underexposure as appropriate

- learning about intentional selection and change of camera focus to convey the relative importance of elements within the frame
  - understanding the effects of lighting, such as type, amount, and direction of light, e.g. natural lighting, studio lighting, low key lighting, chiaroscuro directional lighting
  - learning conventional lighting styles, e.g. three point lighting, back lighting and side lighting, especially as appropriate to genre/style/narrative and to convey aspects of characterisation
  - learning conventional shot composition rules, e.g. head room, looking room, eyelines, depth of field
  - learning about aesthetic use of composition techniques, e.g. rule of thirds, symmetry, compositional triangles, sinuous s-curve, empty space, depth of field
  - learning effective shot choices for the chosen genre/style/narrative, e.g. mid shot or medium close up for interviews in documentaries, close ups to show character emotion
  - learning about ensuring there is enough coverage of action, e.g. Hollywood continuity style for coverage or B-roll for documentaries
  - learning about the importance of the length of takes and shooting with the edit in mind, e.g. use of rapid short takes versus long takes or lyrical camera movement/style
  - learning intentional placement of camera for audience positioning, e.g. close up shots that move to follow a character position the audience to view the character as a protagonist
  - learning to use effective camera movement to give a perceptual point of view as appropriate to the intention of their own production, e.g. pans, tilts, dollies or static shots
  - learning how to achieve a consistent picture quality across different shoot days or using different cameras.
- Provide opportunities for students to analyse cinematography choices within media works and then connect choices to theme, genre/style/narrative, and purpose/context/audience.
  - Provide opportunities for students to explore experimental film-making approaches, e.g. cinematography associated with historical film movements, aesthetic movements, auteurs, genres, styles, etc.
  - Provide opportunities for students to engage with and refine more advanced and experimental cinematography techniques through viewing professional examples, researching media work, and to practice and explore using cinematography equipment.
  - Guide students to select and practice cinematography techniques that are suitable for expressing theme/s within their chosen genre/style/narrative.
  - Encourage creativity and innovation when experimenting with cinematography skills and equipment with an aim to create different effects/results, e.g. combining elements associated with disparate genres/styles or film movements, or deliberately breaking conventions for a desired effect, such as cramped framing.
  - Encourage students to undertake research to promote purposeful exploration of cinematography techniques and problem-solving, as required, in their own productions.

## Production role: editor

In the context of this practical examination, evidence of consistent and skilful demonstration and fulfillment of the editor role may include:

- purposeful and effective use of editing software and other post-production workflows to
  - convey theme
  - construct genre/narrative/style
  - enhance aesthetics through colour filters and/or Lookup Tables (LUTs)
  - adjust pace, rhythm, sequencing and duration of shots
  - apply or create relevant special effects, such as (but not limited to) chroma keying, key-framing, masking, vector images and/or layering of images to create unique compositions
  - experiment with cropping, aspect ratio, frame rate, rotoscoping, other on-screen graphics, and/or text
- intentional and consistent use of cuts and transitions such as
  - cut on action or for emotion, cut to the beat of music, continuity editing, discontinuity editing, cut-aways and cross-cutting
  - J-cut or L-cut transitions
  - fades, wipes and dissolves
  - montages, match cuts and graphic matches
- appropriate and relevant use of titles, text and/or subtitles.

Suggested strategies to promote the development of consistent and high-quality editing skills:

- Encourage students to investigate video editing principles and research the purpose and impact of different editing decisions within media work.
- Provide workshops for students to allow them to experiment and explore a variety of post-production applications, as available, to build proficiency and confidence in their skill and ability. This could also be considered and implemented throughout the course development for lower year levels.
- Nurture student creativity by encouraging risk-taking or experimentation when exploring post-production techniques or skills.
- Provide examples of exemplary student productions (through associations such as ATOM WA Media Perspectives, BUFTA, ATOM Awards or Trop Jr) and critique the post-production selection decisions.
- Provide opportunities for students to investigate the decision-making processes of various short films and content. This may include watching filmmaker commentaries and/or using scene analysis or other analytical scaffolds.
- Provide stock footage to students to encourage experimentation and exploration of various editing techniques, e.g. asking students to use stock footage of a driving car to edit a fast and exciting action sequence.
- Conduct in-class activities to enable students to explore the impact of editing choices, e.g. editing an existing film trailer to demonstrate codes and conventions of a different genre (such as Mary Poppins/Scary Mary)
- Provide opportunities for students to experiment with different programs with advanced editing workflows (such as Adobe After Effects or Blender) to extend students.

## Production role: sound design

In the context of this practical examination, evidence of consistent and skilful demonstration and fulfillment of the sound design role may include:

- audibly effective recording of sound, on-location or in post-production as appropriate, to communicate theme and construct style/genre/narrative in the production
- purposeful sourcing, selection and use of additional audio assets, e.g. music, sound effects, ambiance
- intentional creation and/or production of music, sounds and/or soundscapes to support the theme, style/genre/narrative and purpose/context/audience
- effective and consistent editing of audio and sound levels/mix including the purposeful combination of audio elements using audio transitions, sound filters or other audio effects as appropriate
- accurate record keeping of acknowledgements for audio assets used in production.

Suggested strategies to promote the development of consistent and high-quality sound design skills:

- Emphasise the importance of recording high quality sound and provide students with the opportunity to develop sound recording skills through workshops dedicated to
  - evaluating factors to consider when capturing on-location sound through external audio recording equipment, e.g. use of boom mic, on-camera microphones, or lapel microphones when recording scenes with dialogue or capturing ambiance/atmosphere, as required
  - researching and experimenting with camera equipment capabilities for recording sound (such as in-camera mics compared to external mics)
  - recording sound in a variety of interior and exterior locations using external sound recording devices, e.g. recording traffic with a smartphone or recording footsteps on gravel with an audio recording device
  - evaluating the benefits and use of external microphones such as dictaphones or smartphone sound recording devices
  - recording sound in post-production, e.g. voice over, Foley, audio for dubbing, diegetic sound.
- Provide opportunities for students to create and experiment with sound, e.g. producing original or remixed music, creating interesting or unique Foley, creating soundscapes to support style/genre/narrative or theme and to suit specific purpose/context/audience.
- Encourage students to practise and refine sound editing techniques to
  - ensure dialogue is clear and audio levels are consistent, as appropriate to student production choices
  - synchronise sound with visuals
  - manipulate and experiment with filters and other audio effects for a desired purpose
  - source, use and acknowledge appropriate third-party sound effects and music
  - use audio layers to build atmosphere/mood, adding sound bridges and adjusting foreground and background audio layers to ensure clarity of information
  - trial creating a genre-specific soundtrack/soundscape using audio editing software, e.g. producing music for a thriller chase sequence using GarageBand
  - view examples of different sound bridges, L-cuts and J-cuts used in film, and experiment with creating their own to evoke a mood or emotion
  - use a well-known film sequence and change/recreate the audio.