Students must produce a script for a complete short documentary production exploring an aspect of film theory or film history, based on the study of films from more than one country. The documentary should be targeted at an audience of film students in the 14 to 18 years age range. Among the topics students may choose to investigate are:

* genre
* theme
* direction
* use of sound
* colour
* editing
* lighting.

The topic should be discussed primarily in cinematic terms.

The prime voice of the documentary must clearly be that of the student, who is represented as the narrator, on-screen host and/or voice-over. Students must ensure that any comments or ideas they attribute to celebrities or others, such as experts, are fully supported by detailed references in the annotated list of sources.

Students at SL must make reference to a minimum of two films while students at HL must make reference to a minimum of four films from different countries. The chosen films must originate from more than one country.

The independent study must be presented in the form of a written dossier composed of the following three items.

* Rationale
* Script
* Annotated list of sources.

The rationale must offer a brief, reasoned explanation of the concerns explored by the topic in no more than **100 words**.

The script must clearly indicate the relationship between the audio and visual elements of the documentary, employing an established documentary format such as “side-by-side” columns for video and audio components. All descriptions of video and audio elements must be both detailed and specific. Scripts must be 8–10 pages long at SL or 12–15 pages long at HL, using an accepted size of paper (for example, A4 or US letter) and must **use** 12-point Courier font (not in block capitals) and single spacing. It is important that the student treats a topic of film history/film theory in cinematic rather than literary terms.

The annotated list of sources should refer to all materials used in researching the topic and all materials used in the documentary itself, including films from which extracts will be shown in the documentary and quotations from experts or academics. Annotations should give the source and/or location of the reference. A comment on the relevance of the source must be included.

Assessment of this component is based solely on the written script and the rationale. Actual films or film sequences are not acceptable.

The materials produced for this component must not be submitted for internal assessment as part of the production portfolio. As part of the learning process, teachers can give advice to students on a first draft of the independent study. Advice on improving the work can be given, but this first draft must not be heavily annotated or edited by the teacher. Constant drafting and redrafting is not allowed, and the next version handed to the teacher after the first draft must be the final one.

**Preparation for the independent study**

**Introducing the independent study to students**

The outcome of the independent study is a script for a complete short documentary production exploring an aspect of film theory or film history, based on a study of films from more than one country.

It is clear that there are two parts to the preparation for your students:

* independent research into their chosen topic
* presentation of their research in script form.

In your role as teacher you should:

* teach the documentary genre to your students so that they are familiar with the genre
* teach your students how to present a script in an appropriate format
* teach research methodologies and offer a suitable research environment in your classroom.

**Choosing the topic**

Teachers should give plenty of advice to students in the selection of their topic. More able students should be encouraged to consider topics that will give them the opportunity to develop their ideas fully; weaker students should not attempt projects that may be too complex. Ensure that the requirements of the syllabus are fully met.

**Setting up a research environment**

This component may appear rather daunting for students who are unfamiliar with the skills of independent research. Teachers should present students with an environment that helps them through this process.

If possible, students should have ready access to resources that will help set a project easily in motion, even if it is no more than a basic book box/library or list of useful Internet sites.

Teachers should remind students of the time limits for this work and discourage them from delaying making a start.

**What your students need to know**

In supervising students’ research, teachers will want them to:

* develop sophisticated and high-level research skills
* use the Internet wisely
* know the rules of research, such as proper referencing and how to avoid plagiarism.

Students will need to display knowledge in their research. Teachers will need to guide them towards an understanding of what they have investigated, and advise them on how to demonstrate their understanding.

Teachers will need to show their expertise and deliver appropriate guidance and advice but also be able to stand back and let them find their own way.

Students will need to be taught strategies to enable them to take an independent approach to their research.

Students will need guidance in how to:

* formulate their specific area of study
* choose suitable films for study
* develop an hypothesis
* read different texts actively for different purposes
* support their ideas with evidence and analysis
* look for what is actually there in source material, rather than what they want to find
* organize their material right from the start.

Teachers will accompany students on their research journeys while they are reading, viewing, listening, questioning and discussing, with a view to showing their learning through their completed scripts.

**The role of the classroom environment**

The following are some suggestions for creating a classroom environment that values research and enables students to be independent learners.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type of resource** | **Examples** |
| Text resources | * Examples of research by previous students
* Abstracts of university theses
* A small library of key textbooks
* A range of magazines
* Posters with key learning approaches and phrases
* Glossaries of key terms
* Quotes by theorists
* Deadline dates
 |
| Image resources | * Contrasting film posters
* Movie stills and DVD covers
* Film magazine covers
* Moving image resources
 |
| IT resources | * Topic files containing copies of Internet print-offs by students
* Lists of recommended websites
 |

**A step-by-step approach to research for students**

The very first step is choosing an appropriate topic. This is often harder than it appears. Students should be encouraged to look towards their own interests initially, or towards an area that the teacher believes they would enjoy, given the teacher’s understanding of their abilities and interests.

Once a topic has been broadly decided upon, research can begin. Students should be encouraged to change direction if they are finding the topic too problematic and if the teacher is unable to resolve the problems.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Steps in the research process** | **Issues to consider** |
| Define the topic | * What is the bare outline of the area for discussion?
* Break down the topic into sub-topics or key concepts.
* Develop a broad overview of the topic by browsing sources.
* Become fully conversant with the necessary terminology.
 |
| Develop a research strategy | * What is the scope of the project?
* How much information will be needed?
* What is the appropriate level of the project?
* How manageable is the project?
* Can it be fully developed given the limits of the script?
 |
| Locate and retrieve the information | * Determine what type of information is needed—books, articles, current or archive information.
* Identify the likely and unlikely sources or places to find information.
* Ensure that you have all the information you need including the full citation of any references that are collected. When photocopying always write down the title and author of the book.
 |
| Evaluate the information | * Establish authority—who is the author and what is their credibility?
* Determine the scope of the work—what is its purpose?
* Evaluate accuracy and relevance.
* Recognize bias and/or point of view.
 |
| Determine whether there is enough information | * Look at the length and focus of your topic.
* Are there any unanswered questions?
* Does your topic represent only one point of view?
* Could you include anything further?
 |

**Internet research**

Web pages require the same, and sometimes more, caution as any other source. Anyone with access to a server can put material on the Internet. Do not assume statements are true. As a critical user a student should consider the following.

* Who is responsible for the site?
* What is its rationale/purpose?
* Is the information recent or part of an archive?
* Is the site permanent or part of a permanent organization?

**Teaching tips**

The teacher can help students by:

* establishing firm deadlines for handing in bibliographies, rough drafts, and so on
* identifying high quality source material that is reliable and authoritative
* advising students when to stop researching and when to move on to discussing their findings and preparing the script.

Students should be reminded that their topic is going to be presented as a script for a documentary and not as an essay.