What goes on the blog.

Your blog is the record of how one film opening was made. Cambridge marks it on what it shows of that, and on nothing else. Several of you have asked me the same question this week: does this go on the blog? This guide answers it once, with real posts from the two blogs Cambridge publishes, so that from now on you can answer it yourself.

THE ONE TEST

Would a moderator who has never met me learn from this post how my opening was decided, planned, shot, or changed?

IF YES

Publish it. It is evidence, and the moderator is reading for exactly this.

IF NO

It does not go on the blog. It goes to ManageBac, into your notebook, or nowhere.

ALWAYS ON THE BLOG

- Your direction: the genre, the comparison text, the opening in three lines.
- Research into professional openings, read for camera, sound, mise-en-scène and editing.
- Your audience, with evidence.
- The pitch, the script, the storyboard, the shot list.
- Casting, recce photographs, the risk assessment, test shots.
- The production log: every shoot day, every change to the plan and why.
- Each cut, the footage, the final opening, the reflection.

ON THE BLOG IF IT ENDS WITH THE LAST LINE

- The four preliminary exercises: the photo story, the film letter, the design board, the continuity edit.
- Research into a film or a series that is not in your genre.
- Practice with a new camera, microphone or app.
- The *Parasite* post, which is already set.

The last line is one sentence: what this teaches the opening I am making. Without it the post is practice. With it the post is planning. Pages 2 to 4 show the difference on real posts.

NOT ON THE BLOG

- Exam practice on a set text: the *Parasite* paragraphs P3 and P4, the practice answer, the four-element paragraph.
- Notes from a lesson, a summary of a lecture, the glossary.
- A diary of what happened in class today.
- Anything your partner made. It goes on their blog, not yours.
- Your favorite director, a song you like, a film you watched at the weekend.

Exam practice goes to ManageBac as a document. Notes stay in your notebook. The diary goes nowhere.

Posts that pass, from the top-band blog

Candidate B is the blog Cambridge marked at the top of the highest band. These are four of its posts, quoted as written, with the moderator's comment beside each. Read the post first and decide whether it passes the test. Then read the moderator.

Mind Map

1 December 2016 · Research and planning

A HAND-DRAWN MIND MAP

These are some general ideas I would like to use for the film opening. They are according to title, genre and mise-en-scene.

PASSES

The moderator wrote: this is a great way to start planning. Clearly based on the research that precedes it.

TAKE THIS Twenty-three words and a photograph of a page. It passes because it shows a decision being made, and because the research posts before it are visible in it.

Plot

13 December 2016 · Research and planning

"Demure" begins with the main character introducing his world and thoughts, directly addressing the audience. He is sitting on his bed, in his isolated room, away from the world. [...] He then eventually manages to lay on the bed and fall asleep, troubled by dreams and nightmares.

But is he really falling asleep or is he just now waking up?

PASSES

The moderator wrote: a mistake that many candidates make is to create the plot for a full-length film. All that is needed, as here, is the opening sequence. This candidate has left us with a very interesting enigma, just as it should be.

TAKE THIS Plan the two minutes, not the film. What question does your opening leave the audience holding? That is your direction post's third line.

Character

19 December 2016 · Research and planning

TWO PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ACTOR

The main and only character in our film opening will be played by one of our colleagues. His name is Dan, he is 16 years old, he is 1.80 meters tall, he has blond hair and hazel eyes. We asked him to help us because he is very charismatic and has a dramatic side [...] He also fits the vision of the character that I had when I first thought about the ideas of this film.

PASSES

The moderator wrote: evidence of casting. This is often missing from candidates' blogs.

TAKE THIS Who is in front of the camera, with a photograph and the reason. Six weeks later the same blog has a post called "Actor changes", and the moderator calls its justification strong. A change is not a failure. An unexplained change is.

Location recce, The Paintbrush Factory

18 February 2017 · Research and planning

FIFTEEN PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE FOURTH FLOOR

This location is perfect for our film opening because we were looking for an abandoned house or room, this way we also have electricity and heating and we are not going on any property that we might not have been allowed to use. [...] The only sources of light are the windows. This will not be a problem when filming because we will use spot lights [...] This is why we will film in the afternoons and at night.

PASSES

On an earlier location post the moderator wrote: ideally recce reports should have comments about how each location could be used in the production. They should also recognise any issues involved, health and safety etc.

TAKE THIS A recce is photographs plus three decisions: why here, what the light does, what could go wrong. The post above answers all three. Yours can do it in a hundred words.

Two posts that belong, and still lose marks

Passing the test gets a post onto the blog. It does not by itself earn the marks. Both of these are about the product, and both are thinner than the moderator wanted. One is from the top-band blog and one is from the Level 3 blog.

Day 1

21 February 2017 · Development

The first day of filming was only a half day, we went to the Paint Brush factory in the afternoon and filmed a few shots. Mostly we checked the lights and prepared all our props for the next days. One of the room in which we wanted to film was locked but we talked to one of the men who work there and they will open it tomorrow morning. So we filmed in one of the other rooms and tried to be creative with what we had.

PASSES, AND COULD PASS BETTER

The moderator wrote: some sort of diary of the shoot is a useful record to help show how creative and technical decisions were made. This post needs more detailed discussion but is on the right track and contributes to the high AO3 marks.

TAKE THIS A shoot-day post is a decision and its consequence. The locked room is the decision. What "creative with what we had" actually meant, shot by shot, is what the moderator wanted and did not get.

Foundation Portfolio Film Planning

Candidate A · Final production · post 8 of 14

Movie Pitch. A depressed girl who is bullied and alone in school shares her reasons on how her life got to how it is.

Outline. After the opening scene, the film would go into chronological order of how the girl's life got to the point it is at.

Work Timeline. We plan to start filming on March 11th or 12th.

Roles. Julia is going to play to depressed girl and I will film. [...] Location. We are planning to film at Julia's house for just about half the scenes.

PASSES THE TEST AND STILL LOSES THE MARKS

The moderator wrote: each of the sub-headings in this post should constitute a post of its own. It is not sufficient to say that planning is implicit in the quality of the production. In order to assess it effectively plenty of evidence of the planning process needs to be presented.

TAKE THIS This is the whole plan for Candidate A's film, in one post. It is about the product, so it belongs. It scored low because a moderator cannot see a process in a summary. Candidate B had twenty-three posts between deciding the genre and the first shoot day.

What the two have in common

Both describe. Neither analyzes. "We tried to be creative with what we had" and "we plan to start filming on March 11th" tell the moderator that something happened, not what was decided or why. The coursebook's instruction is the fix: rather than simply describe what you did on a given day, analyze what you did and reflect upon it. Ask, could I have done that better?

So a post that belongs still has a second job. Name the decision. Name what it cost or what it changed. If you can, show it: a still, a before and after, the page of the storyboard that moved.

Posts that fail, from both blogs

None of these are bad work. Every one was made by a student who was trying. They fail the test because the moderator cannot learn anything about the opening from them, and the moderator says so.

Music video research

Candidate A · Preliminary tasks · post 5 of 14

Song, Titanium by David Guetta. Narrative Amplification. The music video takes place in an school to an empty house and then to a wooded area. David Guetta's music video for Titanium has many themes. Including supernatural events, fear and running away from problems. [...] From this video we are going to be using the supernatural aspect and sense of fear from this music video.

Music Video 2. Song, She Wolf by David Guetta [...]

FAILS

The moderator wrote: I'm not sure why this is in the candidate's AS blog. It does not add anything to our understanding of the process of production of the final product. This is not marked as such as it is not part of the brief.

TAKE THIS Four music videos, each with a sentence saying what "we will use". It still fails, because the film being planned is a school drama about a bullied girl, and nothing here touches it. A last line has to be true, not just present.

Music video preliminary task

Candidate B · 1 December 2016 · Preliminary

A MUSIC VIDEO, EMBEDDED

In order to practice video editing for my film opening I decided to make a music video for "Loving Someone" by the British band, the 1975. I chose this song because it has a strong message and a good rhythm for cutting and editing. Two of my friends will help me by acting in the music video, while I shoot and later edit the footage.

FAILS

The moderator wrote: an interesting task for the candidate but it is not directly relevant to the brief. The preliminary task should focus on skills introduction and development that are directly relevant to the brief. Ideally, candidates will only need to do one preliminary exercise and then move on to the research and planning stage.

TAKE THIS This is the top-band blog, and even here the moderator draws the line. Practice earns its place only when it practices the thing you are about to make. Your four exercises are already chosen for that reason.

The big six

Candidate B · 7 February 2017 · Research and planning

A HAND-DRAWN MIND MAP OF SIX CONGLOMERATES

In order to get a broader understanding of the media industry, I studied the largest six conglomerates that own the majority of media production and distribution. To have a clear overview of these companies, I designed a mind map which I wrote by hand.

BELONGS, BUT NOT HERE AND NOT LIKE THIS

The moderator wrote: this is not in the correct location. This should be in the earlier research section and should inform decisions about the institutional context of the production. The production itself should carry company idents based upon this research.

TAKE THIS Industry research is on the blog's list. It fails here because it is posted two weeks before the shoot, after every decision was made, and it changes nothing. The same post in October, ending "so our opening will carry an ident for a small independent studio", would have passed.

The last line, on two posts ten days apart

Both posts are from Candidate B. Both are about something that is not the candidate's film. One was called irrelevant and one was called the start of the planning. The difference is a single sentence.

Somebody else, The 1975

25 September 2016 · Research and planning

A MUSIC VIDEO, EMBEDDED

Some of the elements in this music video have inspired my final work. For example the site come sounds that can be heard in the opening scene.

FAILS

The moderator wrote: beware of including irrelevant preliminary materials such as this post.

TAKE THIS The post tries a last line and still fails. "Some of the elements" names nothing. Which element? Used where in the opening? The moderator cannot tell, so the post counts for nothing.

Quadrant rule for future filming

5 October 2016 · Research and planning

A CLIP ON THE QUADRANT RULE, EMBEDDED

One of my favorite TV series is the Emmy award-winning drama *Mr. Robot*. The main character, Elliot, suffers from social anxiety and the unusual style of filming manages to convey that same feeling to the audience. I would like to experiment with the unique quadrant rule and eventually use it in my film opening.

PASSES

The moderator wrote: planning materials start here. What we are looking for is how the production develops.

TAKE THIS A series that is not the candidate's genre earned its place with one sentence, because the sentence names a technique and says where it will be used. That is the whole standard for the last line: a named thing, and a place in your opening.

Three last lines, and what is wrong with two of them

THE LAST LINE	VERDICT	WHY
"This film inspired me a lot and I will use some of its ideas."	**Fails**	Nothing is named. The moderator learns nothing about your opening.
"I like how the camera moves in this scene and I want my film to feel like that."	**Fails**	A feeling is not a technique. Which movement? The handheld follow? The slow push in? Say the word from the list.
"The low angle on Mr Park at the top of the stairs is how I will introduce my antagonist, in the first ten seconds, before he speaks."	**Passes**	A named technique, a named moment in the source, and a place in your opening. A moderator could check it against your storyboard.

Before you press Publish

Three questions, in order. Most posts are decided by the first one.

ASK WHAT IT SHOWS

Which step of making my opening does this post show? If you can name the step, the post belongs. If you cannot, it does not.

ASK WHAT IT CHANGES

What will I do differently in my opening because of this? Write that as the last line. If nothing changes, the post is not planning.

ASK WHO IT IS FOR

Am I writing this for a moderator who reads my blog in May, or for the teacher who set the homework? Homework for me goes to ManageBac.

Sort these eight

Decide where each one goes before you look at the answers. Some of them move columns depending on how they end.

THE POST	WHERE IT GOES	WHY
A photograph of the corridor you want to shoot in, with the time of day the light works	**The blog**	It is a recce. A moderator learns where you will shoot and why.
Your paragraph on the Kims' semi-basement as a design system	**ManageBac**	Exam practice on a set text. Nothing in it is about your opening.
Your notes on the enigma code from Monday's lesson	**Your notebook**	Lesson notes. If you add one line naming the thing your opening withholds, that line is a blog post and the notes still are not.
The ten-frame photo story, with the contact sheet	**The blog, with the last line**	A preliminary exercise. Cambridge asks for evidence of it, and the last line says what it taught your opening.
A trailer for a film in your genre, with two sentences on what its first shot withholds	**The blog**	Research into a professional product, read for what it does. It counts more once your plan points back to it.
Your partner's storyboard, which you both shot from	**Their blog, and a line on yours**	Cambridge lets a group share a storyboard. It goes on the blog of the person who drew it. Yours says who drew it and what you changed.
A message from a friend saying your first cut is confusing, and what you did about it	**The blog**	Feedback and the change it caused. The moderator on Candidate A asked for exactly this and did not get it.
What happened in the Wednesday double	**Nowhere**	A diary of the day. The moderator is not reading to find out how your Wednesday went.

The *Parasite* post, and what changes from here

The frame analysis due Monday 21 September was set for the blog, so it stays there. Make it earn its place. End it with one sentence that names one of your six frames and says what it teaches the opening you are making, in the shape of the third last line on page 5. Without that sentence the post is exam practice on someone else's film, and you have just read what both moderators do with posts like that.

From the next task onward, exam practice goes to ManageBac as a document and never to the blog. That covers paragraphs P3 and P4, the practice answer on the party sequence, and anything else you write about a set text for Paper 2. The blog is for your film. Keep it that way and a moderator will find every piece of evidence without having to look for it.

What Cambridge asks for

The syllabus says every blog must contain six things. Everything in the left column on page 1 is one of them.

- The process of research, planning and production.
- Any refinement, changes or edits, and reflections on key moments.
- All your own contributions to any group task.
- Evidence of any preliminary exercises.
- The final finished product, clearly labeled.
- The creative critical reflection, clearly labeled.

Cambridge International AS & A Level Media Studies 9607, syllabus for 2027, page 21.

What the coursebook adds

One sentence, and it is the sentence this guide is built on. You do not need to post everything, "from classwork to a daily diary." Post what supports the production, and analyze what you did rather than describe it.

Notice what that rules out. A post that says what happened on Wednesday is a diary. A post that says what you decided on Wednesday, and why, is process.

Cambridge International AS & A Level Media Studies Coursebook, section 6.1.

Where everything else goes

- **ManageBac, as a document.** Every paragraph, answer or analysis written about a set text for Paper 2. It is marked there and it stays there.
- **Your notebook.** Lesson notes, the glossary, the viewing protocol, anything you wrote down to remember.
- **Nowhere.** The diary of the day, a film you liked, a song. If it is not about making your opening, nobody is marking it.

Read the two blogs whole

Every post on pages 2 to 4 comes from the two Component 1 blogs Cambridge publishes with its moderator's comments printed on them. Both are on the class site as PDFs: Candidate B, sixty-six posts in date order, the top of the highest band; and Candidate A, fourteen posts, a secure Level 3. Read B for the shape of a year and A for what a good film cannot rescue.

Cambridge International, School Support Hub, 9607 Component 1 Example Candidate Responses. Reproduced for classroom teaching at BNDS.