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Assessing film in higher education: straddling academic and professional conventions

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the multimodal assessment practices of teachers in a vocationally oriented filmmaking course, specifically identifying the principles guiding the assessment of students' post-production work. The study addresses the question, *according to what principles do teachers assess students' film post-production choices and expressions?* Although there is previous research into assessment of multimodal text across different subjects, it is yet not fully understood how multimodal assessment plays out in practice in vocationally oriented media education, where media artefacts (or 'products') become the ultimate expression of competence. Utilising a multimodal social semiotic framework, the qualitative analysis of teacher interviews, documents, and artefacts identifies four assessment principles: composition of text, text-making process, alignment with institution, and alignment with profession. Tensions emerge between the syllabus, emphasising practical/technical skills, and teachers' assessments, which also take into account aesthetic dimensions of filmmaking.

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Assessment; assessment principles; film; multimodality; norms

Introduction

This paper investigates the assessment of a post-production film project in a vocationally oriented media course at a higher education institution in Sweden, with formally agreed learning outcomes stated in the course syllabus, but without rubrics. The insights from this study can help inform assessment of film across other disciplines and educational contexts.

The emergence of vocationally oriented media and film education (Springer 2021) is a response to the growth of the media industry (British Film Institute 2022; Nunn 2020). In the UK, most of these courses are run at pre-1992/polytechnic universities, rather than research focused universities (Penn 2017). In Sweden (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2024), vocationally focused post-secondary education was brought into the higher education system in 1977 (Haikola 2015).

Film education is offered with different orientations, and can be vocational in focus, or have a more theoretical orientation (learning about film rather than learning to make film), although it has been argued the vocational/theoretical may be considered lenses on learning (Connolly 2020) rather than different kinds of learning.

Vocationally oriented new media programs can be seen as educational initiatives aimed at preparing students for the evolving needs of the media sector job market (Banks 2019). Such programs

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are designed to equip students with skills to utilise technical and digital tools for creating media content, while film education in traditional art schools place emphasis on the creative individual expression in filmmaking (Banks 2019; Springer 2021). However, the epistemological groundings in media education often do not define ‘what should be known’ (Connolly 2021, 316).

Despite new media programs becoming more prevalent (Springer 2021), there is limited research into assessment practices in such contexts. Student created films and multimodal projects are also assessed in subjects beyond film education, making the assessment of film relevant across subject domains and educational institutions.

Assessment is a powerful tool that shapes learning and is consequential (Bezemer and Kress 2016) through access to further education and job markets, making it important to understand and learn more about assessment in vocationally oriented media courses to help inform assessments in media education and other contexts where film is assessed.

The media course

In this course, the students were working with post-production of their own film; post-production refers to work with editing, sound design, colour grading, and visual effects.

The course introduces methods for digital processing of sound and image, as well as options for customizing materials for different distribution channels. The course focus is placed on the principles of digital image processing and sound production. The image processing is based on an understanding of colour theory and different techniques such as green screen, tracking, masking and rotoscoping. Sound design is studied both from a technical point of view and with regard to the narrative function of sound. In addition to laboratory exercises, processing of a previously recorded short film is carried out, where the student applies his/her knowledge in image processing and sound design. (From Syllabus, translated from Swedish)

The teachers, who were also film professionals, instructed and guided the students during the post-production process. This process was iterative and feedback was communicated in workshops, seminars, team meetings, and a pre-presentation session with their teachers where students received formative feedback before finalising the film.

We usually ask them, what are the intentions, what are you thinking, what is it we are supposed to feel here? [...] So we discuss such intentions [...], what details could we polish to get this and kind of feel even more like you want it. [Daniel, interview]

The assessed film project is where the students evidence their learning to make film as a ‘craft’.

The film

The film (Figure 1) was a group project. The students had recorded the short film in an antecedent course. In this course, they worked with post-production to make the film visually coherent and to set the atmosphere in different scenes.



Figure 1. The film ‘Lucas + Meia’.

Film (Spotterfish)		zoom				
time	image	time	Image	Image detail	gesture	speech
00:24		00:09				[Roger]: But then we run group four. Feel free to introduce yourselves.
00:30		00:15				[Student]: Kristian – go for it Kristian
00:35		00:20				[Kristian]: Okav, should I go? Yes, we've done our film - eh - I've been working on eh the sound design - while Jonathan has been working on the green screen - eh, Charlotte has been working on titles like this and after effects, eh - and eh, Felicia has been working on the grading and Ebba has checked that everything is basically (laughter) making sure that everything is - that everything gets done - and eh had the main responsibility for the editing and compositing and so - that's it really - I mean - What else should I say?

Figure 3. Extract from multimodal transcription of Film examination (Part 1: introduction to session).

the design and assessment of multimodal tasks (Bruce et al. 2023). Graul et al. (2022) examined a change from ‘midterm assessments’ to student created videos in physics; focusing on student learning, and innovative assessment practices, highlighting that the video task needs to be properly incentivised and that peer grading is possible but depends on an effective rubric and needs careful execution. A second strand focuses on frameworks for assessing multimodal tasks (Hafner and Ho 2020; Ross, Curwood, and Bell 2020). This prior research highlights challenges and opportunities with grading multimodal tasks (Georgiou 2020; Laingen 2020). A third strand is concerned with challenges, which include the complex and dynamic ‘arrangements of representation’ (Georgiou 2020, 4) and complexities across different disciplines, and ‘it is not a given that students will engage in an academically meaningful way’ (Laingen 2020, iii) in multimodal text tasks, and assessment design need to be carefully considered, also highlighted by Graul et al. (2022), and can ‘lead to a range of dramatically different outcomes’ (Laingen 2020, 360).

The assessment of film reaches beyond the specific context of vocationally oriented film and media programs in higher education. Film is increasingly produced by students in other subjects in schools as well as higher education, and text-making in different subjects is becoming increasingly digitised and multimodal (Fasting and Schofield 2023; Straume Bussesund, Engen, and McGarr 2023).

Research into the assessment of film and media has highlighted the importance of aligning multimodal composing with learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessments (Cartner and Hallas 2020), which is central for students’ (effective) engagement with creating multimodal texts (Dahlström 2021). Despite multimodal assessment having been explored across different levels of education the research shows considerable variation. As Åkerfeldt, Hashemi, and Magnusson (2023) noted, the field of multimodal assessment is an unstructured domain to unfold. Therefore, it is important to explore and understand the complexities of the assessment of student created films. This article introduces a new area of attention with focus on the teachers’ meaning making in the assessment of multimodal texts such as films.

A social semiotic, situated perspective on assessment

In this paper, assessment is understood as an activity of recognising and finding out what students know (Bezemer and Kress 2016) in a situated process (Butler Shay 2004) framed by academic/educational and professional/industry norms. Social norms can be described as shared values embedded in different social contexts (Chung and Rimal 2016; Rhodes 2020), such as different professional communities, education, and assessment (Salomonsen and Andersen 2014).

With a multimodal social semiotic perspective, assessment is understood as an instance of meaning making (Kress 2010) and involves the selective engagement with the students' film. In a higher education course, this meaning making is institutionally framed by the educational context, and assessment involves differentiating against and maintaining standards guided by regulations, syllabi, and procedures.

In joint assessments, as in this media course, teachers come together to calibrate their understanding of the standards written in the learning outcomes and grading criteria. In this process, the teachers make meaning of the students' film before deciding on a final assessment. This means assessment (as an exercise of calibration to standards) does not take place at one single moment but emerges from discussions with teacher colleagues and with students. Hence, applying the standards means teachers have to achieve a joint understanding of the film, as well as the connections between the film and the learning outcomes and grading criteria. In vocationally oriented media education, such assessment standards may be more or less explicit with reference to professional practices the students are being trained for, which may lead to tensions. The world of professional filmmaking cannot simply be replicated in the classroom, as the competencies and norms of those authentic professional contexts are recontextualised (Bezemer and Kress 2016), changed (Dowling 2009), and pedagogized in the process.

Data and methods

This study explores how three teachers jointly assessed one student created film and the students' post-production, in the context of the course within which the assessment took place, drawing on data from interviews, artefacts, and documents. The qualitative study employs multimodal transcription drawing on multimodal social semiotic theory (Bezemer and Kress 2016; Bezemer and Mavers 2011; Denzin and Lincoln 2000). The participants were voluntarily recruited to participate in the study, and informed consent was sought from all participants. The teachers carried out their normal assessment practices, and the data was collected at the end of the course.

The assessment practices of the teachers included formative feedback to the students during the course and jointly viewing the film at the end of the course, which counted as an examination, after which the teachers set the final grade(s) together. The students were given both a group grade and individual grades for the film assignment. As part of their assessment routines, the teachers discussed the quality of students' work and the finished film, using the learning outcomes for the course, and the grading criteria. These discussions were referred to in the teacher interviews but not recorded or observed. No rubrics were used in this course. In Swedish higher education, it is not uncommon to assess against written criteria that are formulated as continuous text or in bullet points. In addition to the syllabus, and the course manual, the teachers drew on their professional experience and knowledge in their assessments. All three teachers had worked in the film industry.

The teachers' assessments were framed and supported by the course learning outcomes (syllabus), and the grading criteria (course manual). Students are expected/asked to demonstrate theoretical understanding of post-production and be able to apply and explain basic principles of digital film post-production of film. The learning goals were evenly divided across theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Online open-ended teacher interviews, sharing screen and showing the students' film, and an online examination, where the students showed their film and received feedback from peers and teachers, were video/screen recorded.

Assessment documentation and digital material from the course virtual learning environment was also collected. One group of five students participated with their assessed short film. The students were under no obligations to show their faces or talk during the recording of the film examination. After the students had been graded, the teachers were interviewed individually to gain their reflections about the students' film and their assessment process. During the interview that included screen sharing, the students' film was rewatched. Three hours of interview material was generated, and 30 minutes of film examination.

Multimodal transcriptions, of image, speech, sounds, gesture, and gaze, were created of the students' film, the teacher interviews and the screen recorded film examination, and anonymised before analysis.

The data presented below is primarily drawn from interview and film examination quotes. However, the audiovisual data and multimodal transcriptions were vital in this study for making visible, and for understanding, the teachers' process of assessing multimodal text.

Coherence and cohesion

This article draws on the concepts of *coherence* and *cohesion* to scaffold the discussion about the principles of assessment identified in the data. The concepts have their origin in linguistics (Halliday and Hasan 1976) and have been further developed within multimodal research (Adami 2009; van Leeuwen 2005, 2015).

From a multimodal social semiotic perspective, coherence and cohesion are attributes of multimodal texts where a 'sense of completeness ... rests on features of cohesion – a formal attribute – and of coherence – an attribute of meaning – internally within the text and of the text with the environment in which it has been produced and is used' (Kress 2010, 148).

Cohesion is concerned with the text and its composition and refers to how the overall arrangements of a text are linked together, belonging together, within the frame of the text (Bezemer and Kress 2016), so that cohesion can be understood to be located in a text as 'a configuration of textual features' (Carrell 1982, 479), that is, the text itself. Coherence refers to how meaning is tied together beyond structural relations in a text and is attained through relationships within a text *and* with meaning making in relation to contexts, including the situational or cultural (Halliday and Hasan 1976; van Leeuwen 2015). In this study, these situational and cultural contexts are the academic institution and the film industry.

The following sections of this paper will describe and establish four principles of assessment that were identified in the data. These principles contribute to the understanding of how multimodal text is assessed in contexts where there are no metrics or rubrics used. The first two principles turn to the text and relate to *cohesion*. The last two principles are concerned with the (social) contexts and *coherence*.

Cohesion and principles of assessment

The composition of multimodal text

The first principle turns the attention to the composition of the text – the structure and use of modes, colour, sound, etc., in the students' film and how the film was tied together.

Beautifully held together in every way. [Daniel, film examination]

Very well told, as well as very well sounded through in all scenes. It's like nothing stands out somehow. Very smooth. [Roger, film examination]

Within this principle for assessments, the teachers were primarily concerned with cohesion and how the students had worked with tying different parts of the film together, using colour, light, sound, speech, and music.

I think it works very well with the alternation between two scenes [between] the environments and that there was a very distinctly different soundscape in the two, which created the illusion [...] of there being two different places. [Daniel, film examination]

Sound is an important part of the film experience and Daniel was engaged with how sound was used to created logic and cohesion in the narrative of the film.

It was a nice story, or it's a nice movie. [...] I think this film could do well at film festivals. [...] It was clear and easy to understand and just a good film. [Daniel, interview]

They have [...] good imagery, they have a good photo, good lighting. All the pieces of the puzzle are there. [Roger, interview]

In attending to how the students had solved the post-production challenges with editing colour, light, sound, speech, and music, the teachers engaged with cohesive aspects of the composition of the students' film and how the film had all the 'pieces of the puzzle' in place. How the students had worked with editing and how sound and images were combined to create cohesion and hold the film together emerged as key in the teachers' assessments.

The text-making process

The second principle centres around the process of text-making, and the students' work-process and engagement.

The whole process here had worked very well. [Daniel, interview]

Something that I discuss a lot in the last years or year. It's that several courses like this need to be tightened up so that it is possible to assess the individuals in a different way, since we give the individuals grades. It is not reasonable to give group grades. [...] If you only watch the film and nothing else, then nothing comes to light if this student has been active and participated in all phases of the group work [and] contributed to the film. [Johan, interview]

In the assessments, the teachers attended to how the students had approached the process of working with their film. In the after-synch, the students worked with cohesion (fitting in the sound) in their film.

It's most common to do the after-synch and then you work with it to make it fit into the production sound, but you've kind of done it the other way which is a fun way. [Daniel, film examination]

Here, Daniel's comment indicates that it would have been better if the students had followed the work-process norms. The students had broken the conventions of the workflow but still managed to solve the problem. That the students had made informed choices emerged as an important point to consider,

to see if they have worked consciously or if it is art by accident we are watching when the film is finished. [Johan, interview]

Johan here referred to film as art but was at the same time firm about the technical character of the course assessment.

Assessing artistic aspects at all is extremely difficult. [...] To judge art, no, that would be completely wrong, because [...] it does not say in the learning outcomes that it should be artistic but [...] they should understand the craft. [Johan, interview]

It's not about creative things, it's about, to a certain extent liking and taste, but it's more about how we have seen the commitment. [Roger, interview]

The aesthetic dimension of film appears to be present throughout the teachers' assessments even though the notion of film as art should not be factored into assessments, and as Roger says, the student's commitment should be the focus.

Another point of engagement for the teachers in their assessments was how well the students were able to respond to instructions and feedback.

You [...] notice who wants to take in supervision and I think that's quite a pretty important part of the grading. [Roger, interview]

That the students were responsive to instructions and feedback emerged as a key aspect in the teachers' assessments. The teachers assessed after the students' effort and thoroughness in the process of post-production, which emerges as more important than doing things 'right'. However,

We had some problems actually [...] in this class with a group [...] that [...] did every little thing exactly as I had written it. And then it gets really weird. [...] It turned out well but [...] it's not me [...] who decides the film. So that's what I'll have to do next time. [...] Not that I, as a teacher, should come in and tell them how it should be, but to try to find points to discuss and with my expertise be able to help them and understand more what is actually happening. [Daniel, interview]

If the students addressed all teacher comments 'letter perfect' this created a problem in assessments, because whose work was then assessed, the students' or the teacher's?

Coherence and principles of assessment

The alignment with the academic institution/school

The third principle is concerned with learning outcomes and expectations of the academic institution/school, and assessment being aligned with the specifications of the learning outcomes and grading criteria, i.e., coherence with the academic context (see Table 1).

These learning outcomes are both theoretical and reflect specific skills and competencies needed for professional post-production work, such as digital work with sound and moving image.

We go after [...] the course manual or the syllabus and there it says the criteria. [...] It's a really difficult part and there both me, Johan and Daniel [...] have tried to gather together [...] what they have done, tried to form some kind of opinion. [Roger, interview]

We have brief notes and in the worst case just reminiscences, but from these occasions when you've met them, and then you sit down, discuss [if] it makes sense and give this person this and that [grade]. [Johan, interview]

The learning outcomes and grading criteria were formulated in broad terms. This required the teachers to discuss and negotiate how and to what extent the specifications had been met

Table 1. Learning outcomes and grading criteria (translated from Swedish).

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	(From syllabus)
	On completion of the course, the student should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Account for and apply the basic principles behind digital post-processing of moving images • Account for and apply the basic principles behind digital post-production of sound in film production • Account for the narrative functions of the moving image • Account for the narrative functions of sound • Manage software for digital processing of moving images and sound • Apply audio and video compression correctly • Describe the workflow in post-processing of film production • Account for and apply basic colour theory • Actively participate in the post-production of a short film production • Account for technical standards regarding sound and image for material published in different viewing windows • Demonstrate the ability to cooperate in a working group
<i>Grading Criteria</i>	(From course manual)
	<p>Pass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has demonstrated practical and theoretical understanding of all phases of post-production of film • The student has actively participated in all phases of the group work and contributed to the completion of the film according to set deadlines • In addition, the individual student should be able to analyse and reflect on planning, technology and implementation of processing of both sound and image in film production • In the examination, the student is assessed individually as well as a group member <p>Pass with Distinction (in addition to the criteria for Pass)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student should have a very good theoretical understanding of post-production • Have a deep understanding of being able to analyse and reflect both organizationally and technically on their work • The student must have participated well in the final production

(i.e., attending to coherence with academic context). The criteria/specifications (Table 1) included that students should be able to ‘analyse and reflect’ (grading criteria), and ‘account for and apply’ (learning outcomes) the technology of finalising sound and image in film production.

It is quite essential that they have understood what they are doing, not just that it became a film so to speak.
[Johan, interview]

That the students were able to explain and motivate their choices emerged as key in the analysis. Being able to theorise around their learning reflects academic conventions for theoretical knowledge, analysis and reflection; ‘the individual student should be able to analyse and reflect on planning, technology and implementation of processing of sound and image in film production’ (see Table 1). During the film examination, the teachers selected instances from the film and asked the students to reflect on their post-production choices. Some of these choices had to do with colour grading.

Do you add any special LUT when you start with the grading? [Johan, film examination]

(LUT is a term used in film production and refers to a look-up table with predefined colour values for colour grading).

The teachers stressed the assessment discussion, negotiations, and implicitness of the assessment. Maintaining that they were assessing in alignment with learning outcomes and grading criteria (attending to the coherence with the academic context) emerged as important to the teachers. There was no evidence that the teachers were idealising their assessments. Instead, the process of negotiating the assessment in alignment with the grading criteria was expressed as difficult. The final grade was a joint assessment decision reached through discussions and negotiations between all three teachers.

The alignment with the profession(s)/industry

The fourth principle is concerned with the expectations of the profession(s)/industry, and professional requirements and norms. In addition to aligning their assessment with the academic institution/school norms and requirements, the teachers referred to professional standards in the film industry. This emerged in the data as the teachers foregrounded the importance of being able to work in teams, and the technical skills of the craft. In the film professions, collaboration is a necessity for producing a film.

There are those who think that it’s hard with cooperation [...] but they don’t last long out in working life.
[Johan, interview]

Collaboration was coded into the syllabus (Table 1). Individual work was taken into account, but collaborative skills were particularly important, and the teachers paid specific attention to collaboration skills based in the requirements of working life, i.e., coherence with professional contexts. While aspects relating to collaboration appear in examples in other sections/findings, they were prevalent when the teachers talked about how they should feature in assessment to help align with the professional industry.

It’s more about how we have seen the commitment from the individuals themselves [...] and the group itself.
[...] If this person [...] has been a driving force. [Roger, interview]

They had good collaboration in the group. [Daniel, interview]

The teachers’ engagement with the collaborative part of the students’ film project is an example of attending to coherence with professional context, and the work-process went beyond what was written in the criteria or the learning outcomes.

A basic norm for working collaboratively in film production was evidenced in repeated comments about the importance of working together with motivations in the needs of the real-world

filmmaking situation. It is not about how good you are but how well you can work with others that emerged as key in the teacher interviews.

Technical skills, ‘tools of the trade’ and the craft were other important assessment considerations relating to the requirements of the profession(s).

As a craft it was put together very well. [Daniel, interview]

Aspects of quality were noted in comments in relation to the craft, including camera angles.

That you’re kind of both up and cut, and a bit low [...] but the technical quality is impressive. [Johan, film examination]

It’s not that you come back to the same situation that’s the problem, it’s that you come back to the same camera setting. It’s a bit tedious but the sequence as a whole works great. [Johan, film examination]

Here the teacher engaged with the film breaking conventions for camera angles, and that visual choice affected the aesthetic impression of the film. Sound also affects the aesthetics of the film experience, and Daniel commented on how the sound of dialogue turned out in the finished film.

The dialogue when I listen in my speakers here, [...] it’s almost too thick, but it sounds very cinematic. [Daniel, film examination]

The teachers’ engagement with the aesthetics of the film was evidenced in feedback and interviews despite the technical focus in the construction of the course. In different ways, the teachers referred to the film as ‘good’, which can be understood as reflections of professional (and aesthetic) norms, and recognition of the film as cohering with the professional context(s).

The requirements of the professions emerged in comments and judgements that could not always be tied to the grading criteria or course goals.

They use themselves as actors [...] and [...] it reduces the production value. [Roger, interview]

Technical skills or mistakes were also placed in relation to professional contexts during the film examination. For example, the students’ film had a long stretch of black screen and silence at the end (which was a mistake).

It creates an uncertainty. [...] This is an example where after the end-credits there is something where you wonder, [...] will there be anything here? [Johan, film examination]

As the examples above indicate, it is not only about how skilled the students were in the use of different tools of the trade but also about the consequences of technical choices or glitches, which emerged from the teacher interviews and in the film examination, which point to the teachers’ engaging with aspects of coherence with profession/industry norms and contexts.

Discussion

This article has focused on how teachers assess students’ work in film post-production, with learning outcomes and grading criteria to guide them (but without rubrics), which is not an uncommon situation in Swedish higher education. Adopting a multimodal social semiotic approach (Bezemer and Kress 2016; Kress 2010), this study has approached the teachers’ assessment as instances of multimodal meaning making. This article contributes to knowledge about how teachers approach the assessment of multimodal text such as film. It does so by drawing on a multimodal social semiotic theory of communication to explore teachers’ meaning making in assessments.

Drawing on the empirical data, the study has identified and articulated four principles guiding the teachers’ assessments: (1) the composition of multimodal text, (2) the text-making process, (3) the alignment with the academic institution/school, and (4) the alignment with the profession(s)/industry. There is no claim that the articulated principles are explicit or distinct, and the numbered order should not be interpreted as a hierarchy. These principles relate to coherence

and cohesion (Halliday and Hasan 1976; van Leeuwen 2015) that contribute to the meaningfulness of a text.

The findings illustrate how the teachers drew on these principles and underlying academic/educational and professional/industry norms. A process that did not come without tensions as the academic and professional norms were found to partly overlap. The teachers' comments about merits (good, nice) of the students' film in this socially negotiated assessment can be understood within a context of shared norms – and understandings of what should be known (Connolly 2021) – in the craft of filmmaking.

The teachers reflected on their feedback practices and expressed that assessing the film was difficult, which is in line with findings from previous studies highlighting the complexities of assessing multimodal texts (Georgiou 2020; Graul et al. 2022; Laingen 2020). This does not mean that the teachers assessed without any frames or that the assessments were unstructured.

The analysis has made visible how the teachers' meaning making was institutionally framed by the course context. Through the process of assessment, the teachers had to differentiate against the specifications outlined in the syllabus and course manual, drawing from norms that guide and regulate expectations and accepted assessment practices, to reach a joint understanding of the film and how the film connected the learning outcomes and grading criteria. In this process, the teachers drew from the principle, *the composition of multimodal text*, attending to how students had succeeded in holding the film together using different modes, in relation to photography and light, including camera angles, and how sound was used to create feeling and construct the narrative.

Findings also illustrate how the teachers drew against the second principle, *the text-making process*, where the text-making (film) process as such emerged as more important than doing things the conventional way. Responsiveness to instructions and feedback are key in situations where students are learning as they work with making film.

When teachers drew against the third principle, *the alignment with the academic institution*, it was with attention to the specified learning outcomes and grading criteria. These learning outcomes were both theoretical and practical/technical. That the students could explain and motivate their choices emerged as key, where being able to theorise around their learning can be understood as reflecting academic conventions of theoretical knowledge and analysis. Academic norms were coded into the learning outcomes and grading criteria including what can be described as 'good student' markers. These emerge through the requirements reflecting academic conventions for theoretical knowledge, analysis, and reflection.

With the fourth principle of assessment *the alignment with the profession(s)/industry*, the findings show that the teachers were guided by professional norms beyond what was coded into the written criteria. Individual work was taken into account including technical skills and how well the student could use technical and digital tools in the craft of filmmaking, but collaborative skills emerge as particularly important. The analysis indicates that collaboration is a basic norm in the film industry, which is also reflected in 'twenty-first century' skills (Perry 2018), and outlined in frameworks for the film industry (British Film Institute 2015). The teachers arrived at their assessments through discussion where they had to rely on the course syllabus and their professional backgrounds to negotiate their assessment of the students' film. This collaborative approach to assessment can be understood as a reflection of a professional norm for teamwork in the film industry which the teachers articulate in their assessments, but also evidence in their work and assessment practices.

The assessments also fell back on requirements, and norms, of the authentic world of the film industry. The teachers' professional knowledge and experience were part of what framed the assessment. Underlying these considerations and expectations were professional norms. These norms are embedded in professional cultures and as such are largely implicit. Although, collaboration was listed as one of several criteria (students should actively participate in the group's work) it was not stressed, while in the teacher interviews working in teams emerged as key. Collaborating is also highlighted as an important 'soft skill' for the world of film work (British Film Institute

2015, 20). This is a norm that was found to be reflected in the teachers' assessments. Technical skills were not unimportant, and the teachers attended to how, and how well, the students had used different technical and digital tools in the post-production, and how this affected the quality of the finished film.

The teachers' assessments can be understood as negotiations, against standards/specifications and between the teachers, interpreting the learning outcomes and assessment criteria (Table 1) and conducted in a social space simultaneously regulated by the norms of the academic institution and the film industry. The assessment standards/specifications in this vocationally oriented media course were in one manner explicit with references to the professional skills and practices the students were being trained for. On the other hand, the real world and industry of professional filmmaking is not simply replicated in the classroom, which always has as its main purpose to train and educate the students and not make films for the market(s). The students should show that they had both theoretical and practical knowledge. This can be understood in the sense that the students should be able to operationalise what they had read and been told in the form of theory, put this into practice, and apply it. The findings point to how norms and competencies of the authentic professional contexts are recontextualised (Bezemer and Kress 2016), changed (Dowling 2009), and pedagogized in the process.

Overlaps in the academic and professional norms (Table 2) became visible in the aesthetic dimensions of professional filmmaking that were not part of the learning outcomes or grading criteria, but still a consideration for the teachers. Table 2 shows institution and industry norms coded into the syllabus and found in observed practice. The analysis has shown that the teachers understood film as a form of art even though they were mindful of referring to the technical/vocational character of the course that should not consider artistic qualities. Still aesthetic dimensions (Burn and Kress 2018) shone through in assessment. Aesthetic aspects of the assessments were for example discerned in comments about the work with sound being done 'beautifully' and 'being cinematic'. What the teachers considered a good, or beautiful film, is grounded in professional norms, and were expressed in the form of opinions. Arguably the aesthetic can be seen as something other than art, but the distinction does not emerge as clear-cut or easy to determine. The norms and conventions of filmmaking as a creative industry come into tension with the vocational/technical focus of the course and the norms of the institution/school. This overlap between the aesthetic and the technical is an area of potential conflict. Not all overlapping norms were a cause for tension of conflict. For example, student engagement reflects 'good' student (school) norms but being an engaged worker and a thorough craftsman are also working life (industry) norms. In this example, the overlapping norms would reinforce rather than cause tension.

Table 2 visualises overlaps between academic and professional norms. The syllabus outlined both theoretical (academic) and practical (professional) specifications, evenly distributed between the

Table 2. Academic vs professional norms – alignment and tensions.

Norms/conventions/expectations	Academic institution/school	Profession/industry
Syllabus <i>The teachers referred to/attended to:</i>	<i>The formal/theoretical/ descriptive/reflection (thinking about)</i> Written into the syllabus as: account for ... / describe ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative functions and basic principles in digital post-processing of moving image/sound • Workflow in post-processing • Basic colour theory and technical standards for sound/image 	<i>Skills /situational /practical /procedural knowledge (doing something)</i> Written into the syllabus as: apply ... / manage ... / actively participate ... / demonstrate ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software for digital processing of moving images/sound • Audio and video compression • Basic colour theory • Participate in the post-production • Cooperate in a working group
Observed practice <i>The teachers looked for/ engaged with:</i>	Technical skills Collaboration Thoroughness (good student)	The artefact & aesthetics Collaborative skills Technical skills Thoroughness (work ethics)

two. In observed practice norms for collaboration emerged as more important than technical skills, while in the syllabus the technical skills were specified in more detail. Being thorough, mirrored in the teachers' focus on collaboration and work-process, emerged as a basic/root norm in both the academic and professional contexts, while the aesthetic dimensions of the craft emerged in observed practice but were not present in the specifications (learning outcome and grading criteria).

Overlapping norms could therefore either reinforce (good student/hard worker norm) the teachers' assessments or cause tensions when the profession/industry norms diverged or differed in relative importance from the academic (aesthetics and collaboration).

This article has presented a situated example of assessment (in film education). The assessments were framed by academic/educational and professional/industry norms. In this vocationally oriented media course, the film artefact can be seen as the ultimate expression of competence, which will not be the case in other subjects where students may make films that are assessed. The principles of assessment identified in this study should be applicable to other contexts and subjects where student created films are assessed, although the specific tensions between the technical skills and the art of filmmaking would be more pronounced in contexts tied to the media industry.

Conclusion

The teachers' assessments were negotiated on the boundaries of the professional, aesthetic, and academic. The findings show that tensions emerge between the norms of the institution and the professional domain of film and uncovers that aesthetic dimensions of the craft emerge in assessments despite the focus on technical, rather than arts-related, post-production skills. Insights gained from the analysis highlight a need for supporting structures in contexts with unstable assessment conventions, when assessments move beyond the conventional, and where assessments are negotiated rather than measured.

The four principles identified in the analysis are a theoretical contribution to the field of multimodal assessment and add to the understanding of assessing multimodal texts in contexts where the assessment of multimodal text has to be navigated without rubrics, and within unstable assessment conventions, and could offer a structure for assessing multimodal texts. The four principles can be applied as a scaffolding for informing the formulation of assessment rubrics as well as construction of film tasks or other multimodal text types. With the development and promotion of vocationally oriented film and media programs, and the inclusion of assessed student created films in other subjects, it is becoming increasingly important to understand assessment in such contexts, but also from a wider perspective as students are creating films (that are assessed) in subjects outside film and media education.

Understanding the process of assessment in situations that include the multimodal, and that move beyond the conventional and measurable, are crucial for informing the design of assessments of multimodal texts and for improving practices for assessing multimodal texts. Findings from this empirical study can be used to explore implications for changing assessment practices, specifically, the assessment of film, which is increasingly used in assessed tasks in a range of subjects and courses.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethical approval

The study has received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at UCL Institute of Education: Z6364106/2019/10/150.

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