

# Student Video Production: Assignment to Assessment

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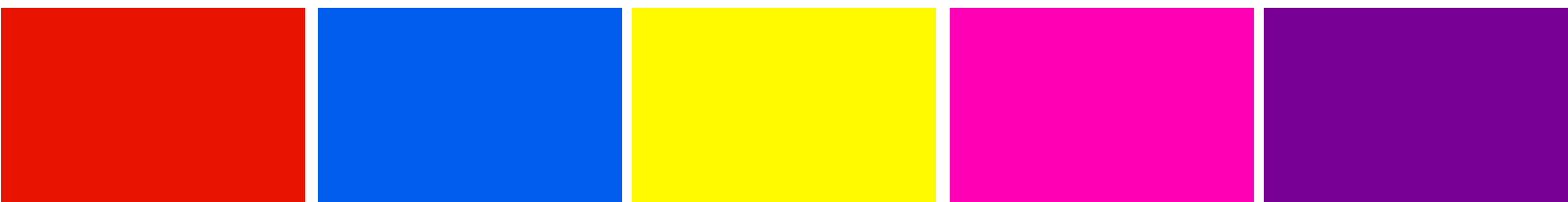


View Link



View Video

Please Note: Works best with Google Chrome or Internet Explorer



# 1. Introduction

The value of student video productions in higher education is often understated in discussions related to ICTs in education, where the topic of lecture recording dominates. This concerns students' consumption of video rather than production. We would like to shift from the notion of video as just a resource to focus on video as a teaching and learning strategy/task where the end product is as important as the filmmaking process.

A useful concept to explore is 'Digital Storytelling' which refers to amateur videos that uses a first person narrative to offer a personalised perspective on a particular topic.



What is Digital Storytelling?



Centre for Digital Storytelling

Not all student videos can be considered 'digital stories' because there are many different video genres or categories:

**Personal or Reflective:** Aims to tell the story from the creator's point of view.

**Promotional:** Aims to promote or advertise something such as a service, product, company, event or society etc.

**Explainer:** Aims to explain something such as an idea, service, product or company.

**Advocacy:** Aims to advocate for a specific cause, community or NGO.

**Educational:** Usually covers educational material only and could be a recorded lecture or tutorial on a subject.



However, a video can fall into more than one category. For example , this video explains the idea of Open Education while both promoting and advocating for this particular cause.



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**Why Open Education Matters**

We will use 'student videos' to refer to a variety of student generated content using the medium of video. However, a digital storytelling framework is helpful to students creating videos and for the educators assessing these products, since it can teach students how to structure their videos.



**UCT RAG by Matt**

Next we'll look at a few guidelines to consider when setting a student video project.



## 2. Preparing students for the assignment

As an educator, the assessment of your students' videos depends largely on how the assignment has been framed. Explain the video assignment topic to students and show examples of the kinds of videos you would like them to produce (personal, promotional, etc). However, reinforce that you will not be assessing the quality of the video, but its method and argument. It is also helpful to remind students that this is a time consuming assignment and that unlike an academic essay, it is impossible to start this project the night before!

It is also essential to show students examples of good and bad filming compositions. It may not be obvious to certain students that bad lighting, poor sound quality and shaky camera shots should be avoided for both aesthetic and technical reasons. Here are two examples of good student videos.



**What is UCT RAG?**



While both are structurally clear and tight, Matt's is stronger on a technical level whilst Rob's video exemplifies a strong argument.

The image shows the word "Varsity" in a large, red, serif font on a black background. To the right of the word is a red circular badge with a white border. Inside the badge, the word "CELEBRATING" is written in small white capital letters at the top. Below it, the number "70" is written in large white digits, and the word "YEARS" is written in smaller white capital letters at the bottom.

This is also the ideal time to educate students about ethics. Encourage them to use creative commons material and explain that publicly available and public domain are not the same thing. If they going to be interviewing people, tell them about informed consent and the importance of consent/ release forms.A more detailed discussion on ethical and legal considerations for student video projects can be found in section 6.



[Varsity Newspaper by Rob](#)

This kind of assignment requires a minimum one month time frame for effective completion.



It is advisable that students plan their videos by doing a storyboard to get them thinking about the kind of video clips, images and music they would need to record or collect and how to structure these materials in a particular sequence to communicate a narrative. Provide one week for this level of planning, another week for filming, interviewing and collecting or taking photos. Provide a week after this for editing and voiceovers and another for doing a rationale and submission. It is important to consider students' time commitments. For example, a one week holiday between semesters is an ideal time for editing but not necessarily for interviewing fellow students who will be off campus during the vacation period. A recommended project timeline follows in section 7.



What is storyboarding?



Example of a storyboard



Template for storyboarding

A storyboard is the planning of your short video shot by shot. Storyboarding is an important practical exercise in brainstorming and conceptualising your video ideas. It helps students see how all the elements in their story fit together. The different elements that you will think about in your storyboard are:

- 1. Shot:** Visual elements such as still images or moving clips. You can draw your shots or jot down what you visualise.
- 2. Voiceover/Dialogue:** Narration, spoken words or written text in your shot.
- 3. Music/Sound:** Musical soundtrack, sound effects or ambient noise in your shot.
- 4. Comment:** Write down any notes for the shot in this section i.e Do not film a certain participant's face.



# 3. Students' access to recording technologies

Ask students about their current access to recording technologies (digital video recorders, cameras on mobile phones, etc). Assure them that marks will not be based on video quality, instead maintain that the emphasis is on how they use visual material/ elements (such as video, still images, text, music and voiceover/ narration) to tell a story. The expectation is not for them to produce broadcast quality feature films, but personalised digital artefacts related to a particular topic. While most university students are familiar with digital video recording, it is also important to make provision for those who may not have access to such resources. Make sure you have a cheap digital camera capable of taking decent quality videos for these students to borrow from you. The students will also need a headset with microphone to record voice.



**'Video 101' discusses options regarding recording technologies**



**Vimeo Video School offers fun video tutorials on filmmaking**



## 4. Video editing software

It is fair to say that filmmaking tools and editing software are becoming increasingly accessible and cost-effective to the novice filmmaker. Today's student production can be filmed entirely on a decent quality cellphone camera or a low-priced digital /flip camera. Students will find themselves using devices that are integrated into their daily lives such as cellphones and laptops.

It is recommended that educators encourage students to make use of easy and free software tools for editing their video clips. For Windows, students can use Windows Live Movie Maker and for Apple, iMovie. The programmes come pre-installed as part of certain OS versions or can be freely downloaded from the internet. In our experience, students rarely experience difficulty with these video editing programmes due to the manageable interfaces of the software and the numerous helpful support resources available online. A simple google search contains helpful how-to guides and troubleshooting tutorials.

Sometimes students will need to convert their video clips before being able to edit it. This is the case when students use a device which may save the video file in a format that is not read by the editing software. We recommend the following free video converter:



**Mobile Media Converter**





**How to use Windows Live Movie Maker: Video & Step-by-Step Guide**



**Microsoft in Education Teaching Guide on using Windows Live Movie Maker in the classroom**



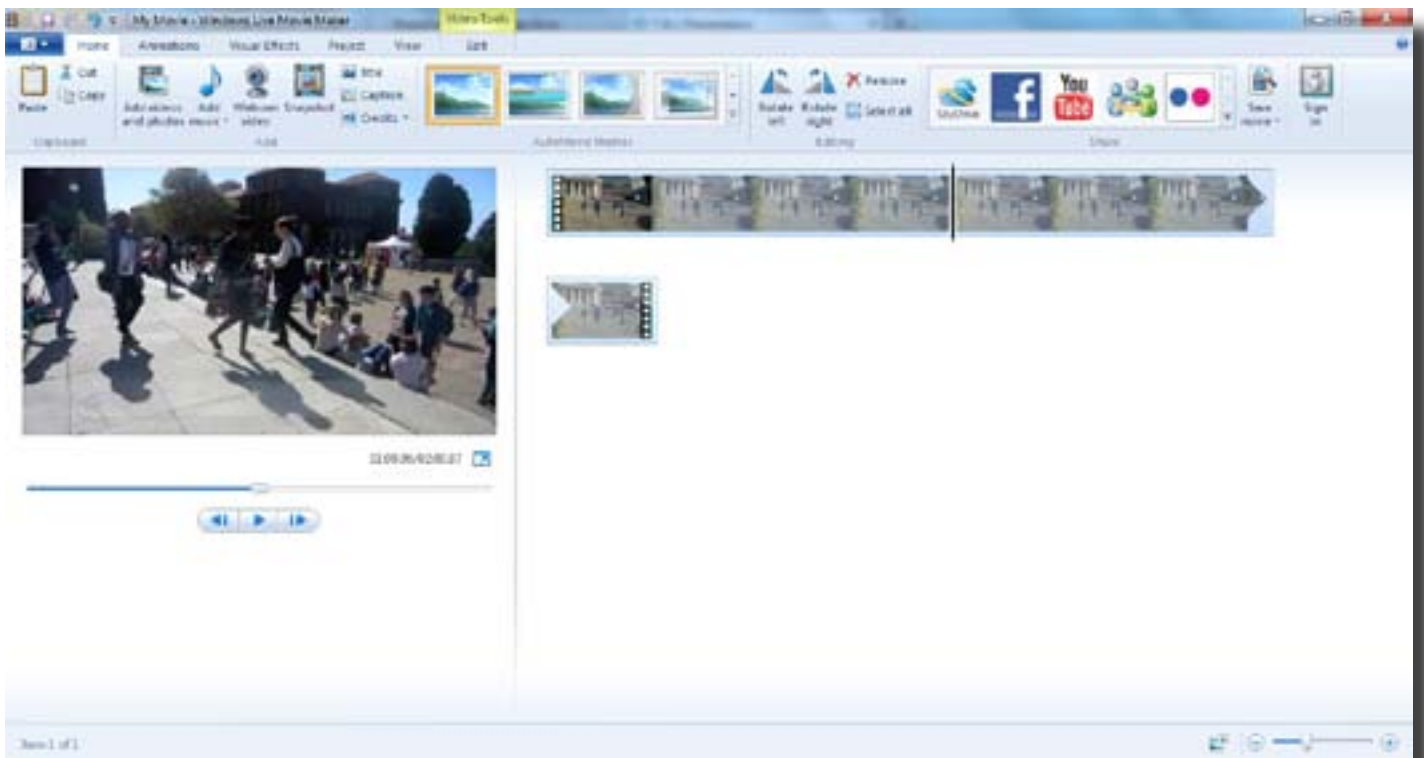
**Download Windows Live Movie Maker**



**How to use iMovie (A guide by Bowling Green State University)**



**Download iMovie**



**The screenshot above shows the Windows Movie Maker Live Interface**



# 5. Formats for student submissions

Ask students to save their short videos in an accessible format such as .wmv, .avi, .mov. They can then burn their video onto a CD to be handed in or upload the video onto an online video hosting service such as YouTube and send you the url link for marking purposes.

Students should also be encouraged to share their videos on social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook to allow interactive discussion amongst their peers and gain constructive feedback. It is best practice to ask students to write a rationale or reflective essay for their videos. Setting a written piece in addition to the video assists an educator towards understanding students' motivations for particular semiotic choices (why the student has chosen a particular location for the video, piece of music, etc). It also helps one gauge a student's planning, reflection and experiential learning to a certain extent.

In our experience, we have found it helpful if educators set up a YouTube channel and upload students' videos so that they are in one location and easily accessible to both the educator and students. Additionally, this assists students who may not have the available bandwidth to upload large video files to YouTube.



**Supported YouTube Formats**



**Example of a YouTube channel with student videos**



## 6. Ethical & legal considerations: Creative Commons, informed consent & sharing

Make sure to explain the use of creative commons materials to students and why using copyrighted material can have negative consequences. Often students get carried away in the excitement of making their own videos by choosing to ignore copyright rules and use the latest music or images that they find very appealing. They then face huge disappointment if they want to publicly share their videos as copyright laws forbid such usage. Thus it's very important to talk about copyright issues from the beginning.

Creative commons materials have been licensed to allow people to freely use, re-mix and share materials without the rigid restrictions that traditional copyright imposes on legal usage. You can easily search for creative commons materials using a search engine such as google or do a general search on the creative commons website.



\* [What is Creative Commons? \(Video\)](#)

\* [More about Copyright Laws In South Africa and Creative Commons](#)



\* [Creativecommons.org](https://creativecommons.org)

\* [Creative Commons Licenses](#)

Materials that are licensed using creative commons are a great alternative to copyrighted materials and thus it is necessary to guide



students to creative commons sites that give them access to resources. Here are some useful creative commons sites:

You can do a creative commons search for images on Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/>) or use Open Graphic Design for vector images (<http://www.opengraphicdesign.com/>)

Kahn Academy has a range of educational videos licensed under creative commons (<http://www.khanacademy.org/>) or you can look on Academic Earth for videos on various topics (<http://academicearth.org>)

You search on Jamendo for music licensed under creative commons (<http://www.jamendo.com/en/>) or check out Free Sound for various sound files (<http://www.freesound.org/>)

Regarding instances where students may be required to interview somebody or have other people featured in their video, they will need to be reminded about the importance of informed consent. Ask each student to submit a consent form with the person's contact details as part of the assignment. It is advisable that educators set up a template consent form for students to use which includes the university logo and the educator's email address in case someone from the public wishes to withdraw their consent.

The consent form should also include a checkbox where the interviewee

acknowledges that the video may be posted to YouTube or placed online. Educators may want to start a YouTube channel with student videos so that students, interviewees and other potential audiences can watch the videos after submissions.



[Consent Form Template](#)



Student video projects are often subject to the same ethical procedures as research with human subjects. Please consult your university faculty's ethics committee about the use of video and informed consent. You may need to submit an application for ethical clearance before setting the assignment. Diverse fields of study are likely to use student videos in different ways and some more controversial videos are likely to stay offline and be used for research purposes only. These includes sensitive topics where people may not want to be identified or shown online (stories about domestic violence, rape, child abuse etc). Protection of individuals needs to be considered before online sharing. Also bear in mind your local context, as particular laws may be country specific.

Duke University also has a number of online guides and samples (consent forms and oral consent scripts), guide for conducting research with children, releases for the use of images and recording and a guide for designing and describing confidentiality procedures.

Students need to be aware of how their choices and practices impact those around them. Encourage them to maintain a good standard of ethical practice.



Duke Ethics & Practice website



Core Principles for Ethical Practice in Digital Storytelling



# 7. Project timeline

We recommend covering 4 stages when working with film in a 1 month period:

## **Week 1: Pre-Production (Research & Planning)**

In this week, we advise educators to introduce all film concepts and theory to students (i.e digital storytelling, storyboarding, etc). An effective way to help students understand the good and bad practices of film is to showcase a number of videos to illustrate and highlight aspects such as story structure, framing and composition. Within this time, students should be asked to complete a storyboard for review. Storyboarding is an excellent exercise for students to brainstorm and conceptualise their film ideas. The main aim of the first week sessions is to get students to see the main purpose for creating a video and work on the intended message their video needs to impart to the target audience.



## **Week 2: Production (Shooting on Location)**

Allow students a full week to shoot various footage. Supply them with the relevant contacts (contact sheet) whom they can get in touch with to arrange an interview and filming sessions. It is best to remind students to make sure they have left an extra day open for re-shooting footage or collection new footage should they not be happy with what they have. By the week's end, student's should have filmed whatever they need to.



### **Week 3: Post Production (Editing)**

This week focuses on rendering the film to completion. Give students the choice to edit from home if they wish to do so or edit in a computer lab booked out for them. The collective lab sessions prove useful as a space where students work in a team by helping each other out with various problems experienced in editing or providing their peers with constructive recommendations to edits. The editing stage also highlights filmmaking as a non-passive task but rather an active exercise in critical thinking where one has to think carefully about choosing the elements to piece together to make your video work.

### **Week 4: Written Report and Premiere**

It is advisable to incorporate a written component to go with students' video submissions. The last week is incredibly useful for tying up everything in a written report or rationale. You can ask students to hand in a written piece supporting and arguing the choices they made in their own film. A premiere to a selected audience is also vital in providing feedback on the effectiveness of the films. In the premiere, you can ask each student to submit a short peer review on a video that they have viewed in this screening.

In addition , you can ask students to partner up with each other for the whole month. The usefulness of having a partner, means you can use this person to bounce ideas off and ask them to review your video in the making. Partnering teaches students to work in a team and to think critically and constructively when providing feedback to each other.

Lastly, it is accurate to say that without careful planning in a structural manner from the educator, such a module would fall flat and students may fail to complete the project on time.



# 8. Assessing students' videos

Unlike multiple choice tests or essays, categorising right and wrong 'answers' in videos is tricky due to the subjective nature of film. One may argue that there are no wrong answers, provided the student has been able to produce a digital video and essay rationalising their image and music choices etc.

However, like essays, digital stories also have a particular structure and different parts have certain functions:

- \* **Beginning:** Does the student introduce or frame the topic effectively? Is the topic or question of the video clear from the start? Is the viewer being drawn in?
- \* **Middle:** Does the middle of the video elaborate on the topic by using a combination of images, sound, video and text to support the argument presented in the introduction to the story?
- \* **End:** Does the viewer have a sense that the topic has been concluded or a question answered? Are there credits acknowledging interviewees, photographers, etc? The credits may also include a website where viewers can find more information about the topic in the video (eg. the website or Twitter handle of a student society discussed in a video e.g. @varsitynews).

While digital videos allow different modes of communication to be edited together, it is important to consider how the student has combined different media to produce meaning. Does this combination reinforce the argument or narrative presented in the video or does it work against it?



Remember that the message imparted to the audience is always the most important aspect of their video. A session allowing both students and educators to watch the videos together, similar to a 'premiere' followed by a discussion panel is also useful in the assessment stage for gaining constructive feedback.



***Here is an example of a video marking grid*** to help you assess student videos. Feel free to tailor it to your assignment topic.



***Here is an example of how Matt's video*** in section 1 was graded using the above marking grid.



As videos are subjective, we recommend that you make use of the following people to provide their opinions and help with assessment: a colleague from the same field, a family member and a student ( See example of collaborative marking in Matt's assessment). To get student feedback, educators can include a peer editing exercise where students use the above marking grid to review a peer's video by giving marks according to the criteria listed and provide additional comments.



## 9. After assessment

The inherent value of video as a visual medium is that it can showcase subject matter in an engaging and memorable way that written text may not be able to achieve in the same sense. Filmmaking itself can also bring a new perspective on a certain topic for students as they get to know their subject matter quite intensely in the one month creation process.

In our experience, we have also found that students enjoy these assignments immensely. They tend to feel empowered after producing a finished product and unlike an essay, they are not shy to share it and show it off to friends and family. In this way, videos have a personal reward dimension for students.

For educators, a YouTube channel with student videos can become a sustainable resource. A channel with student videos are also sustainable in the sense that they can be showcased to the following year's students.

This kind of assignment becomes refined year after year, educators learn from their own experiences and build their own collection of resources to give to students for their video assignments. As time goes by, educators are likely to improve their collections with more recent and updated materials, software and resources.



# 10. Contact details

We hope you find this guide useful and that it has encouraged you to embark on the journey of student video projects!

If you have any further questions regarding student video projects, please email Nicola: [mz.pallitt@gmail.com](mailto:mz.pallitt@gmail.com)

Follow us on Twitter:

 @nicolapallitt

 @Rulisha

## Student Comments

*Producing a video was something completely new to me, so I was a little daunted initially. I think if it's on a topic you are passionate about, especially a society or club you are involved in at UCT, the passion for the subject will shine through, and I hope it did in my video - Rob*

*I was able to learn important and valuable video editing skills, even if it was fairly basic and with a free app like iMovie - Matt*



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