



Censor for a Day 2006

Results and teacher feedback

Office of Film and Literature Classification
2006

V for Vendetta - Wellington, Dunedin, Invercargill

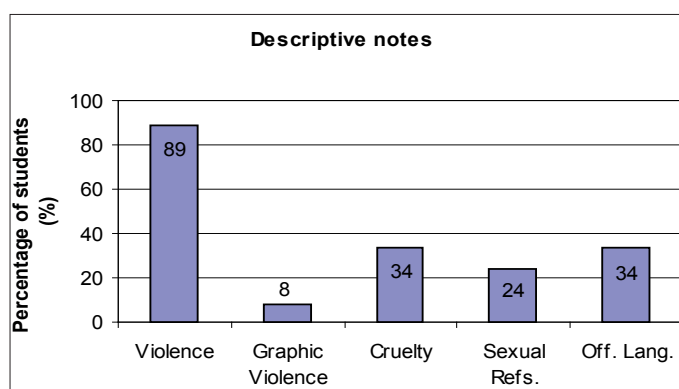
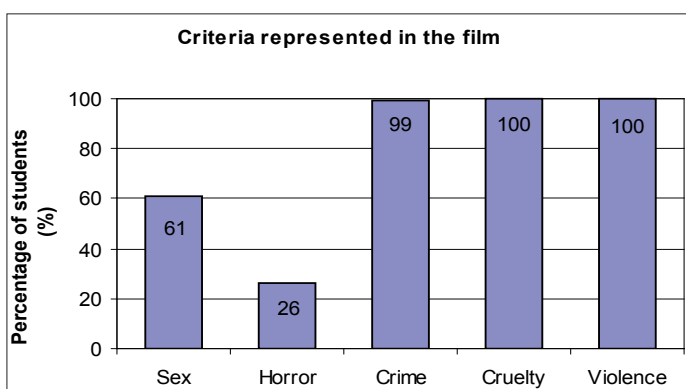
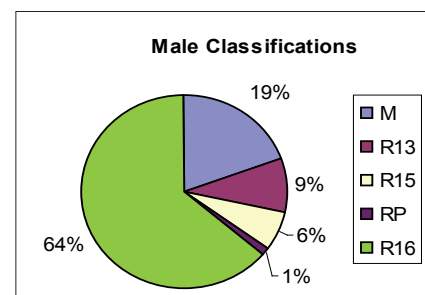
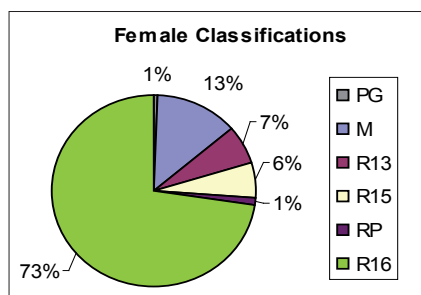
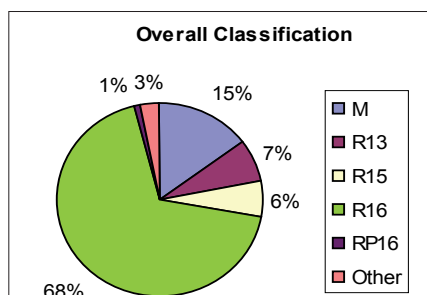
For the first time since it began, Censor for a Day was held over two separate weeks, covering five cities instead of three. Two different films were used, as the first was released in theatres before the second week. In the first week the film *V for Vendetta* was shown to 253 students (169 girls, 77 boys, and 7 who did not state a gender) in Wellington, Dunedin and Invercargill. Students were 82% Pakeha, and there were no large proportions of any other groups.

Overall, 68% of students gave the film the R16 classification. There was a difference between the genders, with 73% of female students opting for R16 but only 64% of male students. Male students were more likely than female to give the lower restrictions such as R13 and R or the unrestricted rating M.

Just under 90% of students gave the film a descriptive note mentioning violence, with 20-35% adding one or more of cruelty, sexual references or offensive language.

These notes were based on the criteria identified in the film according to the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 - sex, horror, crime, cruelty and violence.

Set against the futuristic landscape of totalitarian Britain, *V For Vendetta* tells the story of a mild-mannered young woman named Evey (Natalie Portman) who is rescued from a life-and-death situation by a masked man (Hugo Weaving) known only as "V." Incomparably charismatic and ferociously skilled in the art of combat and deception, V ignites a revolution when he urges his fellow citizens to rise up against tyranny and oppression. As Evey uncovers the truth about V's mysterious background, she also discovers the truth about herself – and emerges as his unlikely ally in the culmination of his plan to bring freedom and justice back to a society fraught with cruelty and corruption.
(from Warner Brothers' website)

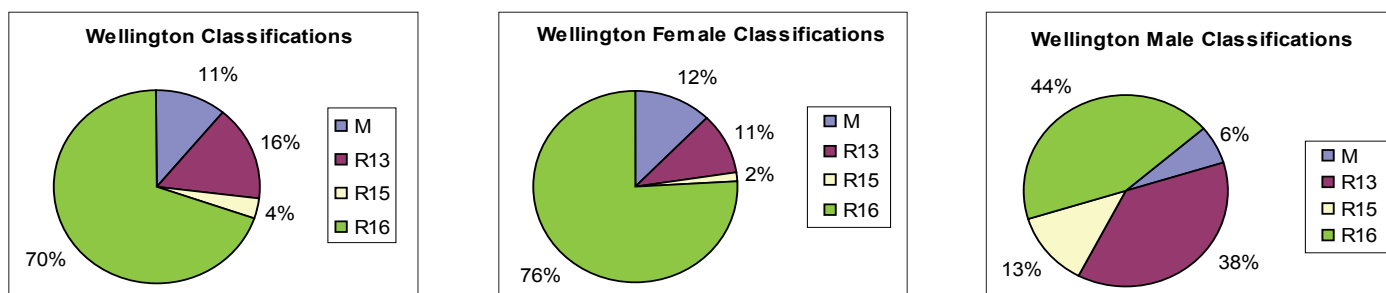


The Office classified the film R13, with the descriptive note "Violence, offensive language and sexual references".

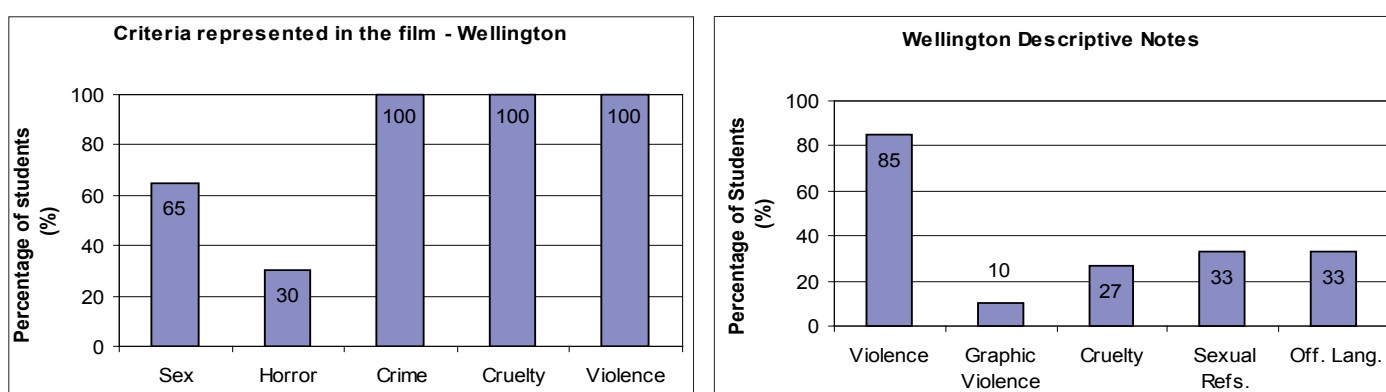
V for Vendetta - Wellington

86 participants attended the Censor for a Day session in Wellington on Monday 20 March. Students and teachers came from Queen Margaret College, St Catherine’s College, Newlands College and Hutt Valley High School. St Catherine’s College also brought students from St Patrick’s College in Kilbirnie. There were 66 female students, 16 male students and 4 who did not state a gender.

Wellington students were slightly more likely to select R16 than the national average. However, they were also more likely to select R13 than M. This was particularly noticeable among male students, although the small number of boys means it is difficult to draw any real conclusions.



When asked to identify classification criteria in the film, all students selected violence, crime and cruelty, with 60% also selecting sex. All male students gave the film the descriptive note “Contains violence”, with some adding either crime or criminal activity. 90% of female students gave the film the same main descriptive note, although they were more likely to include other descriptive notes such as sexual content, offensive language and criminal activity. Students mentioned the possibility of younger people mimicking the bomb-making and other criminal activity in the film as influencing their classification decisionmaking.



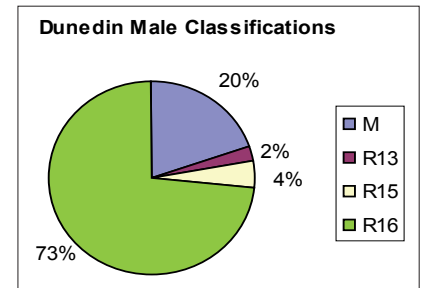
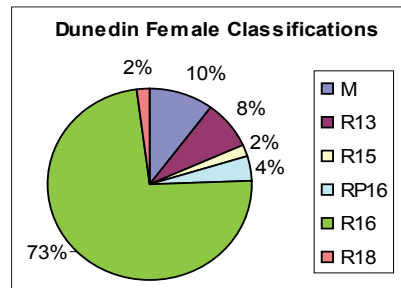
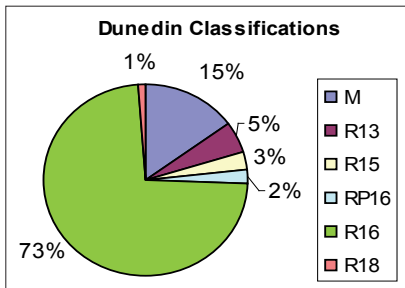
60% of students thought that the film was aimed at people over 16. Some female students thought it was made for people over 13.

Most Wellington students felt that the film had either social or political merit. The question “Was the film trying to make you think” brought out responses ranging from “its just entertainment” to comments that indicated that the film made them think about society, where it is heading, and the role of the individual in questioning authoritarian governments.

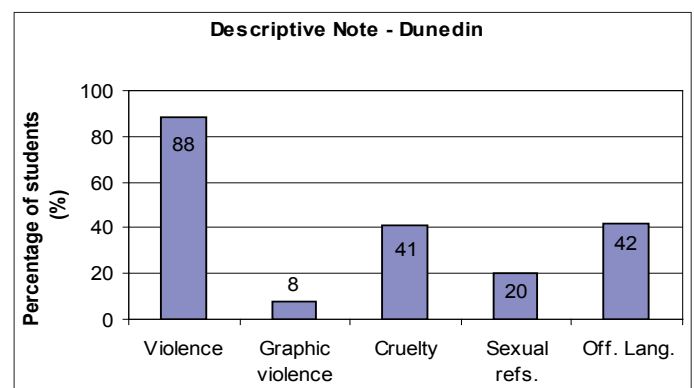
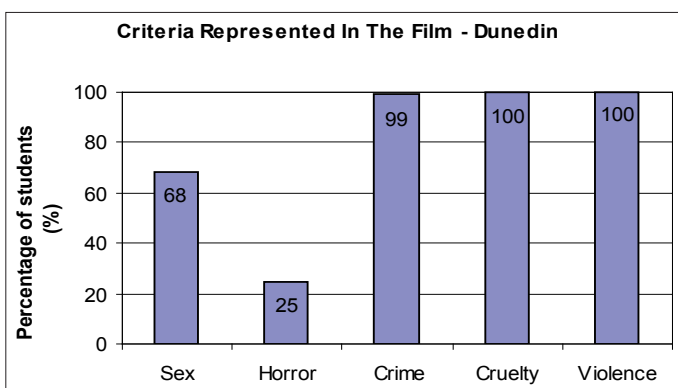
V for Vendetta - Dunedin

95 participants attended the Censor for a Day session in Dunedin on Tuesday 21 March. Students and teachers came from Columba College, Taieri College, Otago Boys' High School, Kings High School, St Hilda's Collegiate and Queen's High School. There were 49 female students, 45 male students and 1 who did not state a gender.

73% of students, both female and male, in Dunedin thought that the film should be classified R16. The other boys were more likely to give an unrestricted classification than the girls. The somewhat skewed results from the other two centres resulting from the small numbers of boys are not apparent.



When asked to identify classification criteria in the film, all students selected violence, crime and cruelty, with over 60% also selecting sex. All but one student selected either violence or graphic violence as a descriptive note with many noting the torture scene as a major reason for their choice. There was some acknowledgement that the violent scenes were somewhat stylised, and that in the context of the story the violence was not gratuitous. One student commented, "I don't think fountains of blood were needed, but I do think the extent of the violence was necessary to convey the severity of the drastic actions required of the characters".

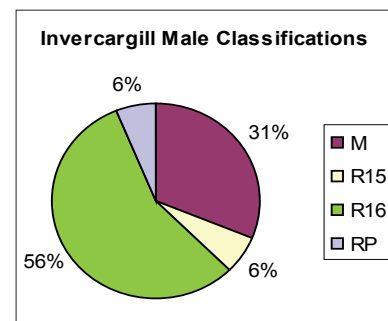
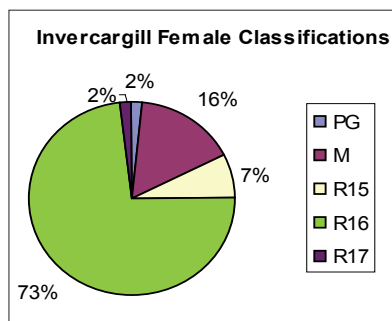
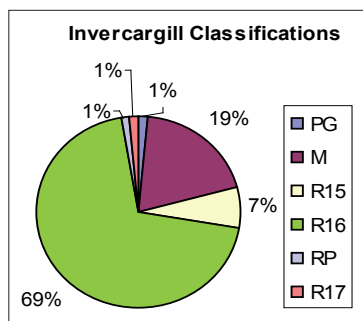


Most Dunedin students found the film thought-provoking although some noted that it shocked them. Many found that the film had social and literary merit. The questions the film raised about government were recognised and appreciated by students - "It has social importance - deals with dictators and seems to relate to history and people like Hitler and Stalin, saying that we have to be aware and not let these situations happen to us. It could happen anywhere, even Britain. It also tells us to be true to ourselves."

V for Vendetta - Invercargill

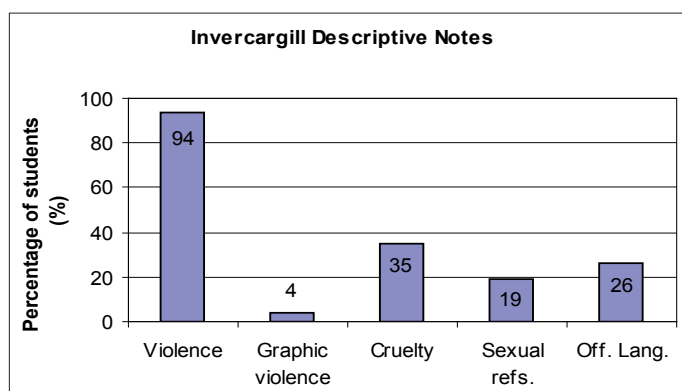
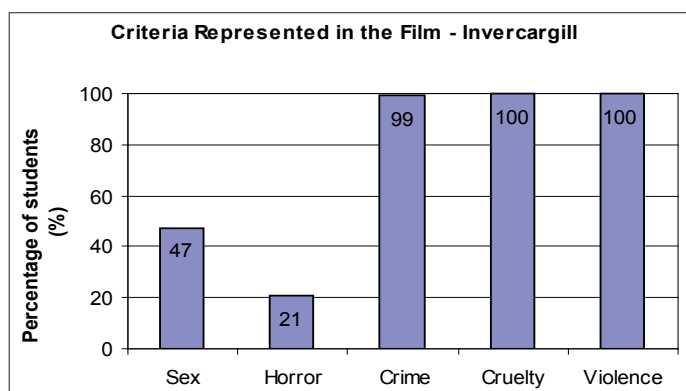
72 participants attended the Censor for a Day session in Invercargill on Wednesday 22 March. Students and teachers came from Southland College, Verdon College, St Peter's College and Menzies College. There were 56 female students and 16 male students.

69% of students in Invercargill thought that the film should be classified R16. This, the smallest group of students, also had the highest overall percentage of unrestricted M classifications.



When asked to identify classification criteria in the film, all students selected violence, crime and cruelty, with slightly fewer than 50% also selecting sex. All but one student selected either violence or graphic violence as a descriptive note with many noting the violence and terrorism as major reasons for their choice. A large number of students remarked on the use of bombs. However, other students felt that "Violence was implied, you never saw the knives enter the person, and when V was poisoning people you never saw it happen."

One student identified the music as a factor in creating the atmosphere of cruelty and terror - "Cruelty was presented extremely realistically, especially the psychological aspect, through the music, which suggests 'loner' and 'madness' as with Beethoven/Mozart. The institution where he was kept is incredibly symbolic..."



Most students found the film thought-provoking although some noted that it shocked them - "The film was shocking - the connotations of much of the dialogue and images related directly to Hitler, the Twin Towers and other social aspects which are not too pleasant". Many found that the film had social and political merit. One student identified the cinematography as a contributor to the artistic merit of the film.

Final Destination 3 - Wellington, Christchurch, Nelson

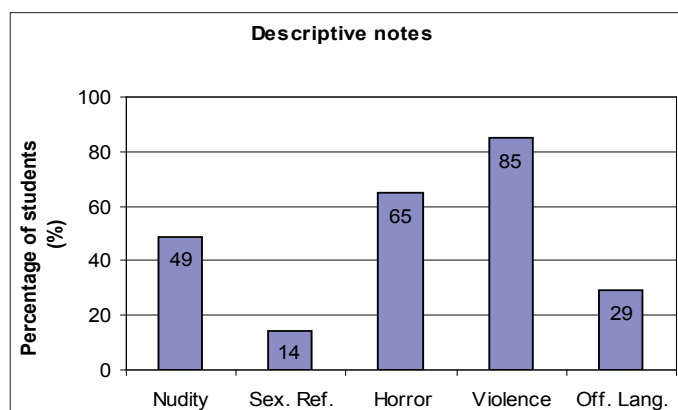
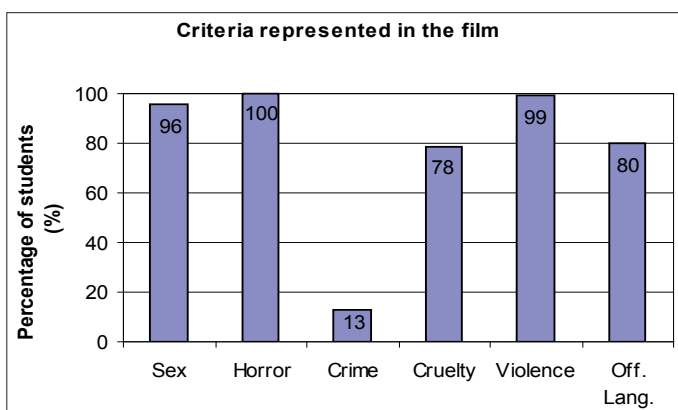
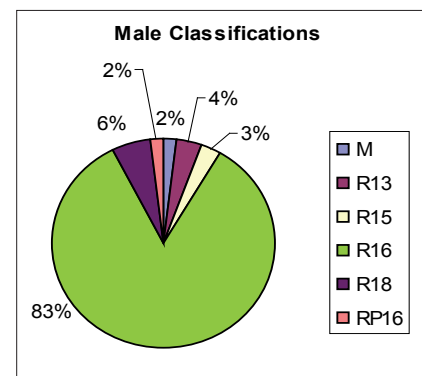
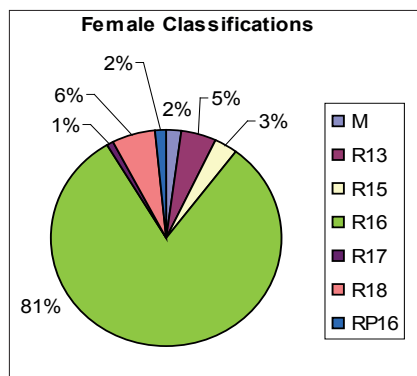
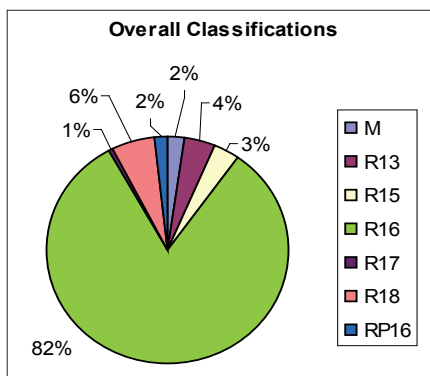
The film *Final Destination 3* was shown to 286 students (175 girls, 109 boys and 2 who did not state a gender) in Wellington, Christchurch and Nelson. Students were 90% Pakeha and there were no large proportions of any other groups.

Overall, 82% of students gave the film the R16 classification, with no significant difference between female and male students.

Violence (85%) was the most common descriptive note for the film. There was a range of responses to the graphic content of the film, one student said “Death is very violent and gross. They showed you all the blood and guts and made it nearly too real so you laugh. Not for the very young or very old”. (Nelson Bays female). 65% of students included the descriptive notes contains horror and 29% of offensive language.

The *Final Destination 3* consideration sheet included a question asking students about the impact of viewing this film on the big screen. Some students said that they like watching this kind of film with peers: “Its less disturbing in a theatre environment because the comic nature is more easily embraced, causing the audience to take it less seriously.” (Wellington male). Another student said that the “Big screen has more impact, the images stay with you longer. Darkness helps to set the scary mood. I wouldn’t watch it alone in the dark.” (Nelson female). A Wellington female student noted “... its scarier for me at home by myself than in the cinema” (Wellington female).

Having cheated death once, Wendy is tormented by an ominous feeling that something is very wrong. Her classmate, Kevin (Ryan Merriman), does some research and learns that something similar has happened before: a high-school student had a premonition that a plane filled with his classmates was doomed, a group of them refused to board, and the plane exploded in flight. Following that incident, the survivors all died under mysterious circumstances and in the order that they died in the premonition. Soon, Wendy and Kevin realize that the same fate is about to befall those who got off the roller coaster and survived. Perhaps more disturbing is that clues to the impending deaths seem to lie in the photos that Wendy took on the evening of the accident. In an instant, innocuous situations and common objects become fatal, causing particularly gruesome deaths. Ultimately, the real question becomes whether or not Wendy and Kevin can save their classmates--and themselves--from impending doom before it’s too late. (from Rotten Tomatoes website)

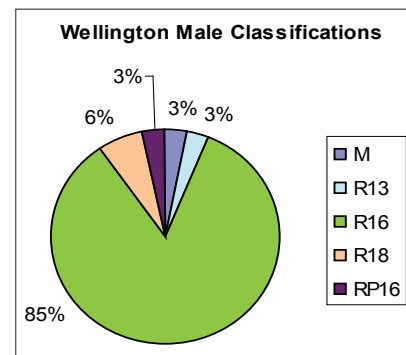
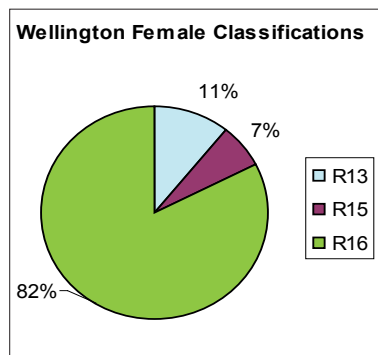
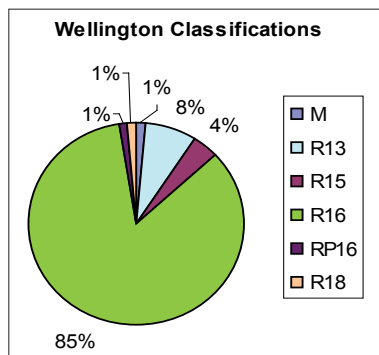


The Office classified the film R16, with the descriptive note “Contains horror scenes and offensive language”.

Final Destination 3 - Wellington

79 students attended the Censor for a Day session in Wellington on Monday 3 April. Students and teachers attended from Onslow College, Wellington Girls' College and Wellington College. There were 45 female students, 33 male students and one student who did not state a gender.

83% of Wellington participants gave the film the R16 classification. 84% of these students included the descriptive note contains violence.



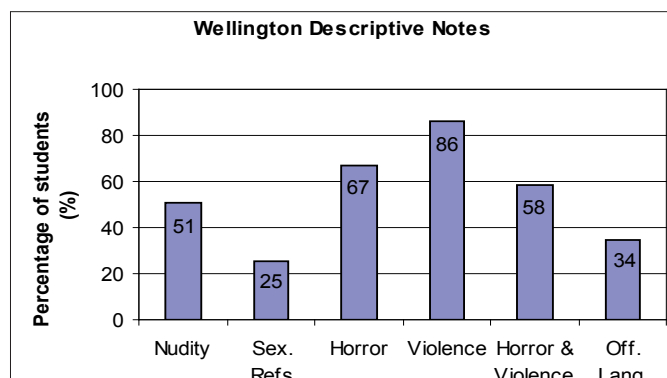
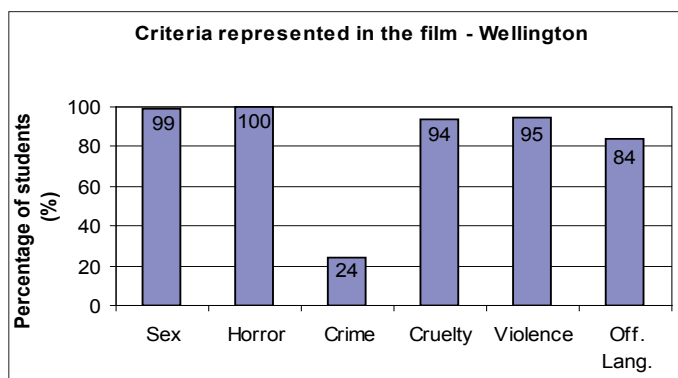
Most students (86%) gave the film the descriptive note contains violence, 58% of students gave the film the descriptive note contains violence and horror. One Wellington student said “Younger people might get really freaked out by the gore and blood and it might have a stronger impact on them because they may not understand the fakeness”.

All Wellington students noted horror as a criterion influencing their classification of the film. Of the other criteria, 99% of students noted sex, 94% noted cruelty and 95% noted violence. While most noted the offensive language used in the film, only just over 30% used “offensive language” as a descriptive note, which was reflective of the discussion of whether the violence and horror elements were ultimately more important. Most students chose a combination of horror and violence descriptive notes, with nearly half also adding “nudity”.

A student from Wellington Girls' College summed up the feelings of many students - “It made me want to keep watching but not see what was happening!” Only 16% of students noted that the main effect of the film was entertainment.

Students had differing opinions on the impact of watching the film in a theatre or at home. They identified the surround sound, lighting and unknown quality of the film as factors in maximising impact in a theatre. Some also noted that the fact of sitting in a theatre with lots of other people all having their own reactions can raise the emotional level. Others thought that watching the film at home on your own would have much more impact.

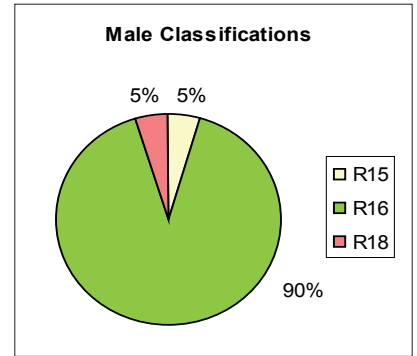
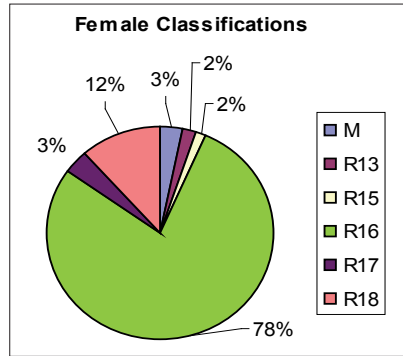
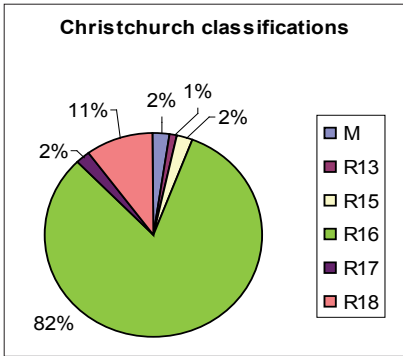
Although many students mentioned that they found the film scary and that it grossed them out, only three students recommended a classification higher than R16.



Final Destination 3 - Christchurch

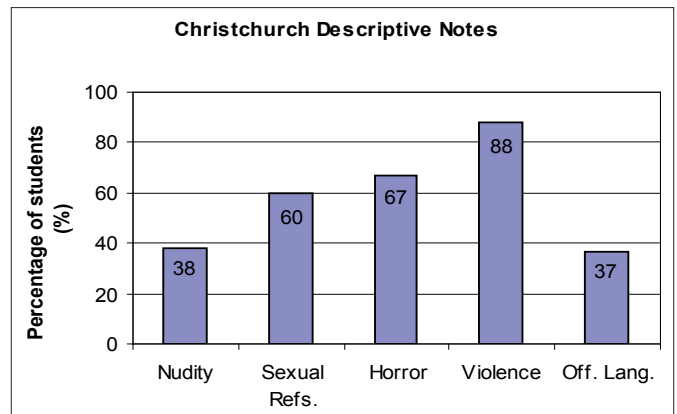
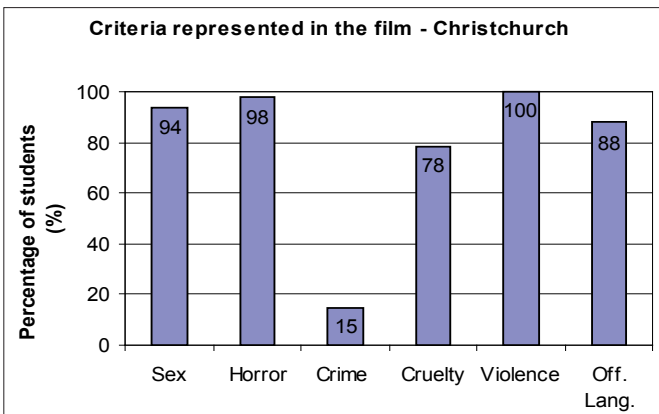
82 participants attended the Censor for a Day session in Christchurch on Wednesday 5 April. Students and teachers came from Cashmere High School, Hagley Community College, Kaiapoi High School, Linwood College and Villa Maria College. There were 61 female students and 21 male students.

Most (80%) Christchurch participants gave the film the R16 classification. 90% of males made the film R16 compared to 77% of females. 90% of females made the film R16 compared to 77% of females. One female student noted that she made the film R16 because the ‘gruesome portrayal of death in the film was not suitable for younger children’.



All Christchurch students noted violence in the classification criteria and 98% horror, 94% sex and 88% offensive language. “Contains violence was the most popular (88%) descriptive note, followed by horror (67%) and sexual references (60%).

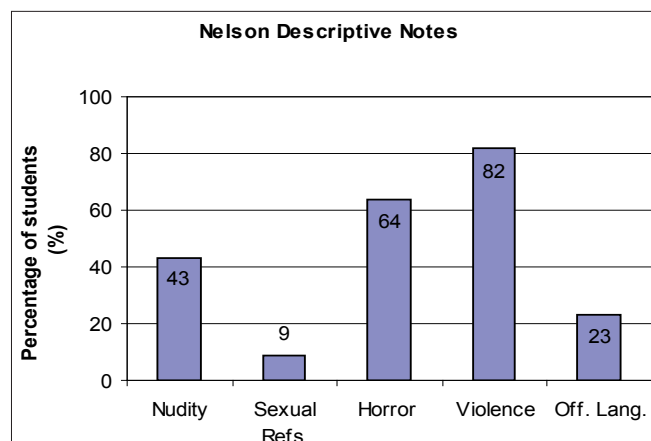
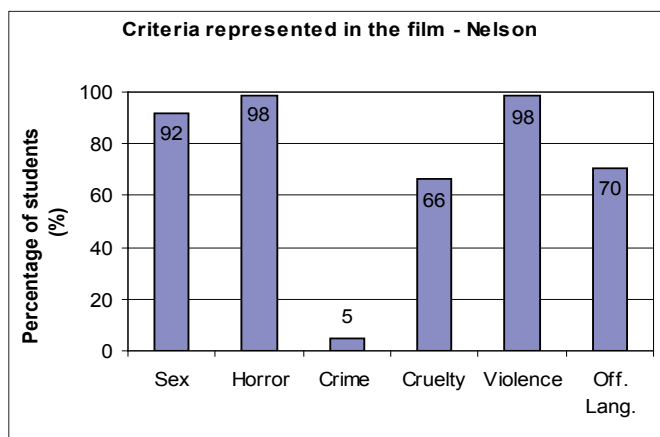
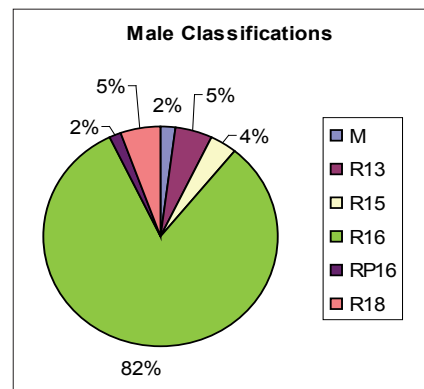
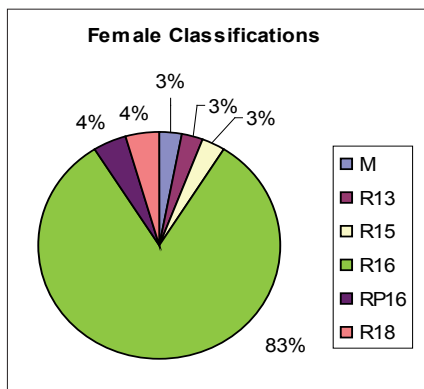
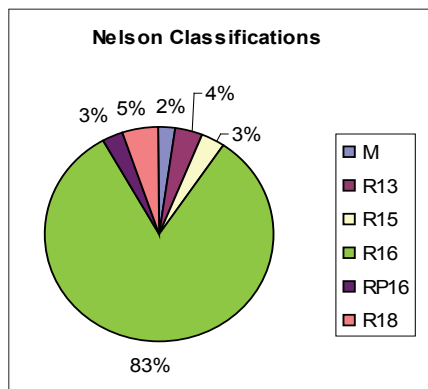
A lot of students found the film scary or sickening (60%) although only 10 students recommended a classification higher than R16. One Christchurch student said “the film made me feel disturbed in the graphic death scenes, but then it also made me feel curious into what was going to happen next...” Another really enjoyed the film and noted that “some parts were scary and graphic but I wanted to be shocked, this is what people who like horrors want to see.”



Final Destination 3 - Nelson

125 participants attended the Censor for a Day sessions in Nelson on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 April. Students and teachers came from Nelson College For Girls, Waimea College, Marlborough Boys' College, Nayland College and Nelson College. There were 69 female students, 55 male students and 1 who did not state a gender.

82% of Nelson students gave the film the R16 classification, with no difference between male and female students.



Horror (98%), violence (98%) and cruelty (66%) were the most common classification criteria noted. Violence and horror were the most common descriptive notes. One Marlborough student noted that the film contained “much violence and cruelty. Death is included in an over exaggerated way.”

33% of students said that they found the film entertaining, the other students found it scary, disturbing and sickening. One student said that they thought that the main effect of the film was to “scare people, push their fear limits in a slightly unreal/ flukey/ comedic way”.

Writing about the impact of seeing the film in a theatre, one student wrote, “It seems as though it was made for the big screen because the effect of elaborate deaths shown up close wouldn't have as much effect [on DVD]”. Another mentioned the impact of being uninterrupted when in a theatre.

Teacher feedback

25 teachers supplied feedback using the forms provided by the Office.

1. Was the length of the programme suitable?

All teachers ticked yes.

Very good - time set aside to get into the issues and the task. - Columba College, Otago

Good reflective time. - Taieri College, Otago

We could have done the whole day! - King's High School, Otago

Well structured. - Waimea College, Nelson

Two teachers commented that *V for Vendetta* was a long film, which meant less discussion.

2. Was the time-slot suitable?

All but one teacher ticked yes.

Ideal. - Newlands College, Wellington

Fitted our school day - although a 9am start would have fitted better. - Columba College, Otago

Could start earlier and then only have half day out of school. - Villa Maria College, Christchurch

Several teachers mentioned an earlier start time in informal discussions. This is really only possible if there are no schools coming from any distance. The school that travelled the furthest distance requested a later start time.

3. Was the mock criteria form provided easy to follow?

All teachers ticked yes.

Yes, there are some interesting words there - such as 'merit' that are thought provoking. - Newlands College, Wellington

Yes, all the students I spoke to agree. - Columba College, Otago

Most students I talked to found it easy to follow. - Taieri College, Otago

Great to have someone talking them through the criteria. - Wellington Girls' College, Wellington.

One teacher suggested 'model' answers might be useful. However, the Office is aware that some students try to pre-guess our thoughts as it is, and we would prefer the students to come up with their own ideas. This is the reason that the Classification Officer gives examples that are unrelated to the film under discussion.

4. Did the programme provide students with sufficient information?

All teachers ticked yes.

A good basic introduction. The website for the NZ Bill of Rights would be helpful. - Newlands College, Wellington

I am sure they would have asked if needed. - Columba College, Otago

The overheads weren't easy to read, but it generally worked well. - Taieri College, Otago

The info you sent out prior to the day was appreciated. - King's High School, Otago.

5. Did the programme enhance students' understanding of film censorship?

All teachers ticked yes.

All agree they learnt quite a bit about the criteria and the process. - Columba College, Otago

Authenticity of the day was the key, and access to the Chief Censor - unusual for kids to hear from a Boss. - St Catherine's College, Wellington

Very good practical demonstration much more useful than reading the Act, etc. - Villa Maria College, Christchurch.

6. Was the content of the film appropriate for the students?

All teachers ticked yes, with one question mark over *Final Destination 3*.

Good, it really challenged them. Thought-provoking, but not too disturbing for them. - Queen Margaret College, Wellington (*V for Vendetta*)

A challenging visual text. Had a lot of issues attached to the imagery. - Taieri College, Otago (*V for Vendetta*)

Potential to be disturbing for some students. - Villa Maria College, Christchurch (*Final Destination 3*)

Don't see what we could do about it. There's worse on TV. Meaty for effective and thoughtful discussion. - Cashmere High School (*Final Destination 3*)

Before viewing I wondered why we were warching so much violence but I think they would relate to it. - Waimea College, Nelson (*Final Destination 3*)

Most of the students appeared familiar with the genre. - Wellington Girls' College, Wellington (*Final Destination 3*)

7. Could the format of the programme be improved?

All teachers ticked no, with one adding the word "possibly".

More time for discussion. - Onslow College, Wellington

It worked well. Could do short extracts and encourage discussion, mixing students from different schools. This would mean students would gain much more, but you, perhaps less! Generally the students and I think it has a suitable format as is. - Columba College, Otago

Maybe more history of OFLC and film in NZ, just to put it all in context, and a brief look at other mediums. - King's High School, Otago

Use data projector instead of OHP? - St Catherine's College, Wellington

8. Would your school wish to participate in a similar event in the future?

All teachers ticked yes, with a number indicating a great deal of enthusiasm for yearly attendance.

Do you have any other comments on Censor for a Day?

Well organised - plenty of time to get it onto the calendar. Interesting material - relevant and a good addition to a senior programme - helps in giving breadth to a programme at Level 3. - Nelson College, Nelson

You made this very easy. Many thanks. - Onslow College, Wellington

As always, an informative and enlightening experience. The film prompted much discussion amongst students. This activity must be continued - students are required to deploy a different set of critical skills in the course of the day - skills in critical reading, in effects assessment and in judgement - all very valuable. - Newlands College, Wellington.

Direct students to your excellent website! - St Catherine's College, Wellington

We felt this was a very worthwhile event, not only for English and media students. The issues raised regarding censorship issues would be of benefit in a citizenship awareness programme for a wide range of students. - St Peter's College, Gore, Southland

Excellent day again - well presented, great that students were able and encouraged to speak so much in a supportive, slightly irreverent environment. Perfectly pitched at this age group. - Hagley Community College.

An excellent opportunity for students to understand the wider issues involved in censorship and classification. - Taieri College, Otago

I loved the choice of film. It had all the criteria but the kids had to really think about their context in the film. - Hutt Valley High School, Wellington

I wish this could happen every year! - Nayland College, Nelson

Thank you for excellent organisation, food and information. Investigating a media issue will have greater depth. - Nelson School for Girls.

Very well organised. Good and knowledgeable speakers. And all FREE!! - Waimea College, Nelson

Thank you for organising this. I think the students gain real pleasure in seeing something before the rest of their peers as well as gaining some insight into why it got the classification it did. Thank you for making space for our very large group. - Wellington Girls' College

Some comments from the Office

Thank you to all the teachers who provided feedback. The Office really appreciates the opportunity to work with students and teachers. It is part of our strategic plan to encourage senior high school students to understand the classification system, as they are a group particularly affected by it. Censor for a Day attempts to feed into NCEA Level 3 Media Studies, along with our resource booklet and the Schools section of our website.

Scheduling

A couple of teachers asked about the scheduling of Censor for a Day in Term 1. Up until three years ago, it was held in September, near the end of what was then Term 2. The introduction of the four term year meant that holding the event at the same time put it right in the middle of mock exams for Year 12 and 13 students. We canvassed a number of teachers around the country and were told that the end of Term 1 would work much better, as there were fewer school events at that point and it could be worked into teaching plans much more easily. The other constraint on the Office is that the film should not yet be released and it must be of the right level (M, R13 or R16). This generally means the film will be one that is due to be released for the school holidays, which means holding the event as close as possible to the end of the term.

As you can imagine, this is a sizeable event to organise, involving juggling schools, theatres, projectionists, caterers, travel, accommodation and staff of the Office. At the moment, since the timing seems to work well for most schools, we are reluctant to change the scheduling. The complexity of arranging the event also means that if schools are going to withdraw from it, we would appreciate knowing it at least a few days in advance, particularly for catering purposes.

The age of students

Almost every school asked before the event if they could bring students who had not yet had their 16th birthday. As the organisation responsible for making decisions about classification the Office receives a significant number of complaints from parents about films that schools are showing their children. While we sometimes use M rated films for this event, this year we used two restricted films, and there is nothing in the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 that allows us to show a restricted film to someone under the age of the restriction.

The Office must abide by the law, and so must schools. This means that it is not possible for underage students to attend this event.