Mastering Work Plans
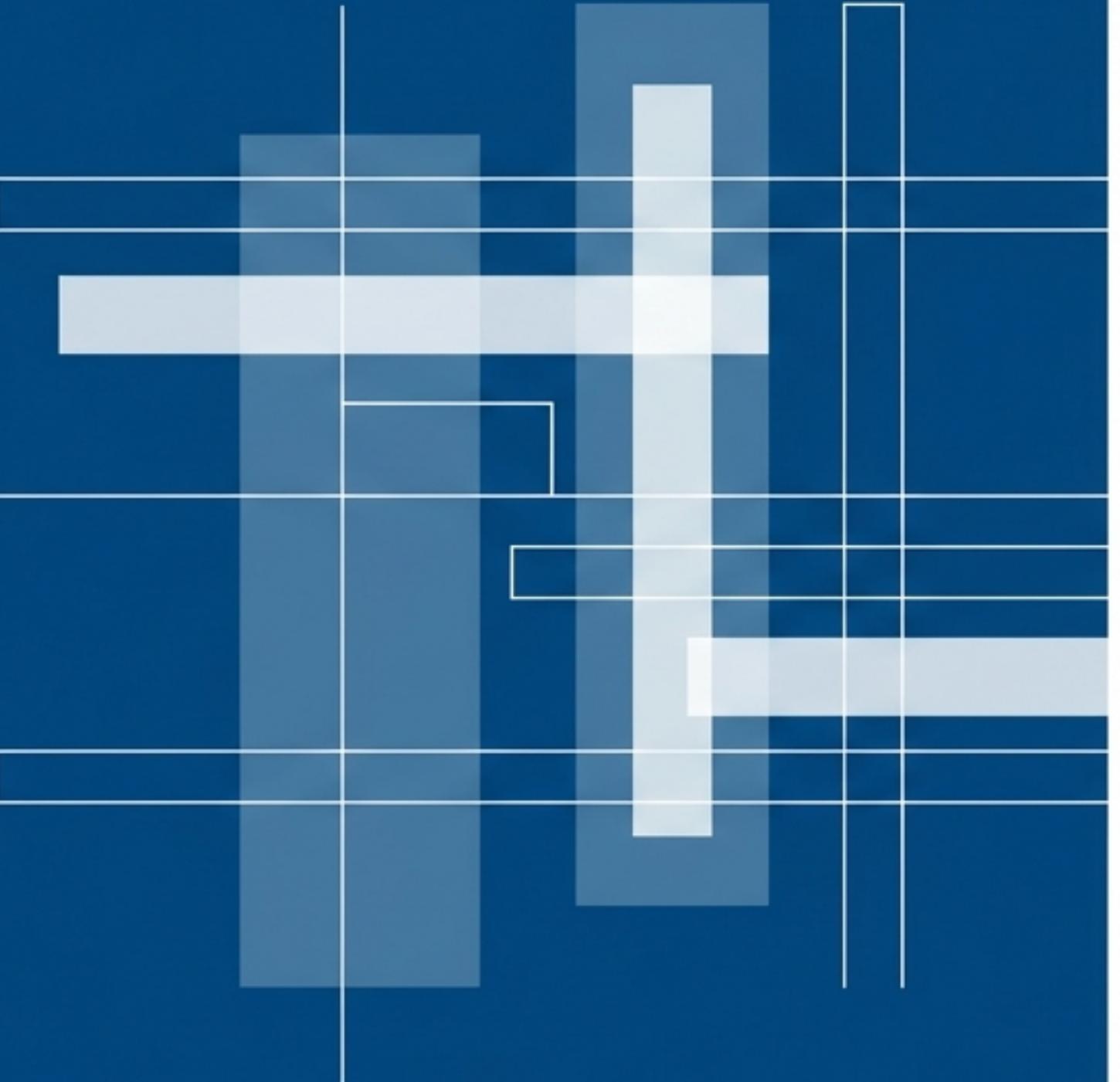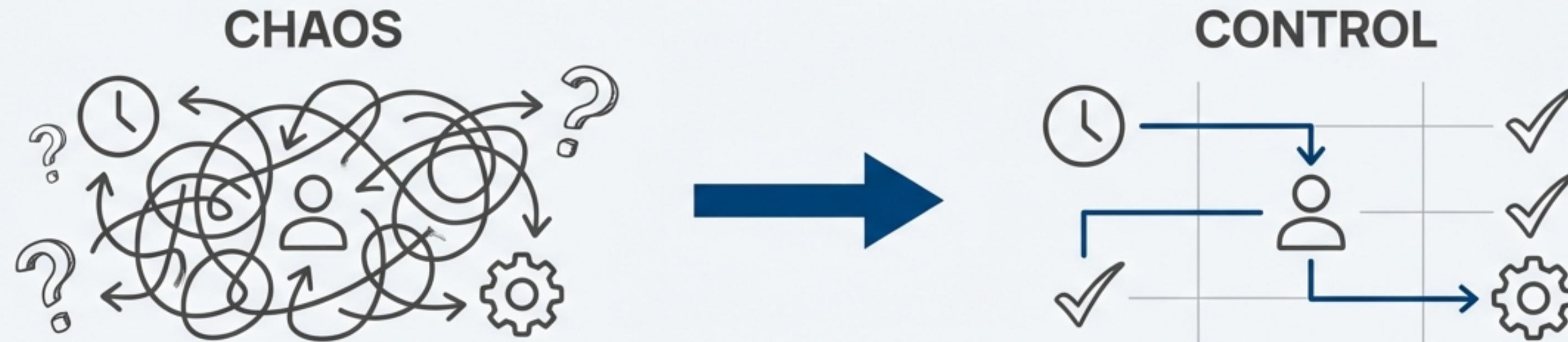
Your R093 guide to planning, executing, and succeeding in media projects.

From Chaos to Control: What is a Work Plan?

CHAOS

CONTROL

A work plan (or production schedule) is the master document for any media project. It **systematically breaks** a large **project** into **manageable parts**. It answers the essential questions:

- **WHAT** needs to be done?
- **WHEN** will it be done?

- **WHO** will do it?
- **WHAT RESOURCES** are needed?

EXAMINER'S TIP

In R093, you must be able to **identify** components, **explain** their purpose, and **recommend improvements** to make a plan more realistic. This deck will show you how.

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Our Project: The College Open Evening Video

Throughout this guide, we'll apply every concept to a single, realistic project. This will help you see how work plans function in the real world.

Project
A promotional video for a college's open evening.

Goal
To be completed on time and to a high standard.

Key Challenge
Juggling planning, filming, editing, and review to meet a fixed deadline.

The Anatomy of a Work Plan: Core Components

Every effective work plan is built from the same essential blocks. Learn to recognise and explain them.

Tasks – Individual actions like research, filming, and editing.

Resources – People, equipment, locations, and software.

Timings – Start/end dates, durations, and the order of tasks.

Dependencies – Tasks that must finish before others can begin.

Milestones – Key checkpoints, like 'Prototype Ready' or 'Filming Complete'.

Deadlines – Final due dates for deliverables.

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Defining the Work: Tasks, Timescales & Milestones

Tasks & Activities

- Tasks must be clear and specific (e.g., 'Record voiceover,' not just 'audio').
- They can be grouped into **phases:** Pre-production, Production, Post-production.
- **Case Study Example:** Planning tasks include scriptwriting and location scouting. Production tasks include filming interviews and B-roll.

Timescales & Dependencies

- Each task needs a start date, end date, or duration (e.g., 2 days).
- Dependencies are crucial: You can't edit footage before it has been filmed.
- **Case Study Example:** *Dependency:* 'Editing' (Task B) cannot start until 'Filming' (Task A) is complete.

Milestones & Deadlines

- Milestones track progress and keep the project on schedule.
- Deadlines are the final, unmissable dates.

- **Case Study Example:** A key **milestone** could be 'First draft edit complete.' The final **deadline** is the college's open evening.

Assembling the Crew & Preparing for Problems

Resources

A plan must list everything needed for each task.

- **People**: Camera Operator, Editor, Actors.
- **Equipment**: Cameras, Microphones, Lights.
- **Software**: Editing Software (e.g., Adobe Premiere Pro).
- **Locations**: College Campus, Studio.

Responsibilities

Assign a clear **owner** to every task to ensure accountability.

Avoids confusion and ensures nothing is missed.

- **Case Study Example**: Sarah – Project Manager; David – Lead Editor.
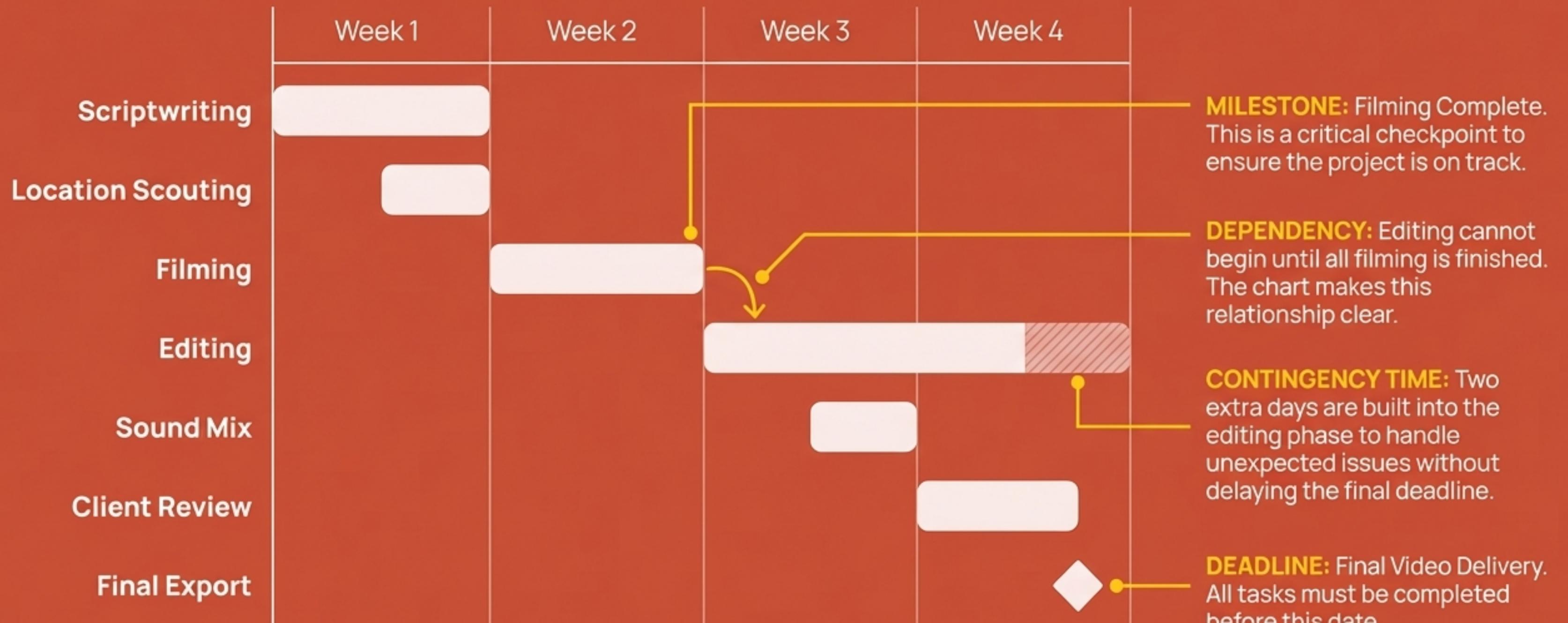
Contingencies

This is your backup plan for when things go wrong (e.g., illness, equipment failure, bad weather).

Contingency time is extra time added to tasks to absorb small delays.

- **Case Study Example**: A backup indoor location is identified in case of rain. Two extra days are added to the editing phase as contingency.

Visualising the Project: The Gantt Chart

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Scriptwriting				
Location Scouting				
Filming				
Editing				
Sound Mix				
Client Review				
Final Export				

MILESTONE: Filming Complete. This is a critical checkpoint to ensure the project is on track.

DEPENDENCY: Editing cannot begin until all filming is finished. The chart makes this relationship clear.

CONTINGENCY TIME: Two extra days are built into the editing phase to handle unexpected issues without delaying the final deadline.

DEADLINE: Final Video Delivery. All tasks must be completed before this date.

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Beyond the Basics: What Makes a Work Plan Realistic?

A perfect-looking plan is useless if it can't handle real-world pressures. Examiners want you to spot flaws and suggest specific, practical improvements.

Signs of a Weak Plan

- ⊗ Unrealistic timescales (too short).
- ⊗ Missing dependencies.
- ⊗ No contingency time.
- ⊗ Vague task descriptions (e.g., "Audio").
- ⊗ Resources not allocated.

How to Suggest Improvements

- ✓ **"Be specific"**: "Instead of 'add more time," say 'add two days of contingency to the editing phase.'"
- ✓ **"Justify your suggestions"**: "Explain *why* the improvement is needed (e.g., "....to allow for re-shoots or technical problems.")."
- ✓ **"Think logically"**: "Suggest combining tasks or reordering them to be more efficient."

> 🔍 **EXAMINER'S TIP**
> Suggest **specific** changes (e.g., add contingency, combine tasks) instead of vague comments. This demonstrates a deeper understanding.

Exam Practice: The Short Answer Takedown

Let's break down the common question types, from easy marks to more detailed explanations.

Question 1: The 1-Mark Recall
Example Question: Q1. State one component of a work plan. (1 mark)
Technique: Give a single, clear component.
Perfect Answer: 'Tasks' or 'Milestones' or 'Resources'.

Question 2: The 2-Mark Explanation
Example Question: Q2. Explain one reason why contingencies are included in a work plan. (2 marks)
Technique: Use the 'Point + Explain' structure. 'Contingencies are... [1 mark]. This helps because... [1 mark].'
Perfect Answer: 'Contingencies are backup plans or extra time. This helps because if a problem like equipment failure occurs, the project can still stay on schedule.'

Question 3: The 3-Mark Description
Example Question: Q3. Describe how milestones can help the project manager monitor progress. (3 marks)
Technique: Define milestones, explain their function, and give a specific example.
Perfect Answer: 'Milestones are key checkpoints in a project. By checking if milestones like 'filming complete' are met on time, the manager can see if the project is on schedule or falling behind, allowing them to take corrective action.'

# Exam Practice: Analysing Impact (4 Marks)

Q4. Explain two ways that unrealistic timescales in a work plan could affect the final media product. (4 marks)

Technique: For each way, describe the issue and then explain its impact on the final product. **Structure your answer as two distinct points.**

Point 1 (2 marks):
Issue: Rushed production and editing.
Impact: This could lead to a lower quality final video, with poor sound mixing or visible editing mistakes, making it look unprofessional.
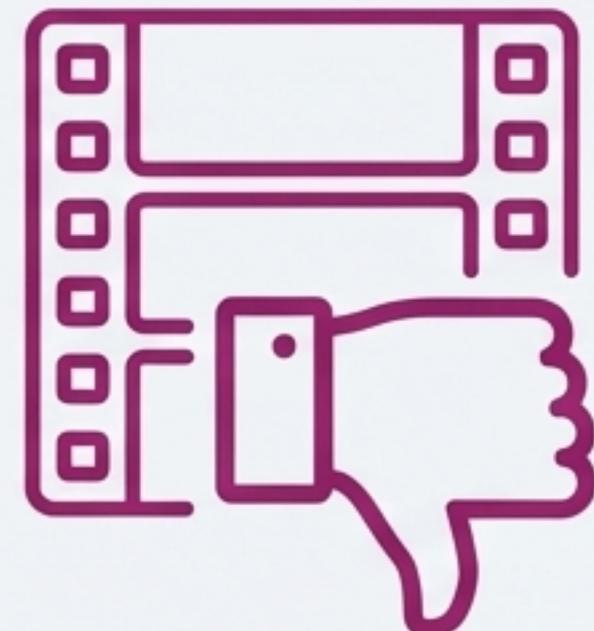
Point 2 (2 marks):
Issue: Key stages might be skipped, such as client review or final testing.
Impact: The final product might not meet the client's requirements or could contain technical bugs, damaging the relationship with the client and requiring costly fixes after the deadline.

The 9-Mark Ninja: A Winning Structure

Q5. A college is planning to produce a promotional video... Discuss how tasks, timescales, milestones, resources and contingencies should be used... Provide justified recommendations. (9 marks)

1 Paragraph 1: Tasks & Timescales

What: Break the project into logical phases (pre-production, production, post-production). List specific tasks for each (e.g., scripting, filming interviews). Assign realistic timings and identify dependencies.

Why: 'This ensures a logical workflow and prevents delays.'

2 Paragraph 2: Milestones & Resources

What: Set key milestones (e.g., 'script approved,' 'final cut ready for review'). List all necessary resources (people, equipment, locations). Assign responsibilities.

Why: 'This helps track progress against the deadline and ensures everything is available when needed.'

3 Paragraph 3: Contingencies & Risks

What: Identify potential risks (e.g., key staff illness, location unavailable). Build in contingency time (e.g., extra editing days). Detail backup plans.

Why: 'This makes the plan robust and able to cope with unexpected problems, safeguarding the final deadline.'

4 Paragraph 4: Justified Conclusion

What: Briefly summarise why this structured approach is vital. State which element you believe is most critical for *this specific project* (e.g., resources or contingencies) and justify your choice.

Why: 'This shows high-level analysis and secures top-band marks.'

Your Work Plan Mastery Checklist

You've completed the guide. Can you now confidently do the following?

- [ ] List key components of a work plan (tasks, timescales, milestones, resources).

- [ ] Explain why contingencies, responsibilities, and deadlines are important.

- [ ] Interpret a simple work plan or Gantt chart for a media project.

- [ ] Suggest specific and justified improvements to a work plan.

- [ ] Use the 9-Mark Ninja formula to structure an extended exam answer.

You have the blueprint for success. Now go build it.

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