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Developing Unified, Ethics-Centered Standards for Applied Media Production: Evidence from Palestinian Universities

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Amid rapid digital transformation, higher education lacks validated, context-sensitive frameworks for evaluating applied media outputs, creating a critical risk of misalignment between academic curricula, professional ethics, and labor-market expectations. This study examines the acceptance among Palestinian university academics of a set of expert-derived criteria for evaluating applied courses, graduation projects, and student films. A convergent mixed-methods design was employed, surveying 40 academics and conducting three focus groups with 14 media-training experts; the survey instrument was developed directly from the qualitative findings. Results from descriptive and inferential statistics, integrated with thematic analysis, revealed strong consensus on the importance of ethical standards, narrative and aesthetic craftsmanship, and fairness. Conversely, confidence was comparatively lower for platform-specific and rapidly evolving technical indicators. Qualitatively, experts reframed technical skill as an ethical narrative practice and emphasized institutional accountability through supervised clearance protocols. Overall, the results indicate the feasibility of employing a shared, multidimensional framework focused on ethical evaluation, aiming to improve transparency, alignment with professional practices, and sensitivity to the educational context in applied media instruction .

Keywords: media evaluation criteria, applied media production, ethical accountability, digital literacy, Palestinian higher education

Higher education institutions are now required to ensure that the graduates they produce can meet various demands of professionalism, technology, and ethics. This requirement is particularly evident in media education, where students are supposed to write journalistic pieces, advertisements, and movies that demonstrate professionalism, technology, and ethical considerations. Under these circumstances, colleges are expected to revise testing procedures to ensure technical knowledge and ethical behavior, critical judgment, and professional relevance to student work (Buckingham, 2015; Kirkwood & Price, 2014).

This is further complicated by digital transformation, where research consistently suggests a gap between media students' learning and the content-making skills needed by the modern media industry: there is a gap in technological competences regarding digital workflows, remote production, and AI-based content creation (Bond et al., 2021; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Moreover, recent studies also reveal that the development of generative AI is impacting journalism, media production, and higher education courses, forcing institutions to rethink their methods of production and evaluation (Pavlik, 2023). Although international standards emphasize linking teaching to the national context and latest technology, especially those in media and information literacy (Livingstone, 2004; Wuyckens et al., 2022), only limited studies have explored how students in developing countries assess applied media work under these conditions. In addition, recent systematic reviews also reveal that the development of digitalization in higher education becomes

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contingent upon the need for institutions to incorporate digital competencies, ethical sensibilities, and adaptive pedagogy to respond to evolving technology (Farías-Gaytán et al., 2023).

While international research has recently grown on media literacy, digital instruction, and evaluation innovation, there is a paucity of empirical and theoretical research on the perception, design, and practice of applied media evaluation in Palestinian universities. The majority of the literature is concentrated on competence in media or development in general without offering any specific models that can relate to evaluation and are inclusive of issues such as ethics, fidelity, and administration. This is especially applicable to the case of Palestine because the need for sound and dependable evaluation criteria is affected by many different factors including politics and resource constraints.

Following the discussion about media literacy, professional ethics, and technology-enhanced learning, this research was conducted through the adoption of a mixed-methods approach, which is an approach that makes use of quantitative and qualitative measurements to assess the academic consensus and understand the more complicated evaluations that can be made when applying media education (Kirkwood & Price, 2014). The research question posed by this paper is the following: To what extent do academics at Palestinian universities agree with the expert-derived criteria proposed for evaluating applied media education, graduation projects, and student films?

Three major contributions stand out from this study. First, media education literature has been enhanced with an integration of the concepts of media literacy, digital literacy, and technology-enabled learning within an evaluation framework consistent with the outputs of applied media; secondly, it represents the first attempt at empirical investigation into the criteria developed by experts in Palestinian universities; finally, a scientifically sound approach to testing has been achieved, which guarantees both curricular and occupational alignment. In combination with practitioner insights and academic validation, this paper proposes a contextual, digital-age-specific methodology for assessing applied media work.

Literature Review

The development of digital media ecosystems and smart production systems has fundamentally changed media education by shifting the focus from traditional skills training to models combining technology use, multimodal design, and critical interpretation (Buckingham, 2013; Burn, 2016). The definition of applied media production used in this study is that of student-produced professional work undertaken in an educational context, ranging from journalism and promotions through audio production and short films, all of which are analyzed as examples of storytelling, artistry, and technique.

However, research on technology-enhanced learning shows that innovation is still conceptually fragmented, causing uncertainty in what constitutes meaningful learning improvement in rapidly changing technological contexts (Kirkwood & Price, 2014). Here technology-enhanced learning means a digital tool with tangible learning gains rather than new technologies. This confusion is difficult to overcome when developing effective assessment criteria for hybrid media practices and is reinforced by AI-driven production practices that undermine established notions of originality, authorship, and professional competence (Schneider et al., 2020). As recent research on journalism and media education also suggests, AI has not only changed how creativity is done but also raised concerns about authorship, creativity, evaluation, and professionalism (Pavlik, 2023; Bender, 2023). AI-driven production is understood to be an algorithmic synthesis or modification of media content that raises questions of student authorship, imagination, and responsibility. Recent studies have raised additional concerns about ethical considerations, effective communication, and incorporating such AI tools into educational contexts (Matsiola et al., 2024).

In this dynamic context, media literacy literature emphasizes that effective navigation through complex media systems requires cognitive, critical, and ethical skills (Livingstone, 2004; Potter, 2010). In practice, media literacy is understood in terms of “a plurality of categories”: critical thinking about media content; awareness of representation and ideology; and ethical production and dissemination. Competent practitioners must integrate technical, analytical, and ethical dimensions, as the boundaries between media,

information, and digital literacy become blurred (Wuyckens et al., 2022). Recent studies have shown that digital literacy is now highly correlated with newly developed skills in the field of artificial intelligence, especially in education settings where users must analyze, understand, and use AI technologies responsibly (Sergeeva et al., 2025). Here, digital literacy is defined as the ability to use digital platforms in order to produce and distribute content while integrating logics within platforms, data practices, audiences, and risk; information literacy refers to the ability to verify information, to validate sources, and to ensure accuracy particularly in journalism and documentary contexts.

Nevertheless, the problem of digital literacy remains a debate when power relations, ideology, and critical analysis are neglected as a component of applied media work (Buckingham, 2015). Finally, Masterman (2018) conceptualized media competence as a form of socially responsible production, implying that evaluation should assess the extent to which students integrate theory, ethics, and professional practice. Ethics, in this study, means the degree of accuracy, objectivity, privacy, knowledge of the law, minimization of harm, and compassion toward participants, audiences, and groups represented, particularly in politically and culturally sensitive situations. According to recent findings regarding digital ethics, an individual's ethical skills in digitized contexts involve more than adhering to rules but encompass awareness of the impact of algorithms, responsibility in content creation, protection of personal information, and the social implications of new technologies (Händel et al., 2025).

Based on these differences within the theory, research carried out in this area shows that the current rubrics do not reflect the multimodal nature and creativity as well as the ethics involved in media application practices (Villarroel et al., 2018). The rubric under discussion refers to a set of performance standards, which serves as the basis for evaluation and feedback, while evaluation criteria mean specific ethical, narrative, technical, and equitable criteria that are taken into account when evaluating the results produced by media. Although the scoring scales are designed to increase transparency, they cannot adequately represent higher-order skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and ethics (Sparks et al., 2014; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013; Dawson, 2017). According to recent literature on authentic assessment, a major deficiency has been recognized between the current methods of evaluation and the complexity associated with evaluating professional competencies (Zhan et al., 2025). This problem becomes evident when dealing with media because technical skill, storytelling, and ethics cannot be separated from one another.

Further, inconsistency among assessment tools, learning goals, and leadership within the organization can negatively affect pedagogical coherence (Leithwood et al., 2008). For this research, fairness involves consistent assessments regardless of the type of outputs or the identity of the students, whereas logical consistency involves consistency among the learning goals, assessment criteria, and assessments.

Studies on institutional adaptation have shown that there are still gaps between the curricula and the labor-market needs in the media industry. To some extent, the universities are not equipped with the infrastructure, training, and methodological flexibility needed to keep up with the ever-changing technologies (Kirkwood & Price, 2014; Burn, 2016). Labor-market alignment in this case translates to what extent professional expectations for employability, such as ethical compliance, workflow competency, and audience-oriented communication, are assessed against standards of evaluation. Research on educational development emphasizes that substantial pedagogical innovation relies on institutional agency, resources, and leadership (Kabeer, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2008), but still the faculty and students are finding it difficult to adjust the evaluation methods to the current production workflows (Potter, 2010; Buckingham, 2015). The multimedia learning research of Mayer emphasizes that the proper control of new technologies necessitates an entire instructional redesign and not the adoption of the tools alone (Mayer, 2014). This suggests that assessment strategies should not include “continuous skills” and “tool-specific skills,” especially given that platform options, software features, and algorithmic inclinations are more dynamic than the academic program.

Theoretically, Craig’s (1999) model of communication as an integration of rhetorical, socio-cultural, critical, and phenomenological traditions underscores the need for evaluation systems that reflect epistemological plurality. In this study, “narrative integrity” refers to coherence in structure, meaning-making,

pacing, and audience comprehension, while "multimodal craftsmanship" denotes the integrated quality of image, sound, editing, composition, and design in producing meaning. As a result, applied media work like films, journalistic texts, and promotional material should be assessed not only for technical competence but also for narrative strategy, cultural context, ethical positioning, and audience orientation. "Platform-specific indicators" indicate measures related to specific digital platforms or rapidly changing production environments such as format optimization, platform conventions, analytics-based editing and periodic re-calibration of tool-based workflows.

However, existing frameworks provide little guidance in implementing such complex evaluations, particularly in the case of Palestine, where institutional constraints make assessment even more challenging. The evaluation process is therefore closely linked to risk management and accountability in confined environments where decisions regarding publication, distribution or public display might require oversight and clearance. Also, although applied courses and graduate programs form the foundations of students' professional identities, little is known in the literature about what students are thinking, understanding, and employing of discipline specific assessment criteria. There is still a short supply of authentic, contextually relevant assessment practices for applied media work in higher education, particularly at developing and conflicted institutions like Palestinian universities where inconsistent grading, sloppy alignment of curriculum and labor markets, and limited student readiness for digital media environments, continue to impede consensus on assessment practices (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Within these areas lie several considerable gaps: largely unaddressed theories of media literacy; assessment tools that neglect modes of communication and ethical concerns; broad frameworks that overlook the impact of deep context; and a plethora of single-method studies unable to capture the nuanced logic of the assessor. Each of these is complicated in the Palestinian context by the impact of geopolitics on media education. However, media education in Palestinian universities faces additional challenges because of issues that may arise due to the restrictions related to movement and access to technological facilities, and increased attention in terms of public media productions' criticism, which can affect both the development and evaluation of such projects as well as the very process of evaluation itself, especially since there are projects that need approval before being released into circulation. Thus, students and staff involved in media education will have to face even greater ethical challenges when dealing with media evaluation issues.

The phrase context-sensitive assessment refers in this research to procedures that are theoretically grounded yet adaptable to local institutions, political pressures, and infrastructure needs while instilling ethical confidence and transparency. These gaps require a mixed-methods strategy capable of validating expert-defined criteria and delivering contextual assessments of the applied media artifacts. While research on digital literacy, digital ethics, authentic assessments, and AI-based learning practices is rapidly increasing, comparatively little effort has been devoted to combining these various aspects in one holistic evaluation process of applied media productions in challenging political conditions within resource-poor contexts in higher education institutions (Farías-Gaytán et al., 2023; Händel et al., 2025; Pavlik, 2023; Zhan et al., 2025). Collectively, the results of the reviewed research indicate that media literacy provides a basis for critically and communicatively assessing media content; that it is extended by digital literacy into today's technology-rich environment; and that digital ethics provides an element of responsible, transparent, and accountable behavior in the use of technology. Thus, authentic assessment frameworks represent the methodological means by which these competencies may be assessed. Therefore, this study conceptualizes applied media evaluation as the integration of media literacy, digital literacy, ethical responsibilities, and authentic assessment practices.

Method

Research Design

This study employed an exploratory convergent mixed-methods design with both quantitative and qualitative analyses to investigate the acceptance of expert-conceptual measures of applied media production by academics in Palestinian universities. Specifically, this study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design in which the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study were carried out within the same overall phase of the research process, analyzed separately, and then combined at the interpretation stage. The qualitative strand preceded finalization of the

instrument to inform the construction of its items whereas the quantitative strand tested the level of acceptance and internal coherence of the suggested criteria among academics. Integration occurred through side-by-side comparison and thematic and statistical convergence analysis to identify areas of agreement, complementarity, and divergence.

The study consisted of four phases: (1) focus groups to identify evaluation dimensions and elicit draft evaluation dimensions, (2) constructing and conducting expert panel review of a structured survey instrument informed by the qualitative data, (3) collecting and statistically validating the survey data to confirm a multidimensional evaluation model, and (4) integrating the qualitative and quantitative findings to interpret and illustrate a comprehensive ethical evaluation schema. Figure 1 shows the underlying structure of the research design, which is more suited to the topic since there are several dimensions in evaluating media, including ethics, technology, storytelling, and institutional considerations that cannot be fully captured through a single method. Both quantitative and qualitative strands were analyzed separately and then integrated during interpretation to identify areas of convergence and divergence in assessment reasoning (Al-Fraihat et al., 2020).

Participants and Sampling

As far as the quantitative aspect is concerned, all the instructors who have been teaching in the field of media at Palestinian universities have been surveyed. A total of ninety faculty members were selected by utilizing the census research design where N = 90. In addition, forty participants gave valid responses in relation to their departments, areas of specialization, and levels of experience. This number was deemed appropriate in terms of statistical validity since a small specialized sample size was used in the study. Moreover, this sample comprised instructors working in nine universities within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In these universities, both private and governmental institutions have been considered. The sample contained instructors of different genders, that is, seventy-five percent males and twenty-five percent females. The level of academic rank and years of teaching experience ranged from assistant, associate, and full professors and from less than five and more than fifteen years. More than one-third of the sample was made up of senior lecturers. In addition, the instructors were specialized in digital/new media, journalism, public relations, radio/television, media technology, and interdisciplinary media subjects.

Qualitative data collection was done using three semi-structured focus groups consisting of 14 media trainers. The media trainers chosen for the study had many years of experience in assessing and supervising projects. The trainers include media supervisors, film makers, and journalism instructors. The qualitative participants represented a variety of professional roles, such as media producers, journalists, and documentary filmmakers. They came from a variety of institutions and had varied years of experience and specializations, including documentary film production, investigative journalism, television, and new media. Participants' professional experiences ranged from professors to practicing professionals, offering a breadth of experience and credibility to the criteria that emerged from experts. The inclusion of qualified practitioners is in keeping with the recommendations of studies on multimodal, creative assessment (Schneider, 2017; Sparks et al., 2014).

Though the sample size was small, it comprised a significant proportion of the unique group of media academics in Palestinian universities and thus was deemed sufficient for conducting this initial research study. Since there were only a few media academics working at Palestinian universities, a census method of sampling was used in an attempt to cover the entire population. Nonetheless, the results obtained need to be cautiously interpreted, especially where differences between sub-groups in terms of universities, disciplines, and years of teaching experience are concerned.

Characteristics of the Study Sample

The quantitative phase included forty faculty members coming from nine Palestinian universities, all from different institutional contexts, different disciplinary domains and different levels of teaching experience. As shown in Table 1, three quarters of the sample was male and one quarter was female. Experience was evenly distributed, with the majority reporting over fifteen years of teaching experience, and a high percentage indicating a high proportion of senior academics. In addition to public relations, radio and television, media

technology, and related specializations, digital and new media and journalism were also on the list. This distribution shows the structure of media programs in Palestinian higher education and provides a basis for an interpretive understanding of assessment consensus across institutions.

Table 1
General Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	30	75.0
Female	10	25.0
Years of Teaching Experience		
Less than 5 years	9	22.5
5–<10 years	10	25.0
10–<15 years	6	15.0
More than 15 years	15	37.5
Specialization		
Digital / New Media	14	35.0
Journalism and Media	10	25.0
Public Relations	5	12.5
Radio and Television	4	10.0
Media Technology	4	10.0
Other	3	7.5
University		
Kadoorie University	8	20.0
Arab American University	6	15.0
Gaza Universities	6	15.0
Al-Quds Open University	5	12.5
Hebron University	4	10.0
An-Najah National University	3	7.5
Bethlehem University	3	7.5
Birzeit University	3	7.5
Al-Asriyya University College	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

Instrument Development

The qualitative data were first collected and then used to inform the quantitative instrument. Focus group conversations were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and examined by thematic analysis using open, axial, and selective coding procedures. The emerging themes of ethical accountability, narrative coherence, technical craftsmanship, fairness, and institutional responsibility were incorporated into measurable survey items.

In this process, a 32-item questionnaire was developed to implement the assessment criteria identified by the qualitative analysis. The assessment instrument was designed to address multiple areas of applied media assessment, including general standards of quality, ethics and analytical depth; the criteria of film-specific quality of cinematography, narrative coherence, and editing quality; the quality criteria for graduation projects and applied outputs of originality, audience impact, technological integration, and conformity with labor market expectations; standards for testing applied courses of professional conventions, production principles, and course-output alignment; and metrics of fairness and logical coherence across media output types and educational contexts.

For consistency and clarity of content, four of the high-ranking media education and assessment professors reviewed the questionnaire. Minor revisions were made to improve wording, conceptual alignment, and instructional coherence as directed by the principles of a transparent, engaged assessment design (Mayer, 2014).

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey items were developed directly from the qualitative research phase through a coding to item translation process. Through open, axial, and selective coding of the focus-group transcripts, several core themes (such as ethical accountability, narrative consistency, multimodal competence, and institutional accountability) have been derived and converted into concrete indicators. For each qualitative theme, multiple statements were developed to reflect the assessment practices identified in the qualitative data, while ensuring that the items remained faithful to the language and meaning of the participants. Overlapping codes, clarified ambiguous language, and removed redundant indicators to refine the constructs.

Prior to mass distribution, the draft instrument was piloted with six media studies faculty (not members of the sampled population) to check for clarity and appropriateness of wording, relevance and internal coherence of items, and the approximate completion time. A few minor changes were made to improve phrasing, avoid duplication, and better match qualitative constructs with quantitative dimensions of measurement. Data generated from the pilot participants were not retained for use in the final analysis.

Quantitative statistics including mean, standard deviations, Pearson correlation coefficients, independent-sample t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were applied to the quantitative data. These analyses were conducted to test acceptance, to test correlations across assessment dimensions, and to analyze demographic variability.

Internal Consistency Validity

In the instrument development process, the validity of internal consistency was examined to ensure that the units of data constructed from qualitative codes into survey items were representative of the dimension they were intended to measure. Since the instrument was developed by translating themes derived from experts into indicators that could be measured, correlations between items and dimensions were evaluated to determine the extent to which each item corresponded to the qualitative constructs from which they were derived.

Items were then re-examined for consistency at the level of the item and the correlation coefficients of the item-dimension relationship were obtained for all axes. This analysis also confirmed that each item adequately represented its intended construct.

Table 2

Internal Consistency Validity (Item-Dimension Correlations)

Dimension / Item	R	p
Axis 1: General Questions		
Accuracy of information	0.75	<.001
Objectivity assessment	0.75	<.001
Legal aspects	0.87	<.001
Professional ethics	0.55	<.001
Depth of analysis	0.81	<.001
Managing field challenges	0.82	<.001
Axis 2: Film Evaluation		
Cinematography quality	0.70	<.001
Visual aesthetics	0.64	<.001
Originality/creativity	0.50	<.001
Narrative pacing	0.62	<.001
Artistic coherence	0.83	<.001
Editing mastery/meaning	0.85	<.001
Editing innovation	0.83	<.001

Temporal synchronization	0.82	<.001
Axis 3: Graduation Projects & Applied Outputs		
Artistic–market balance	0.82	<.001
Audience impact	0.74	<.001
Modern technologies	0.66	<.001
Content–form harmony	0.85	<.001
Fairness across types	0.72	<.001
Originality/depth	0.73	<.001
Experimentation/innovation	0.83	<.001
Editing software	0.71	<.001
Axis 4: Applied Courses		
Journalistic forms/style	0.80	<.001
Persuasive elements	0.77	<.001
Audio/radio outputs	0.89	<.001
Professional standards	0.80	<.001
Design/production principles	0.85	<.001
Output–course alignment	0.86	<.001
Axis 5: Fairness & Logical Consistency		
Unified assessment	0.71	<.001
Standards clarity	0.77	<.001
Fairness across outputs	0.86	<.001
Tech-alignment adoption	0.82	<.001

All items had statistically significant correlations with their respective dimensions ($p < .001$), indicating strong internal consistency and appropriate construct alignment. These findings confirm that the quantitative structure retained fidelity to the qualitative thematic structure from which it was developed.

Construct Validity

The construct validity was assessed using correlations of dimension-total score to assess the contribution of each axis to the overall assessment framework.

Table 3

Construct Validity (Dimension-Total Correlations)

Dimension	**r**	**p**
Axis 1: General Questions	0.92	<.001
Axis 2: Film Evaluation	0.88	<.001
Axis 3: Graduation Projects & Applied Outputs	0.91	<.001
Axis 4: Evaluation of Applied Courses	0.89	<.001
Axis 5: Fairness & Logical Consistency	0.77	<.001

As the study had an exploratory nature, and since the sample size was small (n=40), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were not statistically applicable to this data set. Literature on research methods suggests that much larger sample sizes are needed for consistent factor extraction and model estimation. Thus, construct validity was analyzed by using correlation between dimensions and totals, and reliability coefficients; this type of validation is well recognized when developing initial survey instruments. It is recommended to use larger sample sizes in future studies to conduct an EFA and CFA analysis.

The findings confirmed that all measures significantly correlated with the overall questionnaire score, demonstrating the coherence of the proposed assessment structure.

Reliability Analysis

Instrument reliability was compared with the values of Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability coefficients.

Table 4

Reliability Coefficients

Dimension	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	Split-Half
Axis 1: General Questions	6	0.85	0.83
Axis 2: Film Evaluation	8	0.87	0.82
Axis 3: Graduation Projects & Applied Outputs	8	0.89	0.90
Axis 4: Evaluation of Applied Courses	6	0.90	0.91
Axis 5: Fairness & Logical Consistency	4	0.80	0.75
Total Questionnaire	**32**	**0.96**	**0.91**

Reliability coefficients surpassed accepted thresholds across all dimensions, representing strong internal consistency and measurement stability.

Response Scale Interpretation

The standard five-point Likert scale was used to measure agreement levels across items.

Table 5

Response Scale

Scale	Degree of Agreement	Interval Range	Relative Weight
1	Very Low	1.00–1.80	20%–36%
2	Low	>1.80–2.60	>36%–52%
3	Moderate	>2.60–3.40	>52%–68%
4	High	>3.40–4.20	>68%–84%
5	Very High	>4.20–5.00	>84%–100%

This scale was used to classify mean scores and relative weights in subsequent analyses.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using open-coding for concepts, axial coding to link to categories, and selective coding to define the central themes. Reflective memos, peer debriefing and case by case analysis contributed to a more refined analysis.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Strands

Integration took place at two levels, instrument development and interpretation. At the first level, the quantitative instrument which was the survey was developed through the qualitative data. Through the thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts, it was these themes of ethical responsibility, storytelling, design elements, equity, and school support that formed the basis of the survey. Several items were initially written for each theme to be sure to capture the full scope through the quantitative measures. These were then narrowed and refined to avoid overlap and ensure that the survey instrument reflected the logic of the qualitative findings instead of imposing new ideas.

Second, integration occurred in the interpretation stage through a side-by-side comparison strategy. Quantitative patterns such as mean scores, acceptance ratings, and correlations among dimensions were compared with the qualitative themes to look for convergence, complementarity, and divergence. For example, the high quantitative agreement in the importance of ethical and narrative dimensions was interpreted alongside the qualitative stories of their significance, including ethical clearance from a supervising body and writing a trustworthy story. The lower confidence, relatively, in some of the indicators related to the platforms was examined alongside qualitative descriptions of trepidation about using the fast-changing technology tools.

The integration phase involved linking quantitative data patterns with qualitative data themes that define convergence, complementarity and divergence. Thus, the model was united and the model was developed based on both quantitative acceptance and more formal, expertly taught pedagogical thinking. The

process facilitated integration of the two levels of analysis, making the proposed framework coherent instead of being a juxtaposition of semi-independent statistical validation and professional reasoning.

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

Triangulation, expert validation, and audit-trail procedures were employed to confirm rigor. Ethics was followed, and all participants voluntarily agreed. Data were strictly confidential and anonymous.

Finally, a consideration of how professors were motivated to use the proposed criteria was based on the processes of acceptance of technology, especially perceived value and contextual fit, important factors driving this adoption of assessment systems (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000).

Results

This section begins with a description of the sample. Next, the results are presented beginning with descriptive statistics for each dimension of the research, followed by inferential statistics and finally the qualitative results. To avoid redundancy between methods and results, the findings are presented without interpretation which occurs in the Discussion section.

Overall Acceptance of Evaluative Dimensions

To provide a clear indication of academics' appreciation of the proposed assessment approach, results are summarized by dimension rather than using multiple table items. Table 6 reports mean, standard deviation and relative weights of the evaluation components.

Table 6

Overall Acceptance of Evaluative Dimensions

Evaluative Dimension	Mean	SD	Relative Weight (%)
General Evaluation Criteria	4.10	0.58	82.1
Film Evaluation	4.19	0.55	83.9
Graduation Projects and Applied Outputs	4.12	0.60	82.4
Evaluation of Applied Courses	4.08	0.66	81.6
Fairness and Logical Consistency	4.18	0.63	83.5

The results show that acceptance is consistently high in all dimensions with mean scores of more than 4.0 on the five-point scale. The strongest support was observed for Film Evaluation and Fairness and Logical Consistency. Item-level findings supporting these patterns are presented in Appendix A, Tables A1–A5. The assessment of applied courses and the general criteria also met with strong agreement, although acceptance for aspects of rapidly changing formats and technologies was relatively low but nevertheless strong.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings helped explain the quantitative trends by showing the logic of the instructional process in the academic assessments they make. Participants viewed ethical oversight as an integral component of media education rather than a procedural requirement. They described supervised processes, including staged reviews, ethical checklists, and prior approvals, as vital to the safety of students and schools, especially in politically charged situations. "*Accuracy, legality, and balance are not negotiable; I start each project with these checks before talking about technical details*" one supervisor reported (Participant A).

These technical and aesthetic judgments were repeatedly referred to as ethical narrative practices, rather than as purely artistic practices. They stressed that cinematography, editing, sound, and pacing were valued for their ability to convey meaning and build audience trust. A film teacher stated: *"Any technical error is not a typo; it breaks the story and destroys the viewer's trust in the content they are watching"* (Participant C). This illustrates the reasons for technical criteria being so strongly supported when nested within narrative coherence rather than just tool proficiency.

The third theme that also stood out was the accountability of institutions, specifically in the form of public distribution of student work. The participant emphasized that a project outside of the gallery needs

permission, particularly when it is a politically or socially sensitive project. This concern was illustrated by Participant E, who stated: *"A film may be excellent, but it should not be shown to the public until the department approves it, because the institution bears responsibility for it."* Such reasoning helps explain the strong quantitative support for the fairness and logical consistency indicators.

Finally, creativity was encouraged by all, but always anchored in ethical realism. Participants distinguished between meaningful innovation and superficial novelty, emphasizing sensitivity to local contexts, subjects, and communities. One documentary filmmaker stated, "creativity is not about fancy effects, it is about saying something new without destroying those you are representing" (Participant F). This notion also reflects the cautious acceptance of platform-specific and rapidly changing technical variables that is evident in the quantitative results.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Both quantitative and qualitative data showed considerable agreement between participants. In the quantitative analysis, participants strongly supported the dimensions of ethics, narrative integrity, craftsmanship, and fairness as important factors for assessment. Similarly, in qualitative data, experts confirmed the importance of these factors through their focus on ethics, trust, oversight, and narrative integrity. Therefore, both sets of results provided a strong basis to formulate an assessment framework based on professional ethics.

Convergence was especially apparent when it came to the focus on ethics, fairness, and narrative integrity. On both sets of data, there was also some support for platform-dependent and rapidly changing technological aspects as part of an assessment rubric, although this was shown to be more desirable than assessing based solely on specific technologies.

Discussion

The results are consistent with current research in media literacy, digital literacy, authentic assessment, and digital ethics, where critical thinking, ethical accountability, and professionalism are all essential elements for evaluation systems in higher education (Wuyckens et al., 2022; Farías-Gaytán et al., 2023; Händel et al., 2025). In Palestine, media evaluation extends beyond a purely technical exercise and encompasses ethical, narrative, and institutional responsibilities. This finding aligns with media literacy scholarship, which defines competence as "the mixture of critical judgment, social responsibility, and ethical consciousness" (Livingstone, 2004; Potter, 2010). Buckingham (2015) expands this view by arguing that digital literacy should focus on power, representation, and ethics beyond technical skills. These qualitative data support Masterman (2018)'s vision of socially responsible media education, which recognizes that ethical responsibility is embedded in production, supervision, and assessment, rather than an assessment category.

Besides confirming the alignment between theory and practice, these findings reveal that ethical accountability is truly a framework organizing the applied evaluation of media in Palestinian universities. Rather than being an added dimension to the evaluation rubric, ethics is a cross-cutting accountability that governs the crafting of narratives, aesthetics, and even issues in the dissemination of media products. This represents a movement from evaluating competencies to evaluating responsibilities, especially in politically charged contexts of education. These quantitative results point to the preference of accuracy, professional values, objectivity, and coherent narrative above all innovations and fast-changing technical developments within the context of particular platforms. This tendency may be explained by a greater interest in lasting competencies than in tool-based competences. The results provide further support to contemporary assertions that digital ethics should be treated as a fundamental educational skill instead of an ancillary regulatory issue, especially considering the growing role of algorithmic mediation and content generation using artificial intelligence technology (Händel et al., 2025).

The findings concerning narrative integrity and multimodal craftsmanship are consistent with previous research suggesting traditional rubrics can be utilized to describe creativity and multimodality in work (Panadero & Jonsson, 2013; Sparks et al., 2014). In addition to this, the qualitative results show that the

technical aspects were highly valued only when they appeared in an environment of narrative coherence and believability. The increased importance of film, editing, and narrative coherence suggests a greater focus on aesthetics than scoring. This shift to represent technical ability as ethical narrative practice is consistent with film and media evaluation research that situates aesthetic judgment within larger moral and communicative processes rather than subjective idiosyncratic considerations (Schneider, 2017; Schneider et al., 2020). This level of attention to fairness and coherence is consistent with institutional and leadership literature on shared assessment vision as a model for educational change (Leithwood et al., 2008). It is also important to highlight that the qualitative results revealed that the institutional accountability related to students' published work strengthened the teachers' position regarding fairness and logical consistency in grading. The strong support for fairness and logical consistency also aligns with current thinking on authentic assessment, which stresses the need for clear criteria that can assess difficult-to-evaluate performances within an educational setting (Zhan et al., 2025). Though the support level for fairness remained consistent across all project types, the somewhat low scores assigned to certain technological indicators could be attributed to issues relating to the standardization process across varied media types and production contexts. Whereas standardized testing practices promote accountability, limit discretionary grading, and focus on utility and contextual fit (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000), international assessment studies found numerous contextual factors regarding surveillance, clearance processes, and dissemination control, such as political sensitivity, institutional risk, and transparency in Palestinian assessment practices.

Notably, the high level of agreement across demographic variables indicates that the proposed framework describes common professional norms rather than idiosyncratic preferences of particular specializations. Such consensus may facilitate institutional adoption and system-wide implementation. The moderate correlation of the measures used in evaluating platform-specific metrics and trends linked with technologies is indicative of the fact that the instructors have been able to distinguish between sustainable competencies and skills that evolve quickly due to rapid technological changes. Faculty prioritize transferable narrative and ethical skills over temporary software expertise. This is in line with the developing literature highlighting the growing ability of media educators to differentiate between communicative skills and constantly evolving production technologies (Bender, 2023; Pavlik, 2023). The results could also be due to increased recognition of the moral and pedagogical dimensions of new media technologies powered by artificial intelligence that need a framework that takes into account both technology and effective communication and ethics (Matsiola et al., 2024). The conclusion supports the hypothesis that assessment programs should concentrate on sustainable communication and ethics skills.

Practical Implications for Palestinian Media Programs

There are significant implications from the findings for a potential application at the Palestinian universities. First, departments could adopt a unified rubric of ethical assessment that includes the aspects of ethical accountability, narrative integrity, multimodal artistry, fairness, and institutional responsibility. A shared rubric for all the applied courses and graduation projects and student films could increase the uniformity of evaluation and decrease variability of judgment among faculty.

Second, ethical accountability can also take place through supervision controls such as stage reviews, ethical checklists, and departmental approvals for student work that will be publicly displayed. Given the political and social context of media work in Palestine, implementing such measures as additional layers of safeguards at a departmental level would provide a greater degree of protection for the institution as well as encouraging a sense of ethical accountability for students.

Third, the implementation of the framework should be guided by descriptive principles rather than specific tools. These factors of narrative flow, audience credibility, and responsibility for representation and communication will enable universities to continue to be relevant despite rapidly changing media technologies. Periodic curriculum review committees will be able to redefine the technical descriptive points without altering the ethical and communicative core of the framework.

Fourth, faculty calibration processes should be implemented through professional development workshops and peer-review alignment sessions. Professional development workshops and peer-review alignment sessions can help faculty to develop a consistent understanding of the rubric dimensions and so promote fairness across types of outputs and institutions.

Finally, the application of these principles to quality assurance mechanisms, accreditation processes, and curricular design will turn assessment from an educational exercise into a policy tool that enhances transparency, labor market relevance, and accountability.

These findings indicate that ethical reasoning, narrative construction, and integrative assessment constitute essential components of practical media education. The divergence, especially with regard to platform strategy and institutional control, indicates the need for contextualized assessment approaches, which can be based on the global approach but adjusted to local conditions.

Conclusion

This paper explored whether the concept developed by an expert could provide a robust basis for the assessment of applied media work in Palestinian higher education. Qualitative and quantitative outcomes identified an assessment culture based on ethical accountability, narrative honesty, and multimodal craftsmanship as core pillars of professional competence. Ethics emerged as a central component of the production process and was consistently prioritized by faculty members. Technical and aesthetic elements were evaluated in relation to audience trust and narrative coherence, while the cautiousness regarding platform-specific or rapidly evolving tools was a principled difference between pedagogical development and technological adoption.

Nevertheless, there are a few limitations that must be considered. First, while the quantitative sample included faculty members from many different Palestinian universities and was representative of a large portion of the target population, the total number of participants was still relatively small. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory in nature; they do not represent a broad or reliable representation of other types of higher educational institutions. The subgroup analyses that compared responses by university, specialization type, and years of experience should also be viewed with caution due to the reduced statistical power inherent in smaller subgroup sizes. Second, data consisted of self-reported perceptions of assessment practices, which may be subject to social desirability bias among participants, especially when addressing ethical accountability in a politically sensitive culture. Third, several restrictions affected access and sampling for this study, such as restrictions of movement and university access. Fourthly, even though there was high intercorrelation between the measures and items along with strong item-total correlations, this particular study failed to use any kind of sophisticated methods related to factor analysis such as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) or Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The absence of factor-analytic validation should therefore be viewed as a limitation of the current study and an important direction for future instrument refinement. Future research should examine the dimensional structure of the instrument using EFA and CFA with larger samples.

This research contributes to theory in that media literacy, digital literacy, digital ethics, and authentic assessment viewpoints can all be incorporated into a multidimensional framework designed to address emerging issues linked to AI-based media production and assessment in higher education settings (Farías-Gaytán et al., 2023; Pavlik, 2023; Zhan et al., 2025). Practically, these findings highlight the rare instance in higher education where scholars come together to develop a multidimensional, ethics-based assessment rubric. In addition, this report presents the institutions with a roadmap towards achieving standards and professionalism in meeting normative expectations. The use of a mixed methods approach helped ensure that the measures used quantitatively fit into the reasoning behind the assessment process.

This framework is context-driven, and the needs for specific tools can always be re-calibrated. In future studies, the effect of grading rubrics on new medium formats and students' perceptions should be

investigated, especially with regards to how restrictive rules promote creative thinking and ethical decision-making. Longitudinal studies and cross-regional comparisons would further clarify the transferability and sustainability of the proposed evaluation model. Overall, this study suggests that applied media assessment can be considered principled when ethical reasoning, narrative purpose, and technical competence are treated as complementary dimensions of professional practice.

Recommendations

The findings highlight the need for a common ethics-based assessment that puts emphasis on narrative coherence, technical accuracy, and fairness in all institutions. Students should be evaluated through multiple measures across university and media programs, and ethics and participatory storytelling practices must be at the core of production. Improved supervisory structures, with clearer clearance processes, privacy laws, and ethics codes would increase accountability and make applied and graduate school more valuable.

Given the limited confidence in platform-specific and rapidly evolving technologies, curriculum modifications need to be made with a heightened emphasis on instructional goals over short-term tools. Faculty development programs that match criteria can aid in evaluating new media types. Their actual quality of grading is assessed through continuous improvement in assessment models. Future research should examine implementation fidelity, student responses to clearer standards, and the applicability of criteria to new media forms.

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Appendix A. Supplementary Quantitative Results

This appendix presents detailed item-level statistics, enhancement proposals, and inferential analyses that support the results discussed in the main text.

Table A1

Results of the General Evaluation Criteria Axis

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Relative Weight (%)
1	Accuracy of information in journalistic materials	4.28	0.60	85.5
2	Objectivity of content	4.13	0.72	82.5
3	Consideration of legal aspects	3.93	0.86	78.5
4	Adherence to professional ethics	4.23	0.77	84.5
5	Depth of analysis	4.03	0.89	80.5
6	Ability to manage field challenges	4.05	0.68	81.0
Overall Mean		**4.10**	**0.58**	**82.1**

Table A2

Results of the Film Evaluation Axis

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Relative Weight (%)
1	Cinematography quality	4.43	0.68	88.5
2	Visual aesthetics	4.33	0.76	86.5
3	Originality and creativity	4.40	0.59	88.0
4	Narrative pacing	4.10	0.74	82.0
5	Artistic coherence	4.08	0.86	81.5
6	Editing mastery and meaning construction	4.18	0.68	83.5
7	Innovation in editing	4.05	0.85	81.0
8	Temporal synchronization	4.00	0.85	80.0
Overall Mean		**4.19**	**0.55**	**83.9**

Table A3

Results of the Graduation Projects and Applied Outputs Axis

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Relative Weight (%)
1	Artistic–market balance	4.20	0.72	84.0
2	Audience impact	4.05	0.88	81.0
3	Innovation in modern technologies	4.00	0.82	80.0
4	Content–form alignment	4.18	0.78	83.5
5	Fairness across project types	4.03	0.92	80.5
6	Originality and depth	4.10	0.81	82.0
7	Experimentation and innovation	4.25	0.71	85.0
8	Use of modern editing software	4.18	0.75	83.5
Overall Mean		**4.12**	**0.60**	**82.4**

Table A4

Results of the Applied Courses Evaluation Axis

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Relative Weight (%)
1	Journalistic forms and styles	4.10	0.90	82.0
2	Persuasive elements	4.10	0.67	82.0
3	Podcasts and digital radio outputs	3.78	1.07	75.5
4	Professional standards	4.28	0.64	85.5
5	Design and production principles	4.05	0.85	81.0
6	Alignment with course objectives	4.18	0.64	83.5
Overall Mean		**4.08**	**0.66**	**81.6**

Table A5

Results of the Fairness and Logical Consistency Axis

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Relative Weight (%)
1	Unifying assessment foundations	4.25	0.67	85.0
2	Clarity of standards to students	4.20	0.85	84.0
3	Fairness across output types	4.08	0.80	81.5
4	Adoption considering technological change	4.18	0.84	83.5
Overall Mean		**4.18**	**0.63**	**83.5**

Table A6

Aspects Deemed Necessary for Enhancing Evaluation Criteria

Aspect	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Innovation and multimedia integration	10	25.0
Strengthening ethical verification	9	22.5
No modification needed	8	20.0
Platform-specific criteria	7	17.5
Simplifying complex information	4	10.0
Audience interaction quality	2	5.0
Total	**40**	**100.0**

Table A7

Proposals for Improving Film and Graduation Project Evaluation

Proposal	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Narrative innovation and audiovisual harmony	11	27.5
No modification needed	11	27.5
Artistic–message integration	9	22.5
Alignment with labor-market needs	9	22.5
Total	**40**	**100.0**

Table A8

Group Differences by Demographic Variables

Variable	Test	Value	p-value
Gender	t-test	0.145	0.887
Teaching experience	ANOVA	1.438	0.248
Specialization	ANOVA	0.428	0.826
University	ANOVA	1.220	0.320