

GCE

Performing Arts

Advanced GCE A2 **H546**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H146**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

General Comments

Most centres are beginning to understand the specification and are now teaching one organisation to their cohort of pupils and then encouraging each candidate to choose a different second organisation. Although there are still the same few Centres continuing to teach the same two venues, despite this issue being raised in the report.

It is significant to see that many more candidates had selected appropriate organisations that could be explored in detail unfortunately a small number of candidates still choose inappropriate organisations that were much too big, such as ITV or LAMDA, or they were one man businesses and therefore offered no opportunity for comparison or evaluation with the first organisation. It is important that both organisations can be looked at equally and that candidates are able to draw sensible comparison and contrast conclusions. Greater teacher guidance would help in instances such as these.

Once again there appeared to be a greater grasp of the specification this year. However the marking was still generally lenient from most centres as they continue to underestimate the depth of analysis required for access the top band marks.

A0.1.1

The more able candidates had a deep understanding of both their chosen organisations and the operations underpinning each company. They used pie graphs to illustrate funding, audience profiles, and bar charts showing the success of different products.

Some candidates yet again failed to identify what type of organisation they were exploring, whether it was a receiving or producing house, an essential piece of information for this unit. Funding challenged many candidates with many budgets still not adding up, leading the moderators to believe numbers had just been grabbed out of the air. However, top band candidates are able to discuss income – ticket sales, wages, energy, services, etc. as well as understanding subsidies – grants, and how any deficits are met.

Many centres are sticking to the word count which restricts some candidates from accessing all the marks available.

A01.2

Centres considered the inclusion of a staffing structure diagram as fulfilling the specification and few candidates expanded and further explored implications of hierarchy and /or structure in relation to perceived and actual success of the venue or organisation.

It is during this section of the unit that it becomes apparent if a candidate has picked an inappropriate second organisation as candidates cannot show any depth of understanding of organisational structures. Likewise if a candidate has chosen two very different companies he/she may also find it very difficult to find suitable roles to compare. This in turn limits their marks

A01.3

Once again candidates select a person from their chosen venue and get carried away with the person's life and not the role and the importance of the role within the company.

Please ensure all candidates include a detailed paper copy of their presentation as well as the DVD. An actor cannot be used in this section unless the actor is in residence to the company.

A04.1

Unfortunately there is still a tendency to accept and reward implied comparison of the two venues rather than awarding marks for acknowledging and valuing explicit comparison.

Some candidates didn't include this section at all and only made odd comparisons throughout their portfolios, but this stopped them from accessing the higher mark bands.

Strong candidates wrote detailed comparisons after each section which was excellent practice to see. Whereas weaker candidates only managed to note the most obvious comparisons, showing a lack of understanding and that they hadn't explored the two organisations in enough depth.

A04.2

Though some improvement once again this section of the job role still seems to be the weakest aspect found in portfolios. Candidates do not explore the various contracts on offer in the organisation and the type of contract the chosen employee has, once the type of contract has been established what benefits does this offer them, holiday pay? sickness? any perks?

Health and safety is now an essential part of everyone's jobs yet again candidates do not explore what aspects the employee is responsible for, or effected by with regards to health and safety. Again many more candidates had explored unions, however if the employee has not joined is this because the company frowns upon union membership?

Finally who do they answer to and who answer to them, and how they fit into the job hierarchy. Only by everyone listening and communicating can an organisation run smoothly. Marking in this section of the unit is generally over generous across the board.

G381 Professional Practice: Skills Development

General Comments

There was much improvement in this year's series. Thank you for taking time to read this report and make the changes requested. Very few centres did not follow the correct format with candidates preparing 3 group performances, devising their own dances or monologues. This unit is about repertoire and students developing their skills through exploration of professional repertoire only.

The best practice seen are where centres video the rehearsal process showing the development stages from lifting the text off the page, learning of lines/songs/dance sequences, through to performance standard.

Music candidates have always used technical language throughout their portfolios however this is now moving across all disciplines.

Dancers still have a tendency to re-choreograph dances that they cannot do, in the vague style of the chosen choreographer. Though slight change is acceptable for the occasional step whole sections cannot be changed because a candidate cannot manage that aspect of the dance.

Marking overall was still slightly over generous in particular to A.O.3.1.

Administration

Clerical errors were few in this session with the correct paper work enclosed and signed. Please ensure that all DVD's can be played on both DVD players and laptops, occasionally some moderators had problems watching enclosed DVD's which slowed down the moderation process. Once again please ensure that marking is consistent across the centre before final marks are submitted this makes the job of moderating run much more smoothly.

Portfolios

Overall portfolios arrived on time for the moderation process, with the URS form completed thank you. Again many more candidates included a contents page at the beginning of their portfolio which also helped with the moderation process.

A02.2 developing skills was varied with some candidates still telling "the story" behind the text rather than identifying what skills are being developed and how they've developed them. However the more able candidates are able to show how they will be able to apply these new skills to future work.

Many students had attended lots of workshops which were interesting to read about. However this year many candidates had applied the knowledge learnt to their chosen pieces of repertoire.

Occasionally candidates wrote detailed portfolios with excellent research in particular looking and applying social, historical and cultural elements but their practical work did not match the written element. Unfortunately candidates cannot gain high marks in A03.1 if the skill development is not of a consistently high standard. It states clearly on the URS form professional standard and this is the weakest element where teachers over mark their students.

Again candidates could look at the work covered and respond to both staff and peer feedback, re-evaluating their skills development plan where necessary, setting new targets if appropriate and evaluating their work so far. As well as assessing what was achieved if anything.

Research/Hand-out

This year fewer portfolios contained hand-outs that are of a generic nature. It is important that if candidates do include such hand-outs that they have been annotated and applied to their own work. All research must include the social, historical and cultural aspects of each piece found in their portfolio and then how this information has influenced their own performance.

It is apparent from candidate submissions that those who have completed detailed research and applied it to their performance gain a far greater understanding of the work and in turn achieve marks in the higher bands.

Health and Safety

Health and safety is included in the majority of portfolios with detailed vocal and physical warm ups. However when watching DVD's candidates still work in socks, have inappropriate clothing on and many piercings it is then obvious that they do not apply health and safety to their practical work. Health and safety should be integrated throughout their work and embedded in their practical as witnessed on the DVD.

Choosing Repertoire

In this series it was evident that candidates had selected repertoire more carefully, unfortunately a few candidates still selected work that hindered their ability to develop their chosen skills. Though it was less prevalent there are still some centres who are allowing their candidates to select work that is not repertoire. More teacher guidance is required for these candidates.

Candidate Identification

Despite yearly requests centres still do not always identify each candidate clearly on DVD's. It is important to be able to identify a candidate both through their portfolio and on the DVD. Candidates should state their name, candidate number, name of piece and skills they are focusing on. Please include a clear running order to accompany the DVD and a headshot of each candidate.

Location of Evidence

Again this was much easier clearer for the moderator overall portfolios had numbered pages with appropriate sub headings. OCR cannot stress enough the importance of allowing the moderator to be able to find all the evidence. This can also be done by adding annotations throughout portfolios and filling in the URS in detail. Giving the correct timings on DVD's would also help the moderator

Skills Development Plan

Again many centres organised their students to include a skills development plan. This was detailed and thorough, with good candidates showing that they clearly understood the planning process, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and skills they needed to develop.

Successful plans are realistic and candidates refer back to them throughout their portfolios. Without a SDP candidates cannot successfully evidence the progress they have made.

Commentaries

The commentaries show each stage of the process undergone by the candidate in developing their skills, evaluating work covered, responding to feedback from staff and peers alike, setting new targets and evaluating the SDP where necessary showing candidate ownership. As well as using technical language where appropriate throughout their portfolios.

Observation Reports

Unfortunately once again we are still seeing teachers use tick box sheets. This does not give the moderator a clear insight to the candidate's work ethic, ability to respond to feedback, the skills that have been developed throughout the unit or the journey made in achieving the end product. We would be grateful if all staff wrote detailed observation reports on the candidate's work ethic and progress made.

Recording of Rehearsals and Performances on DVD

Many centres are now recording the rehearsal stage and showing the process of page to stage, the better centres showing 3 or 4 rehearsals. It is then clearer to the moderator the candidate's journey and the progress they have made. Please remember final performances should be in front of an audience with lights, costume, set where appropriate. Some centres still present three finished pieces of work to an audience which is not what the specification is asking.

Please identify your students, you might know them very well and be able to recognise them immediately but remember your moderator has never seen your candidates and cannot identify them easily like you can. Please include a recent photograph along with each candidate identifying him/herself on the DVD.

Conclusion

Centres who follow the specification and apply the grading criteria provide solid opportunities for candidates to develop good skills and techniques. Please ensure marking matches the skills developed by the candidate are clearly evidenced on the DVD.

The issues with DVD's and recognition of candidate's is still, at times an issue please ensure we can identify your candidates easily.

G382 Professional Practice: Performance

General Comments

Examiners reported few changes on last year with centres continuing to respond well generally to the demands of the unit. They report that -

- Administration of the examination process is good
- Issues of repertoire were not significant in this session
- Written material continues to respond to better structures and context provided by centres
- Portfolios and DVDs generally arrive on time
- Centres with G383 candidates have continued to extend the range of evidence; recording both the interviews and backstage and other technical operations. However the sample is so small that any meaningful conclusions are limited

The general context is of a small and diminishing group of centres where examiners are providing evidence based on small samples, with some notable exceptions in the large music cohorts still doing the programme.

Performance

Centres performed well where they responded to demands of the unit and to the assessment criteria in terms of professional replication, choice of appropriate repertoire and depth of analysis in written evidence. That is to say teachers who understood the content of the whole specification with regard to repertoire, the need for an audience and the full range of health and safety, were able to equip their students with the knowledge, skills and understanding to respond appropriately to the demands of the tasks and evidence needs and to produce evidence that met the higher descriptors of the criteria. The vast majority of centres responded appropriately to these demands.

Centres did not do so well where they did not respond to professional production values as outlined above. Again descriptors in the top band that refer to control, fluency and accuracy do so within the context of the tension provided by an audience and a finished production mentality. The same centres each year tend to have these problems with production values.

Centres also responded well in the demand for Health and Safety in portfolios but sometimes tended to exclude personal, art-form based considerations and concentrated on generic risk assessments.

Centres that produced appropriate performances fully understood the vocational and technical demands of the unit and contextualised their preparation with reference to assessment criteria and demands. Consequently candidates that generally achieved well in the task of producing a performance were immersed in professional practice and choose clear repertoire pieces. Within this context there was evidence of a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding.

A range of approaches is expected given the choices and resources available but centres must give candidates the opportunity to produce evidence that tests their understanding of professional practice against the assessment criteria. In the mark scheme there are clearly significant marks to be gained by engaging with, and understanding the needs of the audience and some confident technical performances failed to recognise the importance of this. Both AO2 and AO3 are framed with reference to communication and engagement with the audience; this can be in a range of contexts. To access the criteria fully there must be careful thought put into

getting an audience, understanding what impact the performance is intended to have both from an ensemble and from an individual perspective and knowing what the target audience is.

G382 has criteria demands for group activities; solo performances where the candidate performed just one song/dance/piece of music within a group piece or as part of a band are not fulfilling the unit demands in a way that is likely to give them access to the higher mark bands.

Most centres now seem to be fully aware that candidates cannot elect which art form they wish to be assessed on and understand that a candidate is marked on their entire performance.

Written evidence

Portfolios continue to improve with candidates able to respond to some very useful and comprehensive structures from centres. Better candidates are able to augment these with committed and 'owned' responses drawing on practitioners and seen performances. The best portfolios showed clear evidence of planning, target setting, diary entries that showed progress and an application of techniques. Writing frames or pro-forma can help to elicit evidence from weaker candidates but can also inhibit independent and autonomous work from higher achieving candidates.

Health and Safety contents have improved with the use of risk assessments, annotated photographs and appropriate warm-up activities all contributing to an enhanced understanding. There were some good examples where candidates had really tried to link H & S to their own performance and this should be encouraged but many candidates were still relying on vague comments about wires and spills and keeping the stage area clear without much thought about their own, specific, circumstances. If they are performing they *must* have regard to the health and safety and condition of their physical instrument, this is not only essential evidence but a requirement of any professional practice context. The criteria is framed from this individual and not generic approach to H&S so centres should encourage candidates to start with themselves and their own H&S within the context of the performance, the demands of the work and their physical well-being before moving on to discuss the tripping over wires, technical staging, risk assessments etc.

G383 Professional Practice: Production

General Comments

Examiners reported few changes on last year's session with centres continuing to respond well generally to the demands of the unit. They report that -

- Administration of the examination process is good
- Issues of repertoire were not significant in this session
- Written material continues to respond to better structures and context provided by centres
- Portfolios and DVDs generally arrive on time
- Centres with G383 candidates have continued to extend the range of evidence; recording both the interviews and backstage and other technical operations. However the sample is so small that any meaningful conclusions are limited

The general context is of a small and diminishing group of centres where examiners are providing evidence based on small samples, with some notable exceptions in the large music cohorts still doing the programme.

Realised design/participation in production

Given the very low numbers taking the unit in this session it is difficult to draw overall conclusions but very generally candidates performed better in lighting and sound where technical resources are used with some fluency and were less successful in make-up and costume where aspirations and assumed, anecdotal understanding far outstrip professional knowledge and the resources available to candidates.

Design portfolio

The production candidates (sound and light) spoke well in their respective interviews and their use of PowerPoint presentations as aide memoirs allowed them to focus what they said on the key issues related to their roles. There had clearly been time spent ensuring that production candidates were an integral part of the process rather than students who had been left to get on with it themselves.

G384 Getting Work

General Comments

Administration

With few exceptions all documentation from centres was completed and sent in good time.

Almost all comments on the URS forms and the annotations in the portfolios were helpful in understanding how marks had been allocated. However, there were still a few centres where there was insufficient information and comment on these forms to back up the marks awarded, e.g. some did not provide enough detail about location while others relied on simple ticks to indicate where work was of a good quality but without referencing this to criteria.

Many portfolios were well-organised and well presented, with appropriate use of contents pages and appendices. There are still some candidates who do not use an appendix effectively or any appendix at all. Appendices can include research notes, drafts and details of arts organisations, and enable the assessed evidence to be carefully edited and selected for optimum impact. It is essential that centres follow guidelines on content, layout and presentation more closely, these guidelines aid the moderation process by making where the demands of the unit and the criteria have been addressed more readily apparent and clear.

General comments

The assessment criteria for the unit asks for

- an understanding of work opportunities in the industry
- use of appropriate terminology
- a plan of work showing marketability and contingency
- research with arts professionals
- evaluation

These are presented in

- self-promotion pack
- plan of work for the first year
- written analysis (including SWOTs)

Candidates that performed well in the unit had understood the need to structure the portfolios appropriately. They produced the self-promotion pack, an outline of the range of work considered possible during the first year and written analysis of the plan and pack (SWOT) including a strategy for future professional development in clear and fluent portfolios with appendices. There is reference to appendices above, but additionally appendices can be used to show annotation on documents that need to be pristine for the self-promotion pack. They had evidence that they had understood the need to persuade both verbally and visually within a credible portfolio of experience and a sustainable work plan. Additionally they had thought about and evidenced effective self-promotion that included attitude and survival skills and the management of practical resources. This was underpinned by interviews with professionals in their chosen field. They understood the relationship between contract and freelance work and showed evidence of observations and research leading to a strategy for future professional development and work.

Conversely, some candidates showed less understanding and knowledge of the industry and these portfolios were characterised by much less fluency and depth. Weaker responses failed to project forward effectively or make ambitious and fully aspirational decisions based on best-case scenarios and well researched vocational routes. These portfolios were generally characterised

by interviews with random arts professionals or none at all, archaic information on conditions of service and ridiculously ambitious prospects or in contrast ridiculously realistic prospects; there is no point in candidates following the line that they are not likely to get a job in the first year however 'realistic' this may be.

Promotional pack

There was a wide range of promotion packs. Some were highly produced and effective with a strong sense of what was needed to persuade and sell the candidate in a professional context. These candidates were clearly drawing on their research and experience to be able to speak directly and with focus to those potential employers working in a specific vocational area. Here there was a good underpinning knowledge and understanding.

Weaker candidates had little of this underpinning knowledge and were obviously working in a very narrow context, one essentially provided for them by the centre and entirely focused on their own anecdotal or school-based knowledge and not on interviews conducted with freelance professionals.

At this level it is essential that candidates talk to working professional and experience the vocational context in both replicated events or in real visits to professional venues and spaces. These 'spaces' should include the websites of professionals. Many candidates are beginning to understand the importance of social media and websites in their professional promotion – in this they are realising through their research and networks that this is how the industry is working currently in most areas of the industry. Moderators will respond to this and accept links to websites with show-reels, CDs and links to youtube and Spotlight (or simulations of these links) already uploaded.

Centres should be aware that online access to professional formats and the use of social media and the creation of an 'online presence' will be expected as part of the portfolio and reference to assessment criteria should be predicated on this for both teacher-assessor and moderator.

Some professional quality photos were offered – but very few. Most photos are still without a clear 'target audience', or having a clear idea of what the photo said about them as a performer. In any event, printed photographs are less used professionally and in the light of the reference to online and digital evidence above, these will be less significant in terms of criteria-assessed evidence.

The promotional pack needs to work with the work-plan and some candidates made good links between, for instance, a set of credible qualifications in a resume and what could be reasonable expected in the first year of work. Some candidates had very modest CVs based on what they had actually done and wildly ambitious plans for their first year. Candidates can have fictitious resumes and qualifications: they just need to be *credible* and *sustainable* and working in a well-informed professional context. It should be noted that CVs are not compulsory and the use of them must reflect current professional practice.

Plan of first year of work

Again, a wide range of responses here with a variation in the number of years forming the basis of projections, some very ambitious earning and some unrealistic ideas of what work might be available in the first year. Most candidates however kept to the prerequisite for 50% contract and 50% freelance although some didn't always understand that the contract work should be in a related area rather than any part-time casual work. Most candidates chose teaching or workshop leading in this area but there were also examples of setting up companies and writing. Some plans were sometimes over-optimistic about what might be achieved in a first year, and thus

lacked some credibility. Some candidates divided the year into two blocks of freelance/contract work in an unrealistic way. Many candidates offered the first year plan based on a hypothetical 'post-training context'. A few identified the skills provided by specified training / named training establishments and considered how this might enhance work prospects. Some candidates are still not paying enough attention to contingency planning or professional development.

There were good examples of plans which showed a clear awareness of professional opportunities in the local area. However candidates in one centre relied too much on collectively developing their current activities with their own company, thus limiting opportunities to show a wider knowledge of the industry. This limited the opportunity to show enough evidence of individual career planning and the ability to sustain work in the first post-training year.

There was often a sound knowledge and understanding of work opportunities in a very localised area, but some candidates did not discuss in enough detail how interviews they conducted with workers in the industry helped in the creation of the plan of work for the first year.

Although some plans had limited credibility, overall strands were used effectively to show clear sense of awareness of professional opportunities. There was often good understanding of income, expenditure and basic tax awareness.

The use of 'strands' of work proved mostly useful providing structure and focus to the material. As previously indicated the best candidates linked the plan very closely to the promotional pack giving the overall evidence credibility and coherence.

Generally, there was some effective research, clearly presented, with good evaluation of interviews. Some candidates had a range of professional interviews, not all using the same two or three, and this approach paid off in providing a range of experience and allowing them to select and apply useful information. However, in some centres all candidates were still offering the same two interviews with professionals, some without applying them in a focused way.

Not many placed their first year in the context of impending cuts to arts funding and the general financial climate.

Analysis of the plan

Those candidates that provided coherent packs and plans know clearly where the strengths and weaknesses of the market and professional area were and used this to contextualise their own personal analysis. Weaker candidates tended to restrict their analysis just to their strengths and weakness and even here not very effectively.

Much of the weaker work was in response to a misunderstanding of the purposes and intention of a SWOT analysis. The best portfolios had very succinct analyses because they had looked at their overall plan and projections and done a focused SWOT analysis of the market and where relevant and appropriate of their own abilities and personal characteristics. A few candidates analysed current economic circumstances of the industry.

Better candidates did more than just provide a SWOT, there were introductions and conclusions that placed it in a much wider context. These candidates took a step back and used their knowledge and understanding of the industry to weight up their chances of success with clarity and honesty. Most candidates were good at identifying the strengths of their plan since this was often closely related to the skills outlined in the résumé. Weaknesses were more difficult for candidates to identify. In terms of opportunities, the most able candidates could see that the nature of their work could grow in relation to their professional development and this provided a good source of discussion. Threats were more difficult to identify, but the strongest candidates

were able to locate the work in a context that did identify such threats. Good candidates placed their analysis into a wider professional context and related it both to a specific professional area and their place in it. Given the current economic climate it should be a given for candidates to mention both their own personal issues and contexts in the SWOT analysis as well as the effect economic downturn has on the industry and audience behaviour.

G385 Exploring Repertoire

General comments

The vast majority of centres have continued to demonstrate a willingness to engage imaginatively with the unit, with the most successful outcomes related directly to a carefully chosen pair of contrasting texts which offer opportunities for candidates to research and perform in a clearly defined style or genre and to develop new knowledge and expertise.

There is encouraging evidence of a general ongoing improvement in terms of the expectations of centres. Examples were seen of outstanding centres in which, the rigour and the relevance of the research was excellent, and where this was also directly applied to the practical work. The two elements, essay and performance worked in tandem.

Exceptional centres approach the research in a serious, focussed and structured way with attention to academic detail through which candidates diligently append correctly cited sources and academic authorities and provide an organised and comprehensive bibliography in accordance with standard academic practice. There were some very strong essays with real academic rigour with the best always having good bibliographies. There was a matching up of research that related to the performance, which resulted in good quality applied work. It was noticeable that the more effective the research, the more apposite the practical work with performances showing stylistic conventions clearly. Though there is still a significant number of centres not providing word counts most essays were well written and the quality of language was, generally, very good. The essays were easy to read and (most) candidates' work was informed and accessible.

Teacher annotations were, generally useful and guided the moderator to how, and where, marks had been awarded. This helped moderation. However, there were some occasions where the teacher-assessor did not supply annotation leaving the moderator to make his/her own connections.

Discussion of how the text had been adapted received more attention in this session with more detail on how historical repertoire had been adapted for contemporary audiences. This is good practice.

Practical Work

Standards of performance are generally high. The majority of centres selected very appropriate contrasting texts.

Whilst Shakespeare continues to dominate there were some interesting and widely diverse texts e.g. *Stomp*, *Oh What A Lovely War*, *Sara Kane*, *The Andrews Sisters*, African and Egyptian traditional dance to name but a few. The continued popularity of Shakespeare is not a bad thing as it encourages the development of skills such as verse speaking, which candidates may not otherwise encounter. Contemporary settings for Shakespeare have been mostly successful but those which focus more on the setting and less on the language are invariably disappointing and disadvantage the candidates.

Practical work was well delivered and candidates seemed to relish material that stretched their boundaries. However there is still room for development in the context of the application of stylistic technique. This may be traced in part to essays which though generally good are weakest in applying what is often excellent research to AO2.2 on which the production style

depends. There was some very impressive AO2.1 work but where this does not feed into the process of stylistic adaptation / interpretation it can result in low marks for AO2.2

Centres sometimes find it hard to differentiate between AO3.1 (employing stylistic features) and AO3.2 (using these to communicate intention to an audience). That confusion still exists may be seen in centre marking where there appears to be uncertainty about distinguishing between an understanding of stylistic integrity and strong performances and strong adaptations. By way of reiteration centres are requested to familiarise themselves with the definitions of criteria to be found in the relevant OCR *Guidance to Centres, 2008*.

Notwithstanding the above comments, practical work was once again generally sound and in some instances very strong. Setting and costume was generally very appropriate for genre and some care had gone into this.

Academic standards

Citations, bibliographies and word counts are still being omitted. Centres are again reminded that all candidates must include citations and a full bibliography and word count for each essay.

Good bibliographies, of which there were many more this session, were frequently linked to relevant citations included in the body of the work. The use of proper citation is a skill that should be encouraged since where it is in evidence the academic credentials of the written work improves discernibly.

Candidates should be encouraged to research beyond the basic websites (c.f. Wikipedia) and also to actually look at some books. Centres are again reminded of the value of Google Scholar and to use YouTube for examples of historic performance work that would assist with their mastery of other performance styles.

Administration

The quality of DVD recordings is much improved and most made the moderator the audience. Centres that use very atmospheric lighting for the performance, inadvertently hinder the moderation process however because moderators can't discern candidates well. A few centres made identification difficult, with no identity parade and/or poor information on the documentation. But most did this well.

Centre notes on both the URS sheets and on the essays were of invaluable help to the moderator. These notes were often quite detailed and most linked effectively to specific Assessment Objectives.

Conclusion

A significant majority of centres have engaged effectively with this unit. There was some excellent work seen again this year. Some centres demonstrated real academic rigour and research evidence which was applied most effectively to process to produce performances of great merit. Centres continue to improve in the presentation of this module and examiners have experienced significant levels of creative and academic integrity.

G386 Producing Your Showcase

General Comments

During this session Examiners reported on a range of works and variable standards across the centres. Many centres had encouraged candidates to consider the holistic elements of the showcase and to draw upon the range of skills they had acquired across the units. Candidates appeared to be better prepared showing more understanding about the value of planning and rehearsals and had considered not just the content of their Showcase, but also the performance techniques required to realise it. Standards of performance did appear to be stronger. In some centres it was evident that there had been a good level of teacher input and support to guide candidates towards the professional context of the unit in terms of performance. Technical support was also more apparent which embraced the production values essential to providing candidates with a professional setting.

The majority of candidates generally selected a suitable range of contrasting pieces, demonstrating breadth and depth, drawn from repertoire, with many candidates supplying scripts and scores as required by the specification. Many candidates are choosing to perform in more than one discipline simply in order to achieve contrast, with most recognising the need to tackle pieces that would allow them to showcase their skills and abilities. However, there are still some candidates with an unrealistic notion of their own capabilities who attempt pieces that are far too difficult for them. Stronger candidates managed to achieve consistently high standards across all three pieces with evidence that they understand the context of their pieces and paying close attention to both style and communication.

Despite advice suggesting candidates do not select pieces written for the opposite gender some candidates still selected pieces that were not transferable to the opposite gender and were unable to interpret and perform them in the right context. There is an abundance of material available to candidates and they must select more appropriate pieces that allow them to access the material, both physically and emotionally.

Singers included quite challenging pieces from composers such as Sondheim or protest ballads from the likes of Bob Dylan. There was flute music from Mozart and Beethoven. Drama monologues and duologues featured Shakespeare and other classics. In a number of these pieces candidates did not really grasp the speaking of verse and were inclined to add weighty pauses for effect.

Many candidates made full use of technical elements, like set, props, costume and lighting, to enhance the professionalism of their pieces although poor quality sound continues to detract from the work of some singers and dancers. Rather more candidates are making an attempt to link their pieces, often by announcement or PowerPoint, which is a good idea but needs to be rehearsed and executed with clarity and confidence.

Most centres provided an appropriate venue for the showcases, with enthusiastic and supportive audiences providing both encouragement and a focus for the candidates, but in a couple of cases there was a kind of relaxed approach to the showcase – especially where parents were in the audience, this should be discouraged and centres are reminded that the showcase should be run under examination conditions. Where performances were held in a classroom the space did not allow for theatricality or atmosphere.

On occasions additional stand-in actors (non-speaking) were used on stage to support acting monologues, which is not allowed. There were also some peculiar interpretations in drama pieces where candidates had moved well away from the accepted professional examples of character and had decided to do something more personal. This suggested that they had

misunderstood the character or the piece. Preparatory notes did not clarify this. Work should be performed as closely as possible to its origins and whilst there may be modern twists or contemporary interpretations the essence of the work should not be changed.

As in previous years, there were instances where the interview revealed far greater understanding and a much more sophisticated approach than was apparent in the preparatory notes. However, once again there were some examples of very high quality written work and those candidates often produced the best-rehearsed and most convincing performances.

Dance candidates mainly discussed where they had taken the work from and issues that had arisen in learning a dance from a DVD and re-creating it in its repertoire form. Many explained the difficulties of interpreting professional repertoire and the complications for inexperienced dancers. Good candidates had researched their pieces thoroughly and could talk about performances seen or researched on YouTube. They described the choreographic process used alongside the stylistic influences and were able to put the dance into some form of context, describing its purpose and its impact.

This unit tests the candidates' ability to perform all three pieces back-to-back with regards to stamina and strength and the ability to move from one style of piece to another. Where centres had decided to run candidate performances in an alternate fashion they were politely asked before the performance day to make alterations to the running order so that they were compliant with the requirements of the unit.

All the performances were recorded on DVD but these varied in quality, but there are still some centres that edit performances in camera, producing a version that is not really true to the original live performance. Some DVDs did not have sound, others had recorded the performance so far away from the stage that it was impossible to make out which performer was on stage. A couple of centres did forget to add the ID parade at the beginning. Photographs in costume were not always accurate. However, some centres produced excellent DVD material with clear chapter labels and candidate identification. This is very useful and helpful for the examiner. Too many centres however, did not adhere to the three-day turnaround, with some centres failing to send DVDs at all. Centres must submit a DVD recording as evidence of the showcase performance. This is extremely important where candidate work has to be checked and verified by the Principal Examiner.

The administration was generally very good. Most of the preparatory notes and paperwork arrived in good order and on time. Adequate facilities were provided for interviewing. Most centres were very hospitable, ensuring that the examiner was provided with appropriate breaks and refreshments and generally seated in a good position.

Comments on Preparatory Notes

There were further signs of improvement in the preparatory notes again this year, with several centres clearly using the specification and marking criteria to provide guidance on what should be included. This helps even weaker candidates to make relevant comments on their skills, their strengths and weaknesses, how they chose their pieces and what they did to rehearse and get ready for performance.

This year most candidates got the balance right and covered the selection process fairly briefly, explaining the reasons for their choices. They then concentrated on researching and preparing their chosen performance pieces for performance.

Many continue to describe rather than explain and evaluate the decision-making process, although this year more candidates included a rehearsal log or diary that contained reflections on their progress and targets for future development. Too many candidates were giving a weekly

or stage summary, which is too brief, and retrospective, rather than a daily rehearsal log with appropriate targets and review.

Most candidates conducted some investigations into the context and performance history of their pieces, although it is still quite rare for them to explain fully how their research actually impacted on their decision-making in relation to how they developed a range of aspects of their performances. Many candidates also looked at the work of one or more practitioner, but this was not always relevant or clearly applied. There were often long and eloquent discussions regarding intentions, which did not match up with the outcomes in performance.

Comments on The Performance of the Showcase

Examiners reported wide differences in standards of performance but stated that most candidates showed evidence of thorough and thoughtful preparation and rehearsal, with clear application of social, historical, cultural and practitioner influences characterising much of the work. Overall, the standards were slightly higher than had been seen in previous June sessions. Examiners reported that good candidates selected a suitable range of contrasting pieces demonstrating breadth and depth.

Some high levels of skill were demonstrated; vocal work was generally much better than in previous years and more candidates showed the capacity to integrate a variety of appropriate features into their performances. However, there were still many of the weaker actors, who were unable to pay sufficient attention to aspects of stage presence and movement in the performing space. Candidates must ensure that all pieces are thoroughly rehearsed.

There was very good evidence of dances taken from repertoire across a wide variety of genre and styles. Dancers had considered stylistic elements alongside technical ability. Examiners reported some very high levels of dance where candidates were able to demonstrate mastery of the material. Weaker candidates needed to improve strength and endurance to make sure that all three pieces of dance were performed in a polished and refined manner and further development of core strength and balance was required. Many dance candidates had considered the 'Showcase' element and worked hard to create a performance.

Music candidates were well represented with a range of singers and instrumentalists. There was, again, an increased entry of instrumentalists, who could demonstrate an excellent level of skills and techniques, but were unable to communicate with the audience. It is difficult for drummers and guitarists who normally play in bands, but candidates must ensure that they are performing in a showcase and not a 'jamming session'. Too many instrumentalists performed very insular pieces with little or no regard for the audience.

Many candidates chose to include a Shakespeare piece, but they had not sufficiently researched or read the play so that they could secure an understanding about the structure of the language and its performance aspects, with many candidates struggling with the understanding of iambic pentameter, clear diction, clarity of voice, punctuation and pace. Candidates had learnt the lines but were unable to develop them. It is essential that candidates have a deep understanding of the meaning of the piece, and that they can ensure that their performance of it falls into a clearly defined and acceptable version of repertoire. Whilst modern and contemporary interpretations are perfectly acceptable the candidates must ensure that they have not destroyed the meaning behind the piece. Candidates should be encouraged to research and use devices in their preparation. It is important to know the technical elements of speaking Shakespearean language including the different types of verse or prose and the use of the iambic pentameter alongside other poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, puns and sexual jokes and antithesis.

Acting candidates need to consider acting skills that are crucial in a successful performance. Pace, pitch and pause make such a difference when applied properly alongside articulation, clarity and pronunciation. Accents tended to be left out and candidates must consider whether they should take a piece of repertoire if they are unable to tackle the accent. Stronger acting candidates displayed good levels of skills with emphasis on both physical and vocal techniques. Good drama performances had considered the audience and how to engage with them. Good candidates were using a range of skills, techniques and drama conventions.

Generally, the standard of performance work and the quality of written work were rather better than in previous years, with centres demonstrating a secure grasp of the demands of this unit coupled with good feedback from Centre reports.

G387 Production Demonstration

There was only a small entry on this unit and candidates continued to struggle to understand that their work must reflect industry standards. Too many candidates failed to respond to a brief. Some examiners reported that candidates did not actually have a brief to work to. Centres must provide this to allow the response to have structure.

Preparatory notes for many candidates were weak, as candidates did not sufficiently research the pieces they were working on. Without knowledge of where these pieces have come from and why they were written, as well as the intentions of the playwright/choreographer/composer the candidate could not respond in any depth. A few hand drawn diagrams are not acceptable. The unit specification clearly outlines what is expected in this unit and centres must read and follow these guidelines. Candidates need to be aware that a few rough sketches and pages off the Internet and poorly presented presentations do not equate to the standards required from this A2 unit.

Where there was evidence of good practice in this session candidates had embraced all elements of working in a professional context. Preparatory notes included industry standard software that enabled candidates to produce detailed and labelled drawings and diagrams alongside detailed cue sheets and operational guidance. Candidates were able to demonstrate excellent independent ability and worked with initiative. These candidates had chosen to work on G386 Showcases or were working with G382 candidates and the production roles required for the group performance element.

Centres are reminded that the work for this unit needs to be in two distinct parts: the portfolio of work and the product demonstration. Candidates must submit both their preparatory notes and their portfolio containing their designs as well as pictures, photographs and DVD evidence of their production demonstration.

Many candidates enjoy the practical aspects of this unit and are able to demonstrate an ability to demonstrate good technical skills. However, the supporting preparatory notes are often less effective affecting the overall mark achieved.

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