

GCSE

Drama

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J315**

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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A581 From Page to Stage

There was further good evidence this year of centres feeling confident about how to organise the moderation sample. Most centres met all deadlines; they sent the moderator all the required and fully annotated paperwork and provided evidence of internal moderation where appropriate. They further ensured that the DVD evidence was clearly chaptered and that all candidates could be identified and tracked with ease throughout the performance. The Working Records were annotated throughout enabling the moderator to see ‘how’ and ‘why’ marks have been awarded. The comments on the front of the CAF provided pertinent commentary and the highlighting of the marking bands within the CAF reinforced the Centre’s marking. The Centre ensured that marks were added up correctly and that the final total mark was transferred to the MS1 accurately.

The Text

It was refreshing to see Centres embracing a variety of different texts including:-

Two	Jim Cartwright
Frankenstein	Nick Dear
Red Red Shoes	Charles Way
Gods Official	Robert Farquhar
The Love of a Nightingale	Timberlake Wertenbaker
The Arsonists	Max Frisch
The Lord of the Flies	adapted by Nigel Williams
The Children	Edward bond
Gagging For It	Danny Sturrock
The 39 Steps	adapted by Patrick Barlow

Favourite texts continue to be ‘Blood Brothers’, ‘DNA’, ‘Teechers and Bouncers’. Increasingly popular this year was ‘Find Me’ by Olwen Wymark. Where candidates had a good understanding of the genre, style and pace necessary to realise such popular texts within an appropriate performance space, they were generally successful.

Centres that chose to offer candidates a range of texts to perform were less successful than those who adhered to the ethos of the unit, which is for candidates to focus on one published text.

Centres are again reminded that ‘the script must be changed at least every second year by the Centre.’ In not doing so centres are not complying with the regulatory requirements placed on all GCSE Drama specifications.

Centres are asked again to consider for future submissions whether candidates who play cross-gender are fully endorsing the playwright’s intentions. The decision to play cross-gender should be discussed and justified within the Working Record and the impact and audience feedback following the performance should be reflected upon and evaluated in the final section of the Working Record.

The DVD

The best DVD’s were those that were clearly chaptered and accompanied by a ‘Performance Running Order Sheet’. Candidates had introduced themselves to camera giving their name and candidate number slowly and clearly. It was much appreciated when candidates also stated the

character/s they were playing. The reinforcement of such details by those candidates, who held cards stating their name and number, was extremely helpful.

Throughout the performance the camera should be placed in a static position which takes in all of the performance area. Whilst it can be helpful to use the zoom lens to pick up facial expression and nuances of gesture it is not helpful when the camera is moved from candidate to candidate. The moderator should be able to see and hear all the candidates throughout their performance.

The Performance

The marks awarded for A01 were fully supported when (however basic the performance space might be) due consideration has been given to the 'use and selection of space' not only to provide context and continuity for an audience but to further endorse the 'intention of the playwright and the issues that the drama raises'.

Regarding the use of semiotics, it is appreciated that what is available to candidates varies between centres. However, those centres that choose a text where the genre and style could be positively realised using the available facilities/ semiotics were commended.

There was good evidence of candidates using their research to very good effect when developing their character/s. Many made pertinent use of a range of techniques from current theatre companies e.g. Shared Experience/ Frantic Assembly and other established practitioners most notably Stanislavski.

Candidates demonstrated a range of stage craft with varying degrees of success. The high attaining candidates demonstrated how to enter and exit and move appropriately according to their role and situation within the performance space, they established clear relationships on stage and used appropriate vocal modulation, movement/gesture and handling of props.

It is expected that all candidates will have learnt their lines securely; candidates who fail to have done so can not be marked above 'basic'.

Whilst it is appreciated that the lighting available to each group within a centre can be limited, those groups who had taken time to have a technical rehearsal or who were able to 'find the light' enhanced their performances. It is appreciated that candidates wish to provide atmosphere and tension for their audience using a variety of lighting states but this was only successful when the audience and the camera could define and differentiate between candidates.

The increased use of music and sound is to be commended. Groups who had ensured that the sound technician was conversant with the cues, volume and fade times were the most successful.

Centres are reminded that candidates are not allowed to rehearse outside of the controlled assessment period, to do so constitutes mal practice. However it is acceptable for candidates to learn their lines outside of the controlled assessment.

The Working Record

It should be noted that writing frames are not allowed and to use them constitutes mal practice.

Section One

The depth and range of research that candidates had undertaken around their chosen text and playwright generally focused on the themes and issues prevalent in the text, this included the

social/political background and the period/time. The findings were often linked to initial set and costume ideas. When appropriate the research surrounding the background of the character/s and relationships enhanced the understanding of the sub text.

Some candidates spent too long on this section to the detriment of the quantity and quality of the rest of the Working Record.

Section Two

The most successful second sections of the Working Record (where the marks begin to be awarded) were those that detailed, discussed and evaluated the development of the individual and group performance. They went beyond a description of techniques and rehearsal methods to analyse, establish and evaluate what would be seen and heard on stage.

These sections were further enhanced by photos, well drawn ground plans, (using a ruler) costume, make-up, lighting and sound ideas, all labelled, justified and evaluated.

Candidates who adopted a diary approach rarely went beyond a description of what they had done during the 'hour.' There was little analysis or evaluation offered, too often the focus of the entry was on the social well being of the group.

Many candidates wrote about the technique of 'hot seating' some merely described the exercise whilst the more successful, detailed and analysed how their findings/answers developed the character and how it informed and enhanced the realisation and playing of the role on stage. Most candidates reflected on the ideas and techniques of a range of practitioners. However, the theories of Bertolt Brecht although often espoused were rarely fully understood.

Whilst some candidates structured this section in note form this was only really successful when the notes were further developed, discussed and evaluated.

Section Three

The most comprehensive final sections were seemingly written as soon as possible in the hour following the final filmed performance. Candidates had reflected and evaluated on their own performance, that of one other candidate and they had responded and reflected in some detail on the audience feedback whether that be staff, family, friends or peers.

Further Observations

Candidates who wrote the whole Working Record in the past tense and as continuous prose did not fully embrace the ethos of the unit, that of documenting the journey of discovery and exploration that they should make through the unit.

Centres are reminded that the Working Record should be well presented and securely collated, it should clearly state the candidate's name and number, sections should be titled and pages numbered. Candidates should be dissuaded from using bulky notebooks or folders.

Centres should further note that legibility, spelling, grammar and use of subject specific vocabulary should always be considered when marking the Working Record.

In Conclusion

It is acknowledged that the majority of centres had a very good understanding of how to deliver and realise the unit for moderation. Such centres ensured that candidates were fully prepared and able to reach a level of professionalism within the performance space. Candidates had been

encouraged to approach and write the Working Record with enthusiasm and a practical appreciation of the performance possibilities of their chosen text. The centre had collated the sample with care and applied the marking criteria rigorously giving detailed written justification on the CAF and within the Working Record for their application of the marking scheme.

A582 Drama in the Making

There was some very strong work seen this year, with candidates demonstrating good scripting and structuring skills. A larger number of centres embraced the rationale of the unit, a drama investigation, rather than attempting to create fully realised scenes. This is not a matter of lowering expectations, but making devising a key focus and using performance skills to test out the ideas. In this unit plot, character and context are the prime focus, rather than the style of performance. This year there was a noticeable increase in candidates focusing on developing stronger scenarios with more extended dialogue than seen in previous years. Candidates were less inclined to create multiple scenes for Item 1, but dwelt and explored one strong scenario.

There was some excellent dialogue created and engaging contexts, in these cases substance held primacy over style. It gave a chance for character to develop and gave time for the audience to engage with the actor and situation. The candidates were fulfilling a prime aim of the unit i.e. using improvisation to create a strong scene.

General Administration

Moderators appreciated the professionalism of centres in preparing their submissions so well, reporting a generally high standard of administration from centres. The presentation of evidence by the vast majority of centres on chaptered DVDs with accompanying Performance Running Order sheets (PRO/A582) makes navigation and the locating of candidates easy for moderators. Whatever identification system is used on the DVDs, it still helps moderators if candidates do an identity parade before each item giving name and candidate number. It also helps if this is done slowly with a suitable gap between each name. Those centres where candidates held an A4 sheet with their number on were being particularly helpful. The use of Centre Record of Assessment Forms needs to indicate clearly the candidates' choice for Items 2 and 3 i.e. Performer, Deviser or Designer. Not all centres initially submitted their MSI form, which is essential.

DVD

It is important that a DVD is created, Quick Time files are time consuming for moderators to use and unreliable in presenting candidates' work to best effect. It is preferable if the identity parade of candidates and their performance is all contained in one chapter rather than creating separate ones. This is less time consuming for moderators and it aids identification if you can watch candidates move from parade to performance positions. Blackouts at such points or any point disrupt the work of the moderator. As stated every year in this report, the candidates' work can be seen and judged best when no stage lights and blackouts are used. Centres who continue to present the work in this way are not helping moderators to appreciate the work of their candidates. Likewise playing soundtracks over the candidates' performances distracts from the prime purpose of this unit.

Stimuli

The centres choice of stimulus material to start the drama investigation was in most cases very appropriate and led to good strong scenarios being explored. Stimuli mentioned by moderators were: Hillsborough; Berlin Wall; Holocaust; War; modern day slavery; Willard's Suitcases; The Hunger Games; Black Roses; variations on Self-Image; Objects i.e. remote controls; Paintings of Dali, Van Gogh; lyrics from songs by various artists e.g. Beyonce, The Smashing Pumpkins – 'Tonight', Brad Paisley, Christina Aguilera – 'Beautiful'; Poetry - Solomon Grundy, Josephine Jacobie, Beat Bullying, Saw it in the Papers, All The World's A Stage; Grimm's fairy tales; The Seven Deadly Sins; mental health.

Candidate's Responses

Item 1

Item 1 worked best when it focused on situation, character and developed dialogue. The item is starting the investigation off so was strongest when candidates did not concentrate on semiotics, but rather developed strong scenarios and characters. It also worked best when candidates presented an extended scene rather than a series of short scenes. The candidates who were consciously using the term 'drama investigation' seemed to work more clearly to the rationale of the unit. Moderators noted some centres produced such stylised work focused on performance aspects of practitioners such as Artaud, that it was hard to discern the content. There are still a number of centres treating Item 1 as if it is A583 and attempting to complete a full drama with an extended plot line and full production values. Centres are reminded that the requirement is one improvised scene. The objective is to produce a strong scene that demonstrates the potential of the stimulus to be turned into a good play. Candidates do not have time to complete a realised play. There were some very powerful and engaging scenarios created this year, which were very effectively communicated as straightforward polished improvisations. This led to the focus being on the performer and the script. Where centres extend the focus into the semiotics of lighting and soundtracks, the candidate's performance can be lost. Also where candidates develop multiple scenes or totally focus on physical theatre style presentations, they often demonstrate strong structuring skills, but fail to develop character, plot and dialogue. Generally, dialogue needs to be at the heart of this devising unit. Moderators noted that sometimes where groups were large, 5-6 candidates, not all candidates had the opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

Item 2 and 3

It was noted by moderators that some of the candidates' best performer/deviser work was done for item 2 or 3 when candidates worked in small groups. Monologues featured as a favoured choice with a large number of candidates and moderators stated these were tackled well in terms of performance skills. However, it was noted that small group work, 2-3, often led to more ambitious scripting, and was often more effective in moving the drama forward and developing the potential of the stimulus.

Deviser items saw some strong scripts created, which were very effective in moving the drama investigation on. Centres are reminded these should be set out in the standard format for published scripts. Any directing/staging ideas should appear as stage directions and not as an annotated script. Annotated scripts were used by a number of centres and this approach should be reserved for performers, who can use this as part of their Working Records (WRs). (As stated earlier centres need to indicate if a monologue is entered as Performer or Deviser on the Centre Record of Assessment Forms). There is a danger with some monologues that they become on outpouring on angst adding little to the development of the drama. Centres need to use more discrimination when marking such contributions and encourage candidates to assess the use and purpose of monologues or soliloquies in plays.

There were some very strong design items offered by candidates, but this also remains an area where a disproportionate number of candidates offer their weakest item. It works best when candidates are using design to develop new material for the investigation e.g. considering how an item could take on different meaning with a particular type of design, or how it would change/add to the plotting, or character or how a scene was performed. Too often weaker candidates are selecting some clothing for the previous item. This usually gives them little scope to access the higher mark bands. There was a distinct improvement in the way candidates presented their design work, most now using the standard conventions expected for this work. Moderators noted that some centres did not include candidates' designs in the sample materials. They were seen on DVD presentations, but this did not always enable moderators to see detail and read notes. The actual designs should always be submitted. Please note candidates should

be encouraged not to use chunky felt pens for design work, as they do not facilitate the necessary subtlety and definition that can be created from, for instance, using pencil and crayon. Overall moderators report the unit works best where candidates are making their own decisions regarding the items and are not being directed as to what they should do for each item by the centre. For instance it is very apparent where the centre has directed everyone to do a monologue and design item.

Working Records

There is a significant improvement in the way candidates organise the document so that the investigation can be followed clearly. Candidates from centres adopting the five-part format recommended generally produce the most coherent WRs. The development can be logically followed. As with previous years, centres are encouraged to adopt this outline advice:

‘Feedback for future WR, centres are encouraged to adopt a uniform layout. There should be 5 clearly headed sections to the WR, Introduction, Item 1, Item 2, Item 3 and Final Evaluation. The candidate Final Evaluation is not a re-cap. Once candidates have completed their ‘research’ by completing the 3 Items, they reflect on the potential of the stimulus to make a good play. What is the best audience, genre, and performance style? What strong characters and tensions could be included? This moves on from what they have done, to how they would develop it and is it worth developing. Candidates will have already evaluated each individual Item as they completed them. It is expected candidates will use relevant subject vocabulary and reference relevant subject knowledge connected to devising as well as performing.

Candidates have 1 hour before they start the 10 hours of exploration to do an Introduction. This is their chance to give their own individual ideas and thoughts about the stimulus. Ideas they think might have potential. This will not be very definite or well organised at this stage, as they have not started the exploratory work on Item 1 yet. They will likewise have 1 hour at the end of the process to complete the Final Evaluation.’

A significant number of candidates are focusing most of their attention on Item 1, moderators noting that some candidates had little supporting material for Items 2 and 3. This will impact on the marks that can be awarded to the WR. There are still many candidates who do not complete a Final Evaluation as defined above.

There is a tendency for candidates to treat Item 1 as the end product and cover every area of study at this point. It should be an improvisation and candidates have only just started the investigation so at this stage they could just consider character and plot ideas. All the areas of study can be covered in the Final Evaluation when they have completed the drama investigation. In the Final Evaluation candidates can decide what genre, performance style, performance space and structure best suits a play built around the stimulus.

It appears that many candidates have sorted everything out in the preparation stage so they take Item 1 as the start of the rehearsal of the already fixed play. Counter intuitively if it has all been decided in the preparation stage the candidates are not as well placed to use the 3 Items and WR to conduct the drama investigation.

What not to include in the WR:

- Material from and description of workshops undertaken in the preparation period with the teacher.
- Downloads of research material, only include material that is used for the items.
- Work produced as a group, only individual work is included.

What to Include in the WR:

- Introduction, with initial range of ideas for the stimulus.
- Ideas for each item, key decisions, what the potential is, and evaluation.
- Final Evaluation what sort of play could be made from this stimulus covering the areas of study (excluding improvisation)?
- Somewhere an evaluation of the work of peer(s), either in one of the Item sections or in the Final Evaluation.
- Script and character features of the items, all the focus should not be on performance aspects (see exemplars below)

Exemplars of candidate devising responses

Stimulus 9/11 Twin Towers

Character

“My character was Peter Burton Hanson, he is a banker in the World Trade Centre. I believe my character is very significant to the play as he is the protagonist and also the central link. He is needed in the play, as he is the only character linked to all the other characters. My character does not deal with the events that arise in the play in a good way, as the play progresses he gains a fragile state of mind and begins to break down due to the gravity of the situation. My character only interacts with the other characters in the first part of the scene on the plane. He seems to have a kind of arrogance about him and a sort of want for acceptance so he feels the need to flaunt the fact that he has money, in doing so he pushes others away. This is why I decided a monologue was a good way to bring out his isolation from the others.”

Performance style

“We chose to use a naturalistic performance style to show the seriousness of these events. I believe this is the best choice because it has more chance to make the audience feel emotionally involved, as it reflects the everyday life and language of normal people and how they coped on this extraordinary day.”

The candidate might have given some examples of scripting or referred to the performance to illustrate how the dialogue was matched to naturalism and the character. This would have been moving the response to the higher end on the mark band ‘A perceptive and practically astute matching of choices of content and intent’ rather than being lower end of the band.

Stimulus The Berlin Wall

Research

“We are going to base our improvisation on the true story of the attempted escape by Peter Fletcher and Helmut Kulbeik, in which both attempt to cross the border between east and west at Checkpoint Charlie, which later obtained the name ‘the death strip’. In an interview with Helmut Kulbeik he said their escape was spontaneous and they had no set plan.etc.”

Scenario idea

“A scene in Manfred and Walter’s apartment. This scene will show a determined Manfred trying to convince Walter to cross to West Berlin with him. Manfred wants Hans to join them and cross to the West with them too, however Walter doesn’t trust Hans because of his close relationship to Gunter, a guard who could potentially ruin their plan. Manfred is the more determined and confident brother whereas Walter is more timid and lacks confidence.”

The candidate does elaborate further and justifies the decision made. The outline gives the clear basis for developing an improvised scene with some potential tension and conflict.

Centre Marking (A581 and A582)

Generally centres used good discrimination and there was a good understanding of applying the mark scheme. Exceptions were:

- A tendency to be harsh at the Limited and lower Basic levels. Often candidates who had fulfilled such criteria as, 'uses voice and gesture to create a fully controlled performance' and demonstrated 'some matching of choices made to content and intention' (which is the top of the Basic band descriptor), were being placed in the Limited or low end Basic.
- A tendency to move to the maximum too readily, more discrimination is needed at the very top end of Accomplished, this is the case with both Items and WRs. For instance candidates had not always totally fulfilled such criteria as 'a perceptive and practically matching of choices of content and intent' even though performance skills were very strong.
- Design items being marked very generously in a significant number of centres. At the higher levels there needs to be clarity regarding ' - a clear understanding of how symbols add meaning and support intent.'
- WR's awarded Accomplished Band marks when there was no Final Evaluation or little evaluation of the Items or only consideration of performance aspects, with little of quality on the script and structure.
- If more than one teacher is delivering the specification it is essential that internal standardisation takes place (it is apparent it does so in the vast majority of cases).

Centres should ensure scripts and designs created for Items 1 and 2 are separated from the WR. This makes it clear for the centre, candidate and moderator what is being assessed as WR and what as an Item. Candidates should additionally include some notes in the WR related to a script or design Item, including an evaluation of it.

Malpractice

Centres must ensure all work is done within the set time frame for controlled assessment. All WRs must be collected in at the end of each session. There were examples this year of candidates submitting identical WRs, homework tasks and arranging extra rehearsals outside of controlled assessment. This constitutes malpractice. The mark scheme is applied in terms of what can be achieved within the given time constraints and centres must be rigorous in ensuring this is the case. The signing of The Centre Authentication Sheet indicates the centre has applied these conditions.

Centres are thanked for the high level of professionalism in presenting the evidence for this unit and candidates are to be congratulated for producing so much thought provoking and engaging work. It was a common thread in moderator's reports that they had enjoyed viewing the candidate's work.

A583 From Concept to Creation

General Comments:

It is heartening to once again congratulate Centres on the smooth running of the examination. Most Centres visited provided the full spectrum of ability for assessment. Examiners were most complimentary about the quality of the work presented for examination. Centres were organised and had prepared well for the examination. Facilities provided mostly allowed for the examination to be conducted under appropriate conditions. There are still a few Centres where extraneous noise interferes with the examination. Centres are reminded that the examination should be conducted under examination conditions. It was evident that most candidates were enthusiastic about their work and had found the experience enjoyable and rewarding. Centres commented that candidates had embraced and enjoyed the opportunity of working with a script which was unusual and a stimulus item produced in colour. Much excellent work had been carried out in the exploration period which informed the work of candidates.

Candidates are increasingly linking their work to the theories of practitioners and justifying the choices made in reference to this. However, this should not become the main focus of the Working Record.

More candidates this year chose the Design and Deviser options. The choices for the performer briefs tended to be for the devised brief – although more candidates than last year chose to perform the text extract. Choices for the devised performer brief were equally split between the text and the stimulus item.

Organisation

Centres continue to appreciate the logistical feat of organising an examination which includes four briefs; groups, solo performances and solo presentations and planned the examination day well, this is most commendable. Centres new to the specification this year have mostly coped very well with the requirements of the examination and were generally very proactive in communicating with examiners. Centres with large numbers of candidates and/or many individual performances/presentations built in natural breaks which examiners appreciated. Some Centres continue to use two spaces, one for performance and one for Designer and Deviser presentations. This enables the Designer/Deviser candidates to display their work should they wish to. The discreet space for the Devisers and Designers enables the timetable to run efficiently. There has been an increase this year in candidates performing to an audience of their peers. Most candidates benefit from having a supportive audience of their peers present. Some Centres have introduced evening performances with an invited audience of friends and family this is perfectly acceptable as long as all involved appreciate that the occasion is primarily an examination.

Fewer Centres this year did not fully complete the GITA forms. These are an essential aid to identifying candidates and must be completed before the commencement of the examination. The GITA forms should contain an estimation of the mark range that the candidate falls into for both their presentation/performance and Working Records. Some Centres are still using “Competent”, “Skilful” etc. and specific marks. Some Centres did not chapter their DVDs – the specification requires this to be done. Examiners reported few delays in receiving DVDs after the examination.

Comments on Individual Briefs:

Performer Brief (text extract)

The candidates who chose to present the text extract mostly did so with energy and enthusiasm. The most successful approached the text as a piece of theatre and used costume, make-up and properties in a highly creative way. Less successful candidates merely recited the text rather than performed it. There were some fantastic examples of the use of physical theatre to support the text. Successful candidates approached the text with a clear understanding of context and character and a clear vision for their audience.

Performer Brief (devised)

Those candidates using the text as a stimulus either improvising around its narrative or exploring its themes produced some interesting and memorable pieces of theatre. More candidates this year experimented with genre and style.

Examiners reported seeing instances of enjoyable, original and thought-provoking work. Some candidates explored the concept of toys or animals with much consideration obviously having been given to movement of both animals and toys. It was most pleasing to note that some candidates had used humour most effectively and examiners reported many instances of being thoroughly entertained by the quality of the theatre produced.

The most popular themes explored were exploring mental health, self-image, freedom, belonging, independence, the search for fulfilment and the parent/child relationship.

Candidates exploring the stimulus item created some exciting and stimulating work on themes such as searching for something, Apollo 13 and space travel.

Centres are clearly advising candidates to ensure they make connections between the work produced and the stimulus. However, there are still candidates who make very tenuous links to the material provided.

Fewer candidates preferred to work alone or in pairs this year. Candidates choosing to work in smaller groupings seemed to focus on the language and setting of their pieces – there was some exceptional work seen here. Centres have ensured this year that when working in groups of 6, individual candidates had the opportunity to demonstrate their ability. Fewer weaker candidates produced monologues. Centres are clearly encouraging candidates to make choices based on their strengths.

Centres are reminded that performances should be a maximum of ten minutes. Again this year examiners are reporting that some performances are extending to fifteen minutes and beyond. Few long performances are of the highest quality. The dress rehearsal should give Centres the opportunity to ensure all performances are of the required length. Again this year examiners saw some candidates produce pieces which required many scene changes punctuated by black-outs. This tends to diminish the flow of the piece and is to be avoided.

Examiners reported an increasing use of technology which, in the main, was used to enhance the performances. Clever and effective use of projection, lighting and sound were integral to many performances.

Deviser Brief

Examiners reported many examples of scripts which were highly imaginative, well written and eminently workable. The selection and command of appropriate language was frequently impressive. There were very few candidates who did not produce a workable script. Some candidates wrote multiple scenes when the brief asks for one scene to be written. There continues to be strong understanding of editing and the use of stage directions.

Designer Brief

The most successful Design candidates were those who had a clear design concept. The Designer Brief is for a performance of the text extract not for a devised performance. Candidates who begin their work with 'My Design Concept is...' tended to be more focused on covering the points given on the examination paper than those who began with 'My intention is...' A small number of candidates produced designs which were not unified in any way. Again Centres need to consider this when advising students. The Brief requires designs. Plans for set designs are increasingly following conventions, marking exits and entrances on detailed ground plans for example. Some candidates who tackled lighting had a reasonable knowledge base on which to offer design ideas. It was good to see the use of cue sheets, lantern hanging plans using the performance area they are used to, and the type of lantern used.

Some candidates struggled to cover three areas with any degree of parity which is concerning. Candidates need to ensure that an equal amount of time is spent on all three areas of design. Candidates who choose this brief must use the conventions of lighting, sound and stage design in their submissions. If a candidate chooses sound design then the 'sound' needs to be demonstrated or included in their submission.

Presentation

Most candidates this year presented their work enthusiastically to the examiner. Examiners repeatedly reported that candidates seemed very proud of the work they had created and relished the opportunity to share their thought processes. Candidates who had prepared their presentation in advance were generally more confident when talking about their ideas. It would benefit some candidates to present their ideas in a more informal way – sitting with the examiner rather than 'presenting' from the front. Whilst examiners enjoy enthusiastic and well prepared presentations Centres are reminded that this should not exceed three minutes.

Working Records

There were a variety of styles seen by examiners. The most successful Working Records were those in which the candidates covered all relevant areas of study effectively. There is still a tendency for Working Records to be overloaded with material from the preparation period. Some examiners reported that Centres are not following the guidance in the examination paper with regards to the length of these documents. Candidates need to be conscious of the fact that 75% of the marks are for practical outcomes for performers and 75% for Designs/Scripts. With 25% of the marks for the Working Record. Only work generated during the ten hours should be included – apart from the evaluation completed after the dress rehearsal. It is worth reminding Centres that candidates have one hour at the start of the examination to start their Working Record and one hour after the dress rehearsal to evaluate the work produced. The most successful Working Records focused on the process, on improvement through the process of rehearsal and used appropriate dramatic terminology and would have included some of the following:

- 'The reason we have done this is.....'
- 'We have chosen to include.....'

- ‘We chose to set the scene in....’
- ‘We have included an overseer character to....’
- ‘This had a better outcome because....’
- ‘We added the element of....’

The standard of evaluation is improving with fewer candidates making generalised statements. Examiners reported many instances of incisive analytical evaluations. Centres are reminded that candidates do not need to evaluate the work of another person or group. Some Centres are using peer feedback during the process which candidates can then use to shape and develop their ideas.

Deviser and Designer candidates are reminded that they are required to produce two separate documents – their design concept or script and a document charting the decision making process they have gone through.

Writing frames should not form part of an examined component. In the Specification – page 41- it states ‘It is not acceptable for centre staff to provide model responses or to work through responses in detail’. Unfortunately examiners reported that some Centres are still doing this.

Final Thoughts

The choice of text was welcomed by most Centres as a creative challenge for their candidates. Candidate feedback has been very positive and the quality of work produced is testament to some exceptional teaching in Centres. Centres are to be congratulated for embracing this examination and supporting their candidates to produce such wonderful work.

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