

# Performance Studies

Advanced GCE A2 H548

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H148

## Reports on the Units

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**January 2010**

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Annesley  
NOTTINGHAM  
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622  
Facsimile: 01223 552610  
E-mail: [publications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:publications@ocr.org.uk)

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# Chief Examiner's Report

## Chief Examiner's Introduction

The AS units this series were dominated by poor performing candidates from 2009 resitting and this tended to depress the mean marks for the units, although for the candidates themselves there were clear improvements. In G401, 65% of the candidature were candidates retaking the unit, and in G402 58% of entries were retakes. That said, there was nothing especially unique about the way in which these candidates approached the assessment in either unit.

The revised A2 unit, G403 (Performance Contexts 2) was sat for the first time this session and produced some encouraging results, often slightly better than those achieved in the legacy unit.

### *G401 Creating Performance*

In G401, a number of candidates rewrote the written element of the assessment but based it on the same practical work that had already been submitted. In some cases, the passage of time between the original performance and the rewritten coursework meant that further reflection was possible, with the candidates able to see more clearly the strengths and weaknesses of their work. There were instances of this that produced significantly greater insight into the performance process than had been achieved originally. In other instances, however, the rewritten work consisted of a few additional paragraphs that added little to the evaluation of the work.

Some centres seemed not to understand the moderation process itself, which is based on a sample of candidates' work. In the case of a resubmission, there is no requirement for the same sample of candidates to be chosen as before. Since the work of the moderator is to identify trends rather than to remark individual candidates, there is no guarantee that particular candidates will be chosen. In cases where resit candidates were entered with first-sit candidates, there was sometimes a tendency to overmark the resits on the basis they had simply improved from before.

### *G402 Performance Contexts 1*

This unit was also typified by the large numbers of candidates resitting the examination, most of whom struggled to achieve higher marks. This was seldom because of lack of knowledge of the work studied, and often because of poorly-practised examination technique. This was evidenced by imbalance between answers, running out of time on the second answer, detailed essay plans that bore little resemblance to the subsequent answer, effusive detail on one point diluted by general statements on others. In essence, the most common factor affecting performance was failure to answer the question set. A large number of candidates had clearly practised questions from previous papers in the hope that one of them would come up but were largely unable to apply their knowledge to the question set.

### *G403 Performance Contexts 2*

The most significant change in this unit was the potential to select the nine extracts for study each from a different practitioner. Where centres had taken this approach the results were often more sophisticated since there was a focus on the topic rather than on the extracts or the practitioners themselves. That said, there were also some very generic essays that presented a laboured trawl through the work of nine practitioners with few specific examples, such that the answer produced would have fit almost any question. Such multivalent answers tended to score low marks.

*Reports on the Units taken in January 2010*

There were some very interesting answers that only used three practitioners, as per the legacy unit, but which nevertheless demonstrated a very clear understanding of the topic studied and the relationship of the extracts to it. Ultimately, success in the unit was down to the ability of candidates to discuss this relationship. The greatest regret this series was that no centres entered candidates for the new topic, Performance in the Far East. With its emphasis on the work of countries rather than practitioners, this offers a new and exciting approach to studying Performance Contexts and examiners expressed the hope that centres will be inspired by the possibilities of this option in future series.

## **G401 Creating Performance**

### **General Comments**

The majority of the work submitted was made up of candidates resubmitting work from June 2009. In many cases candidates rewrote their commentaries and submitted the same performances. In some instances candidates had also submitted a new performance.

As with the entries last year staff at centres had put in a considerable amount of hard work to present the submissions well, taking on board the report on last year's entry. However it is worthwhile reiterating the following points in presentation of coursework.

- Each commentary should be annotated clearly with K/U, PP, QL to show where marks have been awarded. Additional comments that draw attention to an important part of the performance are helpful.
- The CCS should have full and clear comments on it to support the marks. These should not merely be a copy of the marking criteria in the Specification.
- On the second side of the CCS it is helpful to write the name of the candidate at the top to aid the moderator in their work.
- The clarity of the DVD and identification of each candidate is important. Moderators have got to be able to assess the centre's marking for each performer. If this evidence is unavailable or significantly unclear then moderation cannot take place.

This last point is important. When centres are submitting work for this unit, all the evidence needs to be included with the submission to the Moderator. The unit is moderated as a whole unit and therefore both the written commentary and the DVD of performance must be submitted. Moderators were grateful when it was made it clear where the deficiencies had been in the original submission and how these had been worked on. Centres do need to be aware when resubmitting material all the evidence (written commentary and DVD) is required because a different selection of candidates are likely to be sampled in different exam series.

### **Written Commentary**

Successful submissions were those where candidates wrote in a concise, objective style, clearly analysing the process that they had been through. Candidates should avoid adopting a narrative, diary-like approach. In redrafting work it is helpful if candidates check how often they start paragraphs and sentences with statements such as 'We then did...Next we did...We also did.' It is more important to state the theatrical effect required, to state how this was achieved, modified and then the final successful solution. Candidates should also realise that there are no marks available for anecdotal details about problems with the group and how they worked together. A good commentary will focus on performing and devising skills. It was clear that candidates had heeded this advice in the submissions seen this series and had tried hard to move their written style forward to one that was more analytical and objective.

Overall there was much better cross-referencing of technique and style to outcomes in the individual pieces. Candidates seem to be learning how to be succinct in their comments.

Unfortunately there were still examples of candidates writing a separate commentary for each art form. This is not the structure recommended and has the detrimental effect of considering the art forms in isolation and repeating concepts of devising which need only be stated once in a commentary that considers the art forms as a whole. Centres are reminded that the performances in the three separate art forms must not share a theme. One centre had the theme

of political issues and a common audience of trainee teachers as their intention. This contravened the instruction to avoid having a common theme across all three individual pieces.

The most successful commentaries made consistent links between the art forms but this is an area that continues to cause candidates problems.

In the redrafted commentaries it was clear that candidates had worked on their knowledge of performance style and how aspects of this were reflected in the performance. There was also clearer attention to objective evaluation of the performance. It is important that sufficient word count is given to this aspect of the commentary. The commentary needs to be planned as a whole and so candidates need to ensure that discussion of the three shorter pieces leaves sufficient word count to enable adequate discussion and analysis of the community piece. In this series there were fewer examples of candidates wasting valuable word count on anecdotal, organisational issues, instead focusing on the performing and devising technique. Candidates need to be aware that the commentary should focus on the project being presented for examination, not other projects that the students might have worked on. Community commentaries too often failed to exemplify statements about techniques and structure, leaving the reader to guess what had actually happened. It is not enough to rely on the reader gaining knowledge from the recording. The use of generic comments as a result of this leads to low marks.

One centre chose as a subject for their community piece something their school did anyway, a charity event. The Performance Studies piece appeared to have been tacked on at the start as an opener, and so the nature of the community and the purpose was a little muddled. Centres should try to avoid simplistic solutions to the idea of 'community' and avoid using 'school' as the identified community. One centre had been commissioned by their local Council to provide some pieces for performance during a week when the Council were highlighting Charles Dickens and his works and trying to raise awareness amongst the townspeople. The 'edge' of having a real purpose for the work brought the best out of the candidates in their performance, and their enthusiasm and commitment shone through the written work.

In terms of the marks awarded under the published criteria moderators reported that more centres were marking within the appropriate mark band but tended not to use the full range within it to provide differentiation between candidates. A mark at the top of the band indicates that the candidates have met all of the criteria. There were several instances of this not being the case and a mark in the middle of the range would have been more appropriate. In terms of Knowledge and Understanding high marks should only be given when the candidate is able to use a range of technical language across the art forms and apply it confidently and appropriately. A written style that becomes a narrative review and focuses on anecdotal, perhaps subjective issues cannot be credited highly under process.

Care needs to be taken when awarding marks for Quality of Language. This was often marked too generously because there was an assumption that if the writing was clear and there were no or few spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, this meant the high marks could be accessed. In such cases the use of language was often simple and complex ideas were not explored and expressed. The comma was often used incorrectly, placed at a point where a new sentence should have started. Another problem was the over-use of pronoun, 'we'. In some commentaries sentence after sentence started with 'we' and this made the writing appear repetitive, list-like and lacking in style.

In summary:

- Write in a clear, objective style analysing the performance process, giving examples from each performance piece.
- Ensure that there is a clear intent and style for each piece.

## *Reports on the Units taken in January 2010*

- Show understanding of the technical terms stated in the Specification through their practical use.
- Show understanding of links between the art forms especially in the discussion of the Community Piece.
- Ensure that the Community Piece is clearly related to a local stimulus and that the venue and intended audience informs the project from the outset.
- Provide a clear, objective evaluation of the final performance.

### **Performance Skills and DVD evidence**

The majority of the performances seen were resubmissions from the previous exam series. However there were several instances of candidates devising a new piece and some first submissions.

The administration of this part of the unit is important. The performance should be devised specifically for the unit and meet the demands of the Specification. The requirements in terms of performance time and number of performers are clear. If a centre has a specific problem this needs to be discussed with OCR. Just as commentaries need to be presented well so it is important that the recording and presentation of the DVD is given careful consideration. Poor camerawork does not reflect the good work of the candidates.

Moderators reported that the majority of centres went to considerable trouble to identify candidates in the different performing groups; often supplying scripts or a performance running order highlighting the work of lead candidates. This is much appreciated and eases the task of moderation.

Candidates need to be clear about the performance style necessary and refine the skills necessary to realise this style. It is important to consider the venue and the audience in terms of the performance energy and appropriate projection. There were a few instances where candidates were performing outside and yet did not adapt to this space giving the impression that the candidates were expecting a more intimate space. It is also important that centres ensure there is a balance of the three art forms when performing outside. There is a natural tendency to focus on drama, with music a poor third; often because of the difficulties involved in providing musical accompaniment from CD. When students created the music themselves, vocally and rhythmically the results were excellent with a clearly integrated performance. There is a similar situation with comedy and pantomime. Gestures and reactions need to be appropriate if the audience is being 'invited in'. Too often candidates seemed unsure as to how to deal with audience reactions and centres need to give this careful consideration when guiding candidates. There were some excellent examples of pantomime and commedia where there was a range of performance energy and candidates were able to work well with their audience.

Moderators reported that centres were marking performances appropriately although sometimes crediting skills too highly when there was an unreasonable imbalance between the art forms. If a piece becomes too dependant upon one art form with little evidence of a range of skills across the art forms, then marks should not be allocated in the higher mark bands. Centres should also note that marks should only be awarded for skills that can be evidenced on the DVD.

When awarding marks for Devising centres need to consider carefully whether the piece and the individual performance has been crafted and is effective for that particular audience and that particular occasion.

It is very pleasing to see the improvements made by candidates to their marks and the work being done by centres to present exciting, good quality work. A number of centres had clearly used the Moderator's report to inform their practice and guide candidates to craft good commentaries and devise a range of interesting and engaging performances.

*Reports on the Units taken in January 2010*

In summary:

- Candidates should devise a performance for a specific community and audience.
- Ensure that the style adopted enables a truly integrated project and does not inherently have an imbalance of art forms.
- Characters should be devised with the style, venue and audience in mind.
- Only skills evidenced within the piece, and therefore on the DVD, can be credited.
- Ensure that the recording of the DVD does not distract from the performance.

# G402 Performance Contexts 1

## General comments

Most centres entered a small number of candidates, with many being retakes from 2009. Generally the standard of work was rather weak with many candidates struggling to construct and present essays that reflected a thorough study of the theoretical and contextual aspects of the chosen works. Significantly many candidates did not seem to appreciate the need to give practical examples (particularly in Music and Drama) and this inevitably resulted in thin and unconvincing arguments.

Weak responses lost focus when they did not show clear understanding of the key terms that they were using. It is anticipated that candidates should have a working knowledge of the words learnt and used during unit G401, this was particularly evident in the lack of movement material used in the dance responses which were rather narrative on the whole. Key terms were sometimes poorly interpreted as in '*blues scale*' or the definition was ignored as in '*physical theatre*'. This was particularly the case in music responses and this weakness meant that such candidates then relied on the examples to show clear understanding, which more often than not they didn't.

A few candidates planned their responses in detail which generally led to responses that had more logical progression and coherence to the argument but plans that were just a list of words often led to the candidate deciding on what they must say regardless of the question being asked. Many candidates used a spider-diagram idea which was very useful in terms of information but does not always help candidates when ordering their thoughts, so weaker responses often jumped around ideas rather than moving logically through points towards a logical conclusion.

Quite a few candidates seemed to struggle with timing: either only writing one response or writing one long and one short response. There is possibly a need for centres to work more closely together across the disciplines, as frequently candidates wrote good essays for one area but not another.

Candidates who seemed to have at least reasonable knowledge of the stylistic techniques of a practitioner frequently struggled to exemplify their ideas using details of movement material, musical notation and performance, quotation, practical explanation and text references. Responses frequently did not give a sense of how the works appeared on stage/ live performance and if references were given there were many occasions where they were not located within the specific work.

Strong responses were well-constructed, sophisticated and showed a logical and progressive train of thought, substantiated by close references. Average responses used the structure of the piece as the structure of the response particularly in the case of dance; consequently producing rather narrative responses. The weakest responses offered no structure at all and jumped from point to point with no connecting argument or meaning and no evidence from the piece studied.

There were a significant number of candidates who repeated the question or fragment of the question frequently but clearly did not understand it and struggled to relate their knowledge to the area up for discussion. Good responses continually referred their points back to the question and offered insightful opinions and interesting standpoints – these candidates appreciated the socio-political and performance context in which the practitioner found themselves and made these links clear. The highest level responses were able to draw from a range of references choosing the most appropriate to their needs. Weaker responses analysed

the work or moment only in terms of the question and did not explore aspects of interpretation. Some candidates muddled themselves by trying to respond to the question by regurgitating an answer to a past paper question or by trying to 'shove in' quotes used in past paper questions. In particular candidates often seemed to be trying to address both questions set or using the other question to guide them.

There were some glaring inaccuracies in this series which reflected a limited understanding of the studied works '*Godber writes for the middle classes*' '*Bourne's plays....*' '*Mr Basford the headteacher....*' '*...all The Beatles took lots of drugs...*' '*Godber was excited by lavish sets*' '*Bourne was a teacher*' There was also much 'misquoting' particularly from Godber scripts or not acknowledging that something was a quote.

Too many candidates were still not supporting statements with relevant or clear examples from the practitioner's work. There were a number of occasions where the example used either contradicted or did not suit or exemplify the point being made. This meant that many candidates were 'caught' in middle band for lack of exemplification despite trying to address the question. Again, there was a surprising lack of movement material referred to in Bourne/Newson responses and a lack of knowledge in terms of musical construction in the music responses. Very few candidates used musical notation to support their ideas. This often resulted in answers that were inevitably narrative or vague where candidates would reference a style such as '*Bourne uses salsa and ballet*' with no supportive understanding of this style.

With the Drama responses some candidates struggled to clarify whether an example was in the original text (ie from the practitioner) or a relevant interpretation that they had seen or been in. A proportion of candidates left the reader to make the implicit links in their argument and there were quite a few generic/ formulaic/ 'everything I know about' style responses. There was a sense of presumption – that there was no point writing certain points as they were so obvious to the reader, but this meant that some fundamental points were not made, making later points more difficult to explain.

There were still many examples of misspellings of key words '*technique*', practitioner's names such as '*Godba*' and '*Brect*', characters names such as '*Jordes / Jordy*', play titles and a significant number of candidates deemed it acceptable to use in house shortened versions of the title ( even if the title was not actually that long): DDOMM, EA, TBSWY. There was also an influx of Americanized/computer spelling such as '*theater*', '*center*' Candidates used '*etc*' when they would have gained further credit if they had explained what else it was that could be said.

Introductions and conclusions were sometimes omitted completely – conclusions more so. There were some conclusions that simply repeated in list form the essay – these were overly long and did not show further understanding. Good conclusions were summative and rounded referring directly back to the question.

## Question Specific comments

### **Matthew Bourne**

- 1 The focus of this question was on the elements of the performing arts. With the growth of 'Physical Theatre' performances with companies such as DV8 and Frantic Assembly that blur the lines between Music, Dance and Drama in a highly dramatic and theatrical way there is still a place for classical work and Bourne is able to attract a vast audience. It was expected that strongest candidates would be able to show how Bourne is able to use influences from the past to create work that still resonates today and which still has significance for audiences in the future. Bourne's *Swan Lake* and *Nutcracker* were the most popular works studied and the best responses were able to recognise the progression and development of Bourne's work and even how the new production of *Swan*

Lake has been adapted. There were some very good references to Bourne's latest work *Dorian Gray* with analysis of how this work reflected a development of Bourne's work whilst retaining the characteristic features of his work. Most candidates struggled to show how Bourne's choreography supported the statement because they tended to discuss set, costume and music and limited the choreographic analysis to stating that 'folk dance' or 'Spanish dance' was used without specific exemplification. Some candidates seemed to misunderstand the question and discussed the three tenses in relation to the action of the studied work itself. There were some sweeping personal statements made asserting that Bourne was the first person ever in Ballet to tell a story through Dance. Best responses understood that Bourne wants to reach a wide audience and keeps the work relevant by using contemporary references. Some candidates were able to identify a few influences but apart from listing them were not able to show how those influences were reflected in the techniques and choreographic material used in the studied work.

- 2 This question focused on the cultural, social and historical context of the performing arts. Many of Bourne's works comment on modern society and candidates were expected to be able to show how Bourne uses his observations of the contemporary world around him and translates those observations into his work to create work that is both relevant and engaging. Candidates who had seen a live performance of the work that they were studying were able to discuss that work with great enthusiasm. The weakest responses tended to be very narrative in approach, retelling the story of the work rather than analysing the techniques in the work, how they are used and to what effect. Very few candidates were able to recognise the elements of contemporary culture in Bourne's work, other than film. Strong responses recognised Bourne as one of the most popular and most performed modern choreographers and were able to show how his work appeals to a modern audience who may otherwise view Ballet as "High Art".

Works studied included : *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker!*, *The Car Man*.

### **Shobana Jeyasingh**

- 3 This question focuses on performance techniques. Candidates were expected to be able to recognize how Jeyasingh conveys her ideas to the audience through the use of gesture and footwork and the influence of the martial art forms as well as traditional contemporary dance. A performer of Jeyasingh's work must be open to the idea of her work as a hybrid form, embracing different styles and drawing from Jeyasingh's own training and experiences and how the challenges that a particular work poses for the performer are reflected in their performance. Strong responses were able to highlight how Jeyasingh has taken her inspiration from her roots and her experiences in London and how she used these to create work that inspired by themes of belonging and migration and the particular demands of a specific work. The weakest answers retold the story of the studied work and failed to identify specific movement material, changes in dynamic and how the performer translates those into performance. Jeyasingh's dancers come from a range of backgrounds with many studying complementary areas such as Yoga and Capoeira and those skills are often used to good effect in Jeyasingh's work. Weak responses did not fully appreciate the techniques and styles such as Bharata Natyam and strong use of hand gestures in works such as *Faultline* and did not appreciate that the dancers are expected to take an active part in the creative process and that they are expected to be dramatically strong as well as technically strong so that they can tell a powerful story.
- 4 This question focuses on the elements of the performing arts. Candidates were expected to show how Jeyasingh is not afraid to be experimental and how she works in a very open-minded way with modern composers such as Michael Nyman and Kevin Volans to create innovative work. Candidates might also explore the collaborations involved in the creative process where the whole administrative and creative teams take part in regular meetings to discuss their ideas and develop work in a unified, holistic manner. The strongest

responses did not just list Jeyasingh's techniques nor recount the action of her works but were able to identify her collaborations and use specific examples from their studied work to show how these collaborations contribute to the effectiveness of the whole work. Weak responses failed to present a coherent argument, neither disagreeing nor agreeing with the statement. Such candidates rarely used specific examples from the studied work/s to illustrate their ideas and were unable to explore what they understood by a 'distinctive form of dance'.

Works studied included : *Exit No Exit*, *Faultline*, *Flicker*.

### **Lloyd Newson**

- 5 This question focused on stylistic influences and how Newson's training and life experiences were reflected in his work. The strongest answers identified the influence of a range of practitioners. They were able to show how Newson absorbed the influences of Paxton, Bausch, Claid and others and how he used these in his work. They were also able to place Newson's work in the appropriate social context and to use specific examples from the studied work, often cross referencing to other works, to support any ideas presented. Weaker responses were unable to explain their understanding of the work of Newson or how it evolved in relation to his stylistic influences. Some candidates approached the question from a very narrative standpoint, often retelling the "story" of the studied work rather than identifying the techniques and devices used and to what effect. *The Cost of Living* was used effectively as a focus work although again weaker candidates adopted a far too narrative approach and lost the connection with the 'influence' aspect of the question. The strongest responses explored how the choreographic material, the themes and the techniques used all reflect different influences. There was a great enthusiasm for Newson's work, particularly from candidates who were able to see beyond the shock elements of Newson's work and who were therefore able to be far more analytical when responding to the question.
- 6 This question focused on the elements of the performing arts and how Newson seeks to face the audience with their own prejudices about life and about dance as an art form. Works such as *The Cost of Living* and *To Be Straight With You* were often used in a very successful way to support ideas and this was particularly true when candidates had seen a live performance of such works. The strongest responses were able to show how Newson's work has evolved and how new works such as *Just For Show* and *To Be Straight With You* reflect Newson's changing concerns and how he never shirks from addressing issues that for others might be thought of as too controversial. He addresses the attitudes held by particular cultures and religions and questions the validity of such beliefs. As in the June 2009 series there were some very interesting responses that focused on Newson's new work *To Be Straight With You*. These candidates were able to use Newson's own thoughts through attending the pre-show talk and explored the idea of Newson's work as ever evolving; how his latest works differ from his earlier works or are a continuing development of previous works, such as the use of text and verbatim theatre in *To Be Straight With You*. Again many candidates referred to a wide range of works but concentrated on one as the main focus work.

Works studied included : *Strangefish*, *Enter Achilles*, *To Be Straight With You*, *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* and *The Cost of Living*.

**Caryl Churchill**

- 7 This question focused on structure and form. It was expected that candidates would be able to show an understanding of how Churchill manipulates the mood and atmosphere of the action in her work through the use of specific features such as dialogue forms, use of devices such as non-linear time and an episodic structure. Weak responses were generic listing everything that the candidate knew about Churchill's work without relating that knowledge to the set question. Strong responses were able to identify specific features and to then highlight moments in the work when Churchill used that feature and to what effect. Weak responses focused on the use of different language forms and failed to recognise how the presentation of those language forms allowed Churchill to manipulate the mood and atmosphere of the action.
- 8 The question focused on performance techniques. Candidates were asked to explore the characters within Churchill's plays and how they should be presented. They were expected to understand the performance possibilities and to explore the roles in terms of the behaviour displayed by the character and how their performance might be delivered. If the audience do not see the full extent of a character's choices and the anguish involved in those choices then they will probably misunderstand the choices made and would instantly dismiss the character as cruel rather than assessing the character's decision and coming to a considered judgement of that decision. It was important that the candidates understood the journey of the character chosen and obviously the success of the response often depended on the choice of role. Many of Churchill's early plays do not have a central journey of a single protagonist but offer the audience an array of people and exposes sections of their lives. What people do and say defines them although these two aspects may contradict each other and therefore presents one of the many performance challenges for an actor. Strong responses recognised the function of each character and their significance in the overall play and were able to identify moments when the character was revealed to the audience and the specific performance techniques that an actor might use to ensure an effective realisation of that role. Most responses seemed to focus on describing the characters and retold the play synopsis without acknowledging the performances challenges and possibilities.

*Works studied included : Top Girls, Cloud Nine, Vinegar Tom*

**Athol Fugard**

- 9 Very few centres had studied this new practitioner. This question focused on the elements of the performing arts. It was expected that candidates would explore how Fugard uses a range of dramatic devices, often Brechtian to confront and challenge the audience. It would be perfectly acceptable for candidates to follow the action of the play although they should be able to identify key moments in the story where Fugard uses a specific device and to what effect. Weak responses listed the characteristic features of Fugard's work without exemplification whilst best responses placed the studied play in the appropriate context and were able to identify the specific theatrical techniques used, at what point in the play they are used and what the particular response is that Fugard was hoping to elicit. Some candidates identified the different stages of Fugard's work and how each reflects a different stage in his development, influences and experiences both as a man and as a writer. Candidates might have mentioned the opening of the new Fugard Theatre in Cape Town's District Six and should have been able to recognise the significance of that historical event.
- 10 The focus of this question was on performance techniques and how performers are required to be physically expressive and articulate as well as vocally expressive – this is particularly true during the sections where no words are used but where physical action and mimetic techniques are used to convey a particular mood or character eg the opening

of *The Island*. Fugard's plays are character driven and represent the greater society that they exist in. Audiences gain an insight into the inner workings of a character so that decisions and incidents become forgivable and understandable rather than shocking. Most candidates understood the political, historical and social context of Fugard's work and were able to identify the characteristic features of his work but they were often unable to identify specific performance techniques and the key moments in a particular text when an actor had to use a particular technique to support their characterisation. Weak responses consisted of a generic list of characteristic features without exemplification and were unable to explore the presentation of physical performances that use language, movement and gesture to build the appropriate characterisation. Again it should be noted that *Tsotsi* is a novel and a film but that it is not a play and is therefore not acceptable as the focus work although it is perfectly permissible for candidates to cross-reference to devices and techniques used in it to illustrate common features in Fugard's work.

*Works studied included : Boesman and Lena, Master Harold...And the Boys*

### **John Godber**

- 11 This question focuses on structure and form and candidates were expected to be able to highlight key moments in the text when Godber uses specific devices to highlight the mechanism of the drama. Candidates tended to approach the question by reinterpreting it to read 'list the features of Godber's work'. Consequently there were very few responses that fully appreciated what was being asked of them. The major problem with responses seemed to be that candidates dealt with a list of techniques/stylistic features / fingerprints in isolation to each other. For example they may deal with fast paced dialogue / rapid fire speed, possibly give a quotation from the piece but give no context, analysis or idea of how (coupled with multi-roling, exaggerated physicality, accent and audience interaction) this would work on stage or for an audience. There was some misinterpretation, and frequently candidates did not appreciate any more than the economic reasons for the minimalistic approach or chose to ignore the second part of the question relating to the 'maximum dramatic impact'. Better responses discussed the structural features of a piece with references and alluded to the desired or actual impact on an audience.
- 12 This question focuses on the social, cultural and historical influences. Candidates were expected to go beyond writing a detailed biographical essay on Godber and to be able to show how his background and experiences influenced his work and how these influences are reflected in a work at a particular moment. Weak responses failed to acknowledge the range of influences and experiences that had affected Godber's work. The question was generally addressed poorly with a lack of detail. Candidates struggled to give clear examples or didn't go beyond Godber's work and time as a teacher. Where these candidates did give specific examples it was unclear where they came from and they also lacked analysis. Influences were often listed but came with no connection to the text. The strongest responses appreciated how Godber combines TV dialogue style and the physical practicality of a drama teacher where everything is stripped away to the bare minimum, so focusing the audience on the performers.

*Works studied included : Shakers, Bouncers, Teechers, Salt of the Earth.*

### **John Adams**

- 13 This question focuses on cultural, social and historical influences. Candidates were expected to show how the range of eclectic influences that Adams was exposed to (from his birth into a household where Pop, Jazz and Classical music were all played, through his training and life experiences) are all reflected in his work and how they give that work a resonance that is relevant to a contemporary audience. The weakest responses were a detailed biographical essay of Adams' life and although they were often able to identify

some influences in simple terms they were not able to offer a more sophisticated analysis of the studied work and show how those influences were placed in his own work. Stronger responses explored a range of influences, including his training with his father playing in bands and orchestra together and the music heard during his youth such as Joni Mitchell and Pink Floyd. They were then able to not only highlight moments in his work where these influences could be clearly seen, but also to show how his work reflected the mood and atmosphere of a certain time in American history. They also recognised that Adams' work is still ever-changing as he continues to experiment and to use music as a reflection of American culture and politics.

- 14 This question focuses on structure and form. The weakest responses were lengthy biographies of Adams, failing to acknowledge how he was first influenced by Minimalism but then moved on, often writing for full orchestra or chamber ensembles. Strong responses were able to appreciate the way that Adams was influenced by Minimalism and were able to show a real understanding of what that meant. Some candidates showed how Adams himself has said that his work is more 'emotionally committed' than that of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. Such candidates were able to analyse the changing works of Adams and used clear appropriate musical examples to illustrate their ideas.

*Works studied included : Nixon In China, I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the Sky.*

### **The Beatles**

- 15 This question focuses on the elements of the performing arts. The candidates were expected to show how the musical techniques used by The Beatles emphasised the importance of the lyrics. They should highlight the use of specific musical elements such as harmony, melody, tonality, tempo, texture and timbre and show where they sit in the songs and their impact on the work. Many candidates struggled with the musicality of the response and were frequently able to list musical aspects of the work without exemplification or relied entirely on lyrical examples – particularly in the case of *Hey Jude*. Examples, when given, were often left for the reader to make the links between them and the point being made. There were a number of tenuous links to the question in terms of interpretation of the pieces.
- 16 This question focuses on the cultural, historical and social influences. Candidates were expected to highlight the range of contemporary themes that are contained in The Beatles' songs that listeners can relate to and whether they are specific to that time or ever-present. Strong answers recognised and identified how the sixties was such a significant period in terms of moving towards a hopeful and optimistic future. Whilst this question was rarely addressed those that did struggled to get beyond possible drugs references. When a candidate was able to identify that a sitar or other instrument had been used they were often unable to explain why or for what effect and struggled to locate the use within the song. Most did not deal with the sexual revolution at all and the socio-political historical and cultural context of The Beatles was not explored coherently. Strongest candidates placed The Beatles firmly in the correct social and historical context, explored the idea of the 1960s as a reaction against the austerity of the 40s and 50s and the nurturing of innovation and experimentation. A couple of candidates identified the continuing influence of The Beatles on contemporary groups such as Oasis.

*Works studied included: Get Back, Please Please me, She's Leaving Home, When I'm 64, Norwegian Wood, Help, She Loves You.*

### **George Gershwin**

- 17 This question focuses on structure and form. Candidates were expected to be able to identify what they understand to be the difference between Gershwin's early songs

influenced by Tin Pan Alley; his songs for Broadway where he felt less comfortable; and those for Hollywood, where not all of Gershwin's songs translated successfully into the cinematic form. The question itself clearly identified the stages of Gershwin's development and strongest candidates were able to work logically through those stages, highlighting works that exemplified those stages. Some candidates struggled to address the question and used it as a platform for '*tell me everything you know about Gershwin...*' There was little understanding of the development of his style other than his move away from Tin Pan Alley and his writing for musicals. Candidates really struggled to use details, particular performances and performers to exemplify their responses. If they did refer to a specific piece then more often than not there was little specific musical detail located within the piece. Key words were sometimes used to show understanding, rather than using a key technique, explaining it, providing evidence of its use and suggesting reasons for its use. The strongest responses were able to offer an analysis of the musical construction of songs from each of the periods in Gershwin's professional career and show the relationship between verse and chorus and any vocal/instrumental contrasts. Such work showed a real understanding of the growth and development of Gershwin's work.

- 18** This question focuses on cultural, historical and social influences. Candidates were expected to show an appreciation of how Gershwin was able to create music using the strict formula for writing songs that he had been exposed to as a song plugger and that having been trained classically he found the freedom to improvise and invent tunes inspirational. Weaker responses struggled to provide enough musical detail and idea of performance to support their claims. Examples were often lyrical rather than musical and had no actual notation to support ideas. Candidates were generally not able to discuss the musical techniques with clarity and had very little comprehension of the 1930s depression and the climate that Gershwin found himself writing in. The strongest responses were able to analyse the construction of the songs and were also able to show how they stirred the imagination of an American population in a Depression. Such candidates appreciated that in times of great hardship and deprivation people often turn to the Arts for escapism and hope and how Gershwin's work had a real sense of optimism.

*Works studied included: The Man I Love, Fascinating Rhythm, I Got Rhythm, Summertime, Foggy Day, Someone to watch over me, They can't take that away from me, Nice Work.*

## G403 Performance Contexts 2

### General Comments

This was the first series for the new version of the unit and double the number of entries there has usually been for the January series. Centres appear to be re-focussing the 4 unit course and using the January entry for this unit so that the June series can focus on G404 and, if necessary, re-takes of this unit. This seems a sensible approach. Certainly, there were some strong answers in this session, with a reasonable spread across the mark bands.

Most of the questions proved accessible to the range of candidates answering them. Most candidates struggled with the breadth of contextual knowledge of postmodernism required to fully answer Question, but many argued their answers well within the three art forms they had studied.

Where centres had taken account of the new flexibility, and subsequently the wider expectation, of this unit, there was greater success. Candidates were able to reference a broader understanding of the topic, which has always been the intention. It is possible to continue with the old 2560 three-works-from-three-practitioners approach, but in most cases this continued to limit the responses, apart from the occasional exception. Centres should use this opportunity to expand the knowledge and understanding of the topic and open up greater repertoire possibilities for G404.

The knowledge depth expected comes in the quality of the reference, which should be specific and indicate informed knowledge and understanding of the art form in detail. The latter still needs to be improved in responses. For example, general phrases such as, "The melody is catchy, upbeat and jolly with memorable lyrics", "the music is emotionally-charged and powerful", "a beautiful folk melody", "uses simple chords and melody" mean very little on their own without some commentary and exemplar detail. It is not the level of analysis expected. Whilst these are music examples the same applies to both dance and drama. Candidates should be able to discuss, drama, dance and music with a range of appropriate art-form relevant vocabulary.

**TIP: It is important to be able to recognise the effect, the intended impact of a performance moment, but, just as important, is the understanding of how that is achieved, whether, for example, there is a change of key and/or instrumentation (from what to what), the use of repetition for emphasis (describe the motif), the irony implicit in dialogue and/or action (quote the text or detail the business).**

This lack of detailed knowledge was often concealed by reference to a list of "fingerprints" of a particular person's style. Whilst the use of such aide mémoires is useful for teaching and learning, without any identification of the use to which this list of techniques are put, they remain merely a list, learnt possibly, but not necessarily understood.

The ways in which candidates are using a balance of art forms across their answers also showed improvement in this series. However, in all but the strongest answers, across all of the topics, the study of music tends to be limited to lyrics and what they mean and dance and drama are discussed in terms of narrative rather than movement and dramatic action. Whilst dance and drama extracts are often sufficient in quantity and reference, some centres appear to be considering only three songs as exemplary reference points for the study of music across each of the topics and this is insufficient for the candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding at this level.

Although there is noticeable improvement in the way candidates are approaching their answers, attempting to respond to the question with a planned set of points and argument based on

themes and ideas supported by examples and discussion, there are still many candidates using a basic all-I-know about each-work- and/or practitioner-I've-studied.

**TIP: Centres should strongly advise candidates not to use phrases such as “the works/practitioners I have studied....”, “I have looked at 3 practitioners....”. They should be avoided at all costs not just from a stylistic perspective but mainly they betray a lack of understanding of what they should have been studying ie one of the topics, as a topic, rather than a set of extracts from works.**

Many candidates plodded through extract by extract, with little, if any, linkage between the 'sections' and even missed the opportunity to make links via the features of the topic. This "works-led" approach, or indeed the "practitioner-led approach" is not appropriate. The average length of an answer was about eight sides, giving just under half a side per extract/practitioner, resulting in a superficial résumé of the extract with hardly any analysis. Some never mentioned any dramatic, choreographic or musical techniques or vocabulary; some made no mention of the art forms, at all, so that the answer read like a collection of book synopses, almost a DVD jacket exercise. Whilst leeway has been given this first series, increasingly, this style of general answer will attract fewer “benefit-of-the-doubt” knowledge marks.

**TIP: Centres should discourage candidates from thinking this unit is about nine extracts, nine practitioners, or old-style three practitioners. It actually involves the study of a genre or topic in the performing arts, as broadly as possible. The extracts and knowledge about practitioners and the context within which the topic developed should be used to exemplify points made about that topic in answer to the question on that topic.**

In many cases, it was clear that candidates had been prepared appropriately, but there was a tendency to write formulaic answers rather than address the question specifically. Centres where a 'model answer' had been learnt across the entire entry, neither assisted those who found difficulty in tying the question into the 'formula' nor allowed for much differentiation in assessment.

Candidates are getting better at planning, in simple terms ensuring that the focus of the question is at the centre of the plan rather than names or a list of works, though there were some responses where the plan was longer than the answer. In addition, many very detailed plans included lines of thought and material that was never discussed in the answer.

Many candidates failed to complete the section detailing those practitioners they had answered questions on in G402. A new format for the question paper has been recommended for both the G402 data and the table of reference works considered for this unit. To clarify, standard OCR and specification regulations forbid a candidate offering the same material for different examinations. Thus whilst there is no longer a complete proscription of all the G402 practitioners, it is incumbent upon the candidate to indicate which practitioners they have answered questions on in G402. This does not stop the odd half line comparative reference, which would gain credit in this unit in terms of understanding the wider context of the unit, but any lengthy reference to a practitioner's work answered in G402 cannot be credited. However, if candidates have studied three practitioners in G402 and only answer on two as required, then that third work/practitioner studied could easily become a useful exemplary work in this unit.

**TIP: Centres are encouraged to seek as wide a range of representative works to exemplify their study of the topic in this unit. Besides the three art forms, the range should reflect the time span of the set topic and the possible different approaches to the set topic.**

The use of contextual understanding continues to improve, it is clear centres are increasingly working this into the topic study rather than treating it as something separate. However, many candidates are not showing that they understand the need to have a grasp of that context in

relation to the ideas and themes of the topic and the works that exemplify, until they reach the examination room.

### **Quality of Language**

In this series, there appeared to be greater consideration to reduce careless and ignorant spelling, particularly of practitioner's names and the works to which reference was being made. However, these spelling errors together with others mentioned on previous 2560 reports, are still frequent at this level of assessment. 'Practitioner' is frequently mis-spelt as is 'integrate', which was on the examination paper. The misuse of the apostrophe, in every plural noun, subject and verb agreement and complicated florid expression to 'pad' answers were all common problems in this area. Some candidates split their answers into note-form creating nine sections with headings based on the works they discussed; some answers had no division at all, with no paragraphs and lengthy convoluted sentences. With 20% of the available marks in this area, centres would be well advised to target those who may have difficulty in their written work, early on in the course, to encourage improvement in this key functional skill.

### **Question specific comments**

#### ***Post Modern Approaches to the Performing Arts since 1960***

1 13.3 % of the candidates answered this question.

This question proved a challenge for many candidates. Few were able to identify any other art forms to which postmodernism relates other than the three specific to the specification. Some candidates were aware of wider reference in the novel, art and architecture and offered intelligent answers exploiting their contextual knowledge by suggesting there was no separation and that all the art forms reflected the changes in society, particularly around technology and attitudes to consumerism. Some were unable to articulate any comparison or contrast with the performing arts and many read it as postmodernism itself being separate from dance, drama and music. That said, there were some very good answers that attempted a discussion on postmodernism and performance. The portfolio of reference works offered a plentiful supply of reference against the comments made.

Many candidates ignored the second part of the question related to performance and the changing society post-1960. Those that did consider that part of the question offered some very interesting perspectives on the contemporary world, one of the best being that Bond's view of the world in his preface on violence in *Lear* had come true, comparing the endless pacing of a caged animal with Bausch's incessant repetitive motifs in *Bluebeard* and that Thatcher's assertion that there was no such thing as society was reflected in Kane's dysfunctional world and Gangsta rap. For weaker candidates, the answers tended to be quite generic and the candidates didn't address the question. Instead, 'fingerprints' of the genre were discussed in answers which led to a fairly limited response. The comments on 'fingerprints' above should be noted. In one centre the discussion for this and Question 2 revolved around pastiche, parody and plunder, but these are not the only techniques used by practitioners of this era and whilst there was a useful range of works referred to, the very formulaic approach in most answers did not assist the candidates.

2 26.4 % of the candidates answered this question.

The most popular question on the paper, this produced a very wide range of answers. Some automatically reverted to all the high art / low art comparisons that they had prepared, which serviced an aspect of the question, but a wider view including the changing views and tastes of the audience opened the answers up to more discussion. Those who had contextual knowledge of the era in which the works were created had some idea of how audiences had changed over time and how practitioners had used a variety of approaches, styles and forms which could be described as blurring the

boundaries between what was once called high and low art. Some answers made relevant comparisons and offered good detail in their choice of examples. Weaker answers were formulaic and it was disappointing to read the same quotation in nearly every essay in one centre. Better answers did not go through extracts one at a time but started by discussing a feature of the topic and then using the extracts to illustrate it.

This question saw the expression of some worrying assumptions of society related to 'populism', that is, "lower class who would prefer the rock band sections and the upper class would like the orchestral bits". Centres should encourage candidates to think beyond this simplistic, black and white view. This is also seen in comments like "this had never been done before", when it is patently not true, or the eulogising of a practitioner who is a good example of doing things differently, only to be seen as the only one working in that way, because they are the only one of which the candidate is aware.

**TIP: Understanding that the texts considered as examples are merely that, examples of a particular technique, style, attitude is often key to more objective discussion and may also encourage personal exploration around ideas to which candidates are introduced.**

As above, candidates from one centre offered a set of almost the same answers with a focus on taboo and intertextuality for both this and Question 1 ignored the question throughout until the conclusion where it got cursory reference. Had the question been on techniques then some would have been relevant, but from a limited perspective. The deliberate use of supposed taboo language, action, instrumentation, subject is definitely characteristic of many of the works of this period, but this is not the only characteristic.

A number of candidates appear to think that OCR established 'postmodernist fingerprints' to which artists such as Cage and Pinter applied themselves. This is either overly subtle postmodernist irony or naiveté inappropriate at this level of assessment.

### **Politics and Performance since 1914**

The new flexibility appears to have created a re-emergence of interest in this topic. Some very good use of a rich variety of works across the period, from Bill T. Jones, Marley, Bond, Edgar and the Manics to O'Casey, Joos, Bruce, Dylan, Bausch, Brecht and Nijinska.

Shostakovich has become popular and appears to have cornered the market in "classical" composers with a political edge, but there are many others that colleagues may wish to consider, to mention but two: Britten's *War Requiem* and Eisler's *Solidarity Song* and the score for *Hangmen Also Die*.

3 14.1% of the candidates answered this question.

Most responses agreed with the statement, listed the works and discussed the degree to which they were entertaining or instructive. Quite often there were some very well written answers, referencing works studied, but with no art form detail at all, so they became impressive A Level General Studies answers. This also applies to several responses to Question 4 and this topic area in general. Knowing the reference implied in the song or play or dance has, in some centres, become more important than understanding the ways in which the performance communicates that message.

The context of works will always be important, but in order that candidates discover the performance techniques used by others, so that their own performances are more informed and enhanced, they must be analysing the works as examples of ways of creating political performance rather than as just social, historical or cultural documents.

Candidates seemed more at home with the instruction aspect of the question, finding it more difficult to identify entertaining aspects of politics and performance. This may relate to the previous comments on balance, above, with sober and detached austerity the order of the day and no room for levity and enjoyment. This of course is to misunderstand the form, serious issues can be dealt with in what might appear quite frivolous ways.

4 14.8% of the candidates answered this question.

Possibly because this question required some real contextual knowledge of the times in which the exemplar works were produced, there was an even greater problem with generalised, if informed discussion, rather than demonstrating understanding in detail. "X was about", "Y wanted to go against the government...", "Z is the story of ....." can all be relevant if they are evidenced in the detail of the works. There was some good discussion of issues and how they have been tackled through pieces, but not comparatively across pieces. Responses to this question varied significantly with some very strong answers using a wide range of reference works. Weaker answers tended to offer the all-I-know type of answer with little or no knowledge of the society and culture that gave rise to the work in the first place. This could have been seen as a shifting focus across the period with war and violence reflected when relevant, amidst an ever-changing social milieu, both heavily satirised usually.

This question highlighted the difference between candidates offering a broad range of works, which gave them much to discuss, as opposed to a practitioner/works-led approach with a limiting three examples from three practitioners.

Again, eulogy was high on the agenda with Dylan personally stopping the Third World War over the Cuban Crisis with a song that was recorded several months after it happened; Brecht - "the father of political theatre" and his "Mother's Courage".

### ***The Twentieth Century American Musical***

This topic is intended to focus on those shows produced on Broadway, or transfers from off-Broadway, rather than film musicals, an area of study in its own right. A number of references were made to musicals that were first created for film. Whilst these are perfectly acceptable as study texts, and the more of that contextual experience the better, the candidates must understand the differences between stage and film versions. Some fall outside of the set period, *Hairspray*, for example, filmed in '88, but did not open on Broadway until 2002. A brief reference would not matter, in fact may be credited if complementing a comment on other works, but lengthy narrative and reference to a work outside the time period, is difficult to credit. Candidates will sometimes describe filmic action when discussing songs that could not be possible on stage, especially when discussing dance.

5 22.9% of the candidates answered this question.

Where centres had looked at a broad range of works, as examples of the American Musical, that is, considering all three art forms, the candidates made some exceptional responses. They were able to track and reference not only the developing contribution of dance, but also how the other art forms adjusted to accommodate it. For example, the development of longer musical compositions for ballet sections such as Rodgers' *Slaughter on 10th Avenue*.

Candidates appeared to enjoy answering this question and often showed good lateral thinking as they discussed across the works rather than just listing them, they mentioned links and application to not only the main works selected but also current musicals ie *The Lion King*, *Les Miserables*, *Spamalot* and *Avenue Q*. As mentioned above, for this type of

reference, it is all a matter of degree. *Spamalot* and *Avenue Q* are both outside of the time period, but used judiciously they can illuminate and clarify ideas admirably. However, many candidates were not equipped to answer this question at the length expected or in the dance detail and vocabulary required. Centres must ensure that candidates are prepared for art form-related questions. Some candidates still are still using an all-I-know approach, listing and discussing the practitioners and not answering the question, despite having studied a range of practitioners.

There was excess in the expression, which is more likely to betray ignorance than indicate understanding. For example, "In the King and I they perform a waltz (sic), this was a shock because it was the first of its kind", It's a polka and Lehar's operetta, *The Merry Widow* some 50 years before had featured a very famous waltz.

Few made reference to the rise of the director / choreographer or indeed the impact of the Hollywood musical, which not only drew some choreographers away from Broadway, but also helped to make dance an integral part of the live musical show.

Few also capitalised on the background information they had. Here was a question where knowledge of *The Black Crook*, would come into its own, given it was the putting together of a melodrama and displaced ballet company. Only one or two candidates made reference to the hoofers of Vaudeville and Burlesque or the cakewalk of the minstrel shows and the spectacular choreography of the Ziegfeld Follies.

**6** 8.5% of the candidates answered this question.

This was the least popular question on the paper and yet produced some of the best work. This was consistent across all the examiners, who felt that this question somehow encouraged both the broader overview of the Musical and the best detail in example. As mentioned in the comments for Question 5 above, where candidates had studied a broad range of works not from independent art form, or practitioner perspectives, but as holistic works using all three art forms, the discussion was exemplary. There was also more use of a thematic approach to the answers that drew together common writing approaches. One which was particularly attractive was "Pride in the Homeland", where candidates discussed not only the variety of reflections of the American Dream, but also could draw in the popularity of *The Sound of Music*.

The development of the 'book musical' was handled well and here the antecedents, Vaudeville, Burlesque, Minstrelsy, Revue and Operetta, also were used effectively to demonstrate how the different approaches to the Musicals reflected the past, in this, both *Chicago* and *Gypsy* were discussed effectively as examples.

Weak answers to this question, would probably have been weak with any question. A very basic approach to listing the works considered with few if any contrasts or comparisons and elementary mistakes, eg John Godber as a composer.

Thus this question elicited some of the best and worst responses.

**Performance in the Far East**

Sadly, there were no responses to the Questions on Performance in the Far East. We look forward to centres venturing into these, as yet, uncharted waters.

# Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Performance Studies H148 H548  
January 2010 Examination Series

## Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
G401	Raw	70	58	50	43	36	29	0
	UMS	140	112	98	84	70	56	0
G402	Raw	60	48	41	35	29	23	0
	UMS	60	48	42	36	30	24	0
G403	Raw	45	33	29	25	21	18	0
	UMS	60	48	42	36	30	24	0

## Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
H148	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H148	6.0	18.0	61.0	81.0	99.0	100.0	106

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums/index.html>

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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**1 Hills Road**  
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**Head office**  
**Telephone: 01223 552552**  
**Facsimile: 01223 552553**

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