

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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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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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Drama (J315)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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Overview

This series has demonstrated how the three units provide candidates with a strong grounding in Drama and prepares them well for progression to KS5. The candidates have the opportunity to develop their performance, devising and technical knowledge and skills. This was well demonstrated in the wide range of high quality outcomes offered as evidence in each unit. The two controlled assessment units are preparing candidates well for the challenges of the examined unit. This year candidates were increasingly making informed decisions regarding the Brief they wished to tackle for examination. The fact that more candidates are choosing to tackle the Designer and Deviser Briefs reflects the breadth of skills being developed in centres.

More centres are embracing the Working Record (WR) as a valued and useful part of the process of creating quality drama, rather than a bolt on chore. There were many excellent WRs, which moderators often noted were a 'good read'.

Centres are reminded of the inappropriateness of providing writing frames. Moderators' feedback identified that such writing frames do not lead to stronger work in fact the reverse is true. Reference to JCQ regulations make it clear such writing frames are not permissible either for the examination or controlled assessment.

The individual unit reports draw attention to the submission of evidence on DVD; centres are asked to carefully assimilate this feedback, as this is an integral part of the assessment process. Also centres need to be clear that time allocations for the work should be adhered to and no work should be taken home or completed in unsupervised conditions, as such breeches constitute malpractice. As does candidates handing in the same work for WRs.

Alongside the reports below, each centre receives an individual report on each of the three units. It is important that these reports reach the staff delivering the specification; moderators have expressed concern that they think these reports may not be reaching such staff in some centres. The same points regarding misconceptions had to be repeated for some centres.

Attention is also drawn to the need for rigorous cross-moderation where more than one teacher operates at a centre. The centre must be confident that there is one reliable rank order being sub-mitted for the centre.

The work seen this series has been strong testament to the value of Drama in the education of young people and a tribute to the excellent work being done by centres and candidates in a wide range of contexts.

A581 From Page to Stage

In essence the requirements of this unit are to take an extract from a published text and rehearse and stage the extract in an appropriate performance space with clear intentions for the audience and a strong regard for the playwright's intentions. Group size must be no larger than six and each candidate should have at least three minutes exposure with ten minutes being the maximum performance time for a group of six. The process and product is supported by the Working Record which allows the moderator to understand 'the journey' that the candidate has taken to realise the text in the performance space. Centres must therefore choose a text which allows the candidates to fulfil the remit and realise their potential.

Moderators saw a variety of texts which had clearly engaged and enthused candidates and allowed them to exploit the possibilities for performance. Popular as ever was work by John Godber and Willy Russell. However many Centres who were mindful of the stipulation that texts must be changed after two years introduced their candidates to some contrasting yet very accessible texts including:-

Blood Wedding	Lorca
Antigone	Sophocles
Romeo & Juliet	Shakespeare
The Tempest	Shakespeare
Macbeth	Shakespeare
My Mother Said I Never Should	Keatley
Our Country's Good	Wertenbaker
Fast	David Grant
Ostrich Boys	Keith Gray
The Last Laugh	Ben Payne
Walking With Shadows	Ben Myers
The American Dream	Albee
The Body	Nick Darke
The Last Resort	Chris Owen

All were performed as the playwright intended and with due regard to the 'study, use and exploration of a minimum of two genres and two performance styles' as stipulated as a minimum requirement in the specification.

The formatting of the DVD continues to be a challenge for some centres. However, many centres clearly chaptered their DVDs and completed and returned the new written running order. DVDs which are compatible with 'Windows Media' or similar are still the most preferred format. It is essential that centres continue to check the content of the DVD before posting to make sure that the required sample is included and 'signposted', for the moderator. The centre must continue to keep a copy of the DVD in case of any problems. Centres are also advised not to put sticky labels on their DVDs as this causes problems for moderators when trying to open the DVD.

Where centres regarded the moderator as the audience when filming and candidates spoke slowly and clearly to camera giving their name, candidate number and character before performing, this greatly aided moderation. Centres who filmed using a tripod and the 'close up' facility to good effect allowed all their candidates to be observed and tracked. The most successful filming was delivered by centres who had duly considered the various lighting states which provided context and atmosphere for the audience but also allowed all candidates to be observed by the moderator.

A range of performance spaces were observed by moderators but still the most successful were those spaces that allowed the candidates to fulfil the playwright's intentions and create a strong sense of 'theatre'. Whilst it is understood that some facilities are limiting it was pleasing to see that candidates had given due regard to clearing such spaces by covering notice boards and white boards to help create the sense of a 'black box' thereby considering the audience experience. Moderators commented that many candidates this year had a good grasp of stage craft and used the performance space with due regard for the demands of the text and the continuity.

The majority of candidates had given consideration and varying but appropriate importance to a range of semiotics to provide a consistent context for the audience. Costume, sound/music, lighting were all used to good effect. Moderators also commended the use of simple but effective sets, projections and even dry ice to further the context for the audience.

Centres should reflect on the required timing of extracts. The maximum requirement for a group of six is ten minutes. Some centres exceeded the time limit which compromised the quality of the performances. However, whilst some centres exceeded the time limit, moderators observed monologues which were only of a minute's duration, which did not allow candidates the time or opportunity to demonstrate their potential. A monologue should be three minutes long.

The majority of Centres did provide an audience which helped to further the sense of 'theatre' and provide useful feedback to the candidates. Candidates generally responded well to their audience and many candidates wrote 'that it had focused their performance and encouraged their best work'.

A considerable amount of time had clearly been spent within centres both before the controlled assessment and during, exploring and developing characters and there was some excellent characterisations viewed in many centres.

Most candidates had a good grounding in their chosen style and genre. Many Centres had researched and explored a variety of practitioners in particular Stanislavski and Brecht, to support their chosen text, genre and style. Work was enhanced where the ideas and thinking of the practitioner had been fully understood and utilised appropriately.

Several centres had taken their candidates to see their chosen text and the experience had clearly inspired and informed their own performance to good effect. However whilst candidates wrote with enthusiasm about their theatre visit within their Working Records, Centres should ensure that their 'review' of the performance does not dominate the content and that candidates develop and reflect on their own ideas and decisions for exploring and putting the extract in the performance space.

The most successful centres were those who had applied the marking scheme with rigour. In centres where there was more than one teacher, the process of internal moderation ensured continuity and a clear rank order. Careful attention to the addition and accurate transfer of marks from the Centre Assessment Form to the MS1 is required as clerical errors are not only time consuming to deal with but delay the moderation process.

Working Records

The majority of centres have really embraced the required format of three clear sections for the Working Records, thereby leading the moderator through the process that the candidates have undertaken. The most successful candidates used their background research and understanding to develop ideas for the performance. Such candidates went beyond description to reflect analyse and evaluate their findings and ideas. These candidates did not allow one aspect of their preparation or development to predominate the Working Record but balanced their directing and design ideas with their understanding of the text, context, staging, themes, issues, intentions, character background and development. Their final section was a thoughtful and considered reflection and evaluation of the final performance which was detailed and included audience response and evaluation of the performance of another candidate or group.

Successful Working Records were not only well presented but encouraged an individual response without centre intervention in the form of writing frames, which are not permissible at GCSE.

Working Records were generally accurately marked by centres who applied the marking criteria with discernment. Those centres who provided due annotation as to how and why marks had been awarded greatly aided the moderation process.

All Centres are reminded to reflect on their own individual report on this unit which can be found on OCR Interchange. Please see your Examinations Officer if you require assistance accessing this area.

This year there was a strong sense of many centres embracing and fully understanding the demands and ethos of the unit. In the main candidates continued to use their imagination and enthusiasm to explore the requirements of the unit to very good effect which makes moderating a very positive experience.

A582 Drama in the Making

There were some outstanding examples of centres working with the unit this series. These centres have embraced the ethos of the unit. The enthusiasm of the candidates in the range of activities offered for assessment was, as one moderator expressed it, “a joy to behold”. These centres put into sharp relief centres that approach the unit in a constrained and restricted manner or focus on creating fully rehearsed performance pieces.

However there was generally an increased engagement with the distinctive features of the unit, with most candidates conducting a dramatic investigation. A wider variety of approaches were evident and there were some strong improvised ideas tested. There is still a tendency not to give full reign to the exploratory aspects that the unit seeks to facilitate. Some centres/candidates appear to have the mind-set that they need to create a finished polished product rather than test ideas. This is noticeable in the Working Records (WR) where the majority of candidates focus very exclusively on how a scene was performed and not on the potential qualities it has as a script. Of course performance aspects are relevant, but they are not the complete story in this unit. The Area of Study Improvisation is very much to the fore in this unit. (In *OCR Drama for GCSE* the section on Improvising Drama p114 is the type of key knowledge and skills being drawn upon). Some centres have expressed that they do not like to prevent the candidates taking the ideas to full performance level. However the key thrust of this unit is on other aspects of candidates’ dramatic development and providing an opportunity to widen skills and expertise.

In relation to performance aspects, it might help candidates if in this unit they reflect on how the improvisation works for the actor. How do the words ‘flow’ from the mouth? How does the structuring of language effect performance (alliteration, metaphor, iambic pentameter)? Does the situation engage you/create tension and give a ‘buzz’ when you perform it? How interesting is the character to play? What has the scenario got going for it? Candidates will also reflect on how the audience might receive the material, not in terms of how well they acted it (the ideas/script could be given to professional actors who would act it very well), but in terms of is that an engaging situation? Does that performance style showcase the material/theme to best effect?

Feedback to candidates tends to focus on how candidates acted in the scene. This is particularly the case when fellow candidates gave feedback after a performance. Centres perhaps need to provide candidates with broader set of reflective references to use for this unit. There is a specific set of subject knowledge and terminology that is needed for the unit. More reference to this is given later in the report.

What are some of the common features seen in the centres that are producing strong work in this unit?

- Treating Item 1 as the start of an investigation into the potential of the stimulus material, rather than concentrating on rehearsing scenes for as fully realised performance as possible – the unit is **not** another version of Page to Stage. The implication is candidates have not worked it all out in the preparation period and with the start of controlled assessment they investigate rather than rehearse and polish an already fixed idea.
- Giving the candidates the autonomy to decide how to approach the work and choose what to offer for each Item (not prescribing a format for all candidates to follow) – candidates conduct the investigation not the teacher.
- Keeping the work paired down and simple, presented in workshop mode, no stage lights and minimum semiotics certainly for Item 1.
- Definitely no writing frames or booklets for the Working Record (WR) – they are not permissible. Candidates need to chart their own individual record of their investigation and come to their own decisions as to what is important. Only in this way can they access the higher mark bands. Answering set questions is seen as prescription (See Footnote).¹

¹ Joint Council For Qualification - document ‘Instructions for conducting controlled assessment’ Page 6 4.5.2

- Ensuring candidates have been given a minimum 'kit bag' of information during the course to tackle Design Items should they choose to.
- Ensuring during the course the candidates are introduced to devising subject knowledge and skills as well as the performance ones.
- If already completed, using the Page to Stage text (and/or others used during the course) to reflect how the playwright structured their work, the scripting conventions used, the function of the characters, the use of language, how tension was created, the exposition, the denouement etc. This prior knowledge is referenced in the WR.
- Presenting the evidence in one **chaptered DVD** (or 3 if using a separate DVD for each Item). Do not present it in MPEG, AVI, Quick Time folders or other formats that have not been turned into a DVD. The fact that it is on a disc does not mean it is a DVD. Many centres are now producing exemplary DVD evidence, even down to captioning candidates and providing only material relating to the sampled candidates. It is worth investing some time into making sure the centre can do this well, as it will happen year on year and in the long term it will save time. The right software works miracles. And finally no stage lights for filming, unless it is a complete even wash, which will not burn out faces. Random profile spotlights are not going to light the space in any way that will assist identification or enhance artistic interpretation. Note: In future moderators will not spend the time they have been doing trying to rectify/solve the problems created by centres not providing a chaptered DVD. The work will be sent back to centres to be re-presented in an accessible format. Please remember that the DVD is to be produced for the use of the moderator and as such needs to be as clear as possible in order for the assessment objectives to be noted – it is not to capture 'the moment' for the candidates or the school.

What are the common features of strong candidates in the unit?

- In Item 1 giving due emphasis to the context, character and purpose of the scene, shown through one extended scene rather than multiple scenes. This is demonstrated both on DVD and WR. Candidates have not spent all their time 'rehearsing' the same situation over and over again or spent time adding semiotics, but will have strived to create an engaging and meaningful context that has some resonance with the stimulus. They often try at minimum two completely different scenes, and select one to film. The WR lists the possibilities considered. Candidates look to find a good context, good characters, and possible tension/exposition. If these factors are sound candidates don't need much rehearsal time to create strong performance work, it is an improvisation to demonstrate the potential of a piece of script. Other aspects are selected for Items 2 and 3, often for at least one Item, candidate's work as an individual.
- The WR charts their journey to create each Item and you can see why the candidates selected Item 2 and finally Item 3 (it wasn't just because the teacher prescribed a monologue next).
- Good subject vocabulary and knowledge percolate and inform both performance and WR, which includes both devising and performance aspects.
- The WR is not general and descriptive of what was done, but concentrates on what the candidates worked on, giving intent, what was rejected, what chosen, reasons for decisions and reflects on how and why things work or don't.
- Items 2 and 3 show clear development from Item 1 or alternatively try a new line of attack if Item 1 was not satisfactory – they dare to ditch a poor initial idea.
- The WR is an individual interpretation not a set format.

Areas of feedback that could help centres with future cohorts are:

- For the WR adopt these five recommended headings to store work under. 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. For instance what is the best audience, genre, and performance style? What strong characters and tensions have been identified that could be included? It is permissible to include the ideas of other candidates that have been observed with source acknowledged. This moves on from what they have done, to how they would develop it and is it worth developing. They will have already evaluated each individual Item as they completed them.
- The emphasis for the Items is workshop mode, ie no stage lights and minimum semiotics. Experience for this unit has demonstrated this is the best way to present candidates work. The focus is then totally on the content and the performer. The lighting effects and blackouts used by many centres usually mean you can't see the candidates to moderate them. The lights will not have been rigged for the scene so they invariably weaken the appreciation of the strong scripting and performance work that is being looked for. Semiotics is a possible area for Items 2 and 3. Blackouts do not help moderators, having just been introduced to candidates on screen in the identity parade you like to watch candidates walk to their place on the stage, a blackout at this point or any point just scrambles everything. Being able to watch candidates move to new positions demonstrates their stagecraft, blackouts hide it. So a good rule of thumb for moderated work is not to use blackouts. Remember the moderator is the audience is for the DVD.
- Prepare the evidence in an efficient user-friendly way for the Moderator. It is in the interests of the candidates to do this well. The DVD is a vital part of this, (some centres are using the filmed evidence for the candidates to use for evaluations and to take stills from to use in their WR), as well as being **chaptered** each Item needs a candidate **identity parade** with name and candidate number given. One centre had a brilliant 'innovation' to help the Moderator, each candidate held their number in front of them on a card in large letters for the identity parade. What a difference that makes when you can't hear what the candidate said. The DVD should be accompanied by a paper running order, available on the OCR website, PRO/A582 (Performance Running Order – for the purpose of recorded evidence). Only one Centre Authentication Form is needed per centre, not one for every candidate. The Authentication Form and MS1 are sent to your Moderator separately from the sample materials, in most cases before the materials. The WR has to be posted back and forth so it is best kept simple and **light**, ordinary A4 sheets are perfectly adequate for this working document. Large items like mood boards can be shown on the DVD, zooming in to take a good slow look. Filmed presentations are part of the WR. The 'art book' approach, sticking bits here and there creating an artistic look, wastes vital candidate time and is invariably detrimental to the purpose and focus of the WR. There is no credit given for 'artistic presentation' in the mark scheme.

Examples of good practice seen in WR – illustrating how the document supports and works alongside the dramatic investigation and charts a journey:

- For Item 1 a candidate listed 3 potential scenarios (Ideas), a paragraph for each, then selected the one to work on and gave reasons why it had the most potential (another paragraph)
- A candidate note illustrating the journey *"In Item 3 I played a different character, as this was a new improvised piece not a development from Item 1 like in my Item 2. It was set in a hospital and I played a patient etc."*

- The use of devising subject vocabulary and knowledge, *unreliable narrator*, creating a representational roles *Hunger, Chaos, Lies, Anger*, using the convention of *the ghost* to foretell, stating the scene is for example only going to deal with introducing the characters, *exposition*, development will be explored/considered in later items. The scene is *rising action* building to (*foreshadowing*) the final action *climax*. This is an idea for the final resolution the *denouement*.
- Referencing sources for ideas, “*The monologue I wrote and performed was based on the theme of ‘being trapped’ by your circumstances, which I took from the novella ‘Of Mice and Men’ by John Steinbeck and the character of Lenny. The idea of being trapped by your circumstances was what I tried to portray by...’*”
- Referencing the use of language, one candidates notes:
 - “*The techniques used in my monologue are:*
 - *Alliteration, infant, inherit*
 - *Repetition ‘He has the need’; ‘He has the need’; ‘How can I!’*
 - *Hyphen – ‘He has the need of me- His own mother – No matter my son’*
 - *Rhetorical questions ‘Am I able to help him with anything? How can I help him? How can I feed them? How can I stop this pain? How can I stop all this?’*
 - *Short sentences for affect ‘The Government!’ ‘Its their fault.’ ‘I am strong.’*
 - *Simile ‘He is like the light for me.’*
 - *Metaphor ‘This impenetrable tunnel.’ ‘My hands are tied.’*
 - *Personification ‘The chaos has become a companion in our lives.’*
 - *Emotional language ‘Her infant.’*

Getting the right emphasis for the unit – devising is central

As already noted too many candidates are trying to do too much in Item 1, create a complete rounded play. That is not possible or desirable in consideration of the time allowance they have. It leads to multi scenes with no real depth in terms of potential context/plot development or character. Knowledge of such devising structures as the Aristotelian model can help them work on manageable segments. For example concentrating on the *exposition*, how can we introduce the characters (*protagonist, antagonist*) to the audience in an interesting efficient way? That would be plenty of material to try and deal with for Item 1. Of course it needn't be so sequential, Item 1 could deal with the ending (some playwrights advocate get your ending sorted first and plotting becomes easy) so candidates experiment with the final *denouement*. Or candidates could create a scene where the key tension is developed, *climax*. The subject knowledge and vocabulary helps the candidate's focus, define and control their work. The WR operates alongside the practical work, helping candidates plan out and define the drama investigation and should not be a bolt on, completed after the Items are completed.

Moderators Noted

- It would be helpful if all candidates made sure they acknowledged what the starting stimulus was in the first section of their WR. It would also be helpful if the teacher very briefly explained the stimulus used and if practical provide a copy. This would from the outset make it easier for moderators to follow a candidate's lines of thought.

- Groups of six make it harder for all candidates to make a full contribution; invariably candidates did better when in smaller groups of no more than four.
- Design and Scriptwriting are best tackled by individuals.
- Monologues, soliloquies and duologues, generally allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability well. (One point, many candidates do not appear to know the distinction between a monologue and a soliloquy.)
- Few candidates consider devising Prologues or Epilogues, which is an alternative to monologues/duologues.
- Although there were some very strong design offerings, generally this area was not so consistently well tackled. It was rare for candidates to use standard conventions for presenting such design work, for example ground plans, sound/lighting cue sheets. The candidates that did use them generally stood out. Note candidates needed to be aware a mood board is not a completed design, but part of planning.
- There is a need for rigorous cross-moderation where more than one teacher operates at a centre. The centre must be confident that there is one reliable rank order being sub-mitted for the centre. It is recommended this is documented and a copy sent with the sample to the moderator.
- It would be helpful if centres recorded the individual mark for Items 2 and 3 as well as the overall mark.
- The notes on Centre Assessment Forms are helpful when identifying where evidence is to be found, what the candidate is offering eg Performer, Deviser or Designer and how the mark scheme has been applied. Other comments are not relevant or helpful eg general comments like 'a very talented student', information such as 'An SEN student', 'A year 9 student', 'Attends drama classes outside school' etc.
- Centres should check filming has worked while they are doing the unit. If it hasn't then it can be repeated. All DVDs should be checked to confirm they are working and complete before being forwarded to the moderator. A paper running order PRO/A582 should accompany the DVD.

Information for all centres: there is a new OCR support DVD for this unit 'Towards an Effective and Manageable Delivery of Drama in the Making'. This compliments and develops on the initial support DVD for the unit. It shows delivery of the unit to a year 11 class. Contains: Chief Examiner outlining the unit to the class, short preparation period, devising the stimulus, Working Records, all 3 items and end of unit interviews with class teacher and candidates.

Examples of stimuli used by centres (the prevailing choices tended to shy away from the cheerful):

Historical Events – Columbine Massacre; Match girls Strike; the riots of 2011; Holocaust; murder of Sophie Lancaster

Paintings – The Scream

Poems – Seven Ages of Man; A poem written by candidates in the preparation period

People – Kevin Carter South African photojournalist; People of Moral Courage – eg Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Thomas More, Martin Luther King

Concepts – The Seven Deadly Sins

Books – The Arrival by Shaun Tan

Issues – Homelessness; youth culture; eugenics; racism; feral children; political situation in Zimbabwe

A583 From Concept to Creation

General

Most examinations ran smoothly this series and most Centres visited showed the full spectrum of ability for assessment. 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 fewer centres where extraneous noise interferes with the examination. It was evident that most candidates were enthusiastic about their work and had found the experience enjoyable and rewarding.

This year saw a rise in the number of candidates offering solo work and centres are reminded to consider the implications in relation to the time taken to conduct the examination. It should also be noted that deviser and designer briefs should be completed individually – candidates are not permitted to work in pairs.

A few Centres 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. Again some Centres did not chapter their DVDs – the specification requires this to be done.

The Briefs

Performer Brief (text extract)

Some highly imaginative and effective performances of excerpts from the script extract (Macbeth) were seen. It was clear that candidates who chose this brief did so because they had fully engaged with the text. The most popular scenes were the witches and the murder of Duncan. There were instances of the script being used to excellent effect demonstrating sensitivity and subtlety to the text. Many candidates enhanced their performances by the use of costumes and properties to great effect and some excellent staging ideas were seen.

Performer Brief (devised)

Those candidates using the text as a stimulus either improvising around its narrative or exploring its themes produced some interesting results. There were many creative and interesting pieces which explored the role and history of Lady Macbeth. Some candidates explored the themes of power and ambition to great effect.

Candidates exploring the stimulus item created some exciting and stimulating work exploring advances in science, technology as well as looking at more personal issues. Candidates used a wide variety of styles and conventions. Brechtian style proved to be very popular for both stimuli and there was a fusion of both the script and the issues and themes raised in the future comments for the finished pieces. The juxtaposition was effective and interesting. However, centres are advised to ensure that candidates make connections between the work produced and the stimulus material – in some cases the Working Records were unhelpful in this respect. In a few isolated cases examiners reported that candidates appeared to be reprising work that they had done earlier in the course.

Some candidates preferred to work alone or in pairs and provided some of the most outstanding performances. 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. Monologues proved to be particularly difficult for weaker candidates. Some only managed less than a minute because they could not remember their lines. Centres should encourage candidates to make choices based on their strengths. Centres are reminded that performances should be a maximum of ten minutes. Increasingly examiners are reporting that performances are extending to fifteen minutes with some reporting performances lasting twenty five minutes. 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.

Deviser Brief

Those candidates who chose this option were often the most successful. Examiners reported many examples of scripts which were highly imaginative, well written and eminently stageable. The selection and command of appropriate language was frequently impressive.

Less successful candidates tended to produce scripts which were too long and did not know what to cut and what to leave in. Some candidates had produced work more suitable to television or film. The major weakness of some scripts produced is that multiple scenes are too short to develop character or theme and locations change rapidly. The brief asks for a scene to be written. An understanding of editing and the use of stage directions are a must.

Centres also need to be aware that they ensure that candidates submit their work individually ie their individual script.

Designer Brief

Candidates who chose the Designer Brief often failed to develop or communicate a design concept, they simply designed. Often the results were of quite a good standard but Centres must ensure that candidates are aware of and understand this requirement. The presentation of work varied greatly. Fewer candidates this year had made costumes and properties. A small number of candidates produced designs which were not unified in any way. Again centres need to consider this when advising candidates. The use of computer generated designs might be impressive but candidates are designing for the stage and the practicality of designs must be the primary consideration. Plans for set designs often do not follow conventions, marking exits and entrances on detailed ground plans for example. Some candidates engage in 'blue sky thinking' often starting with phrases such as 'if money were no object'. Too often this approach does not allow candidates to produce ideas that display real practical knowledge or understanding. Similarly candidates who tackle lighting rarely have a knowledge base on which to offer design ideas. Candidates limit much of their design ideas to general colour washes or 'spots'. Cue sheets, lantern hanging plans using the performance area they are used to, or the type of lantern used are all too often not in evidence.

Weaker candidates struggled to cover three areas with any degree of parity – detailed costume and make-up designs coupled with a simple ground plan were quite common. Candidates who choose this brief must use the conventions of lighting, sound and stage design in their submissions.

Again centres also need to be aware that they ensure that candidates submit their work individually ie their individual design concept.

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.

Working Records

There were a variety of styles seen by examiners. The most successful Working Records were those in which the candidates covered all areas of study effectively. There was a tendency for Working Records to be overloaded with material from the preparation period. Only work generated during the ten hours should be included – apart from the evaluation completed after the dress rehearsal. Centres are reminded that candidates have 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. The least successful were those limited to an account of ‘what we did’ particularly if it was completed using a diary format.

The standard of evaluation is still poor with many candidates making generalised statements.

Some centres had still not read the advice relating to the Working Records of those candidates choosing the Designer and Deviser Briefs. It is essential that candidates choosing these briefs understand that the designs/scripts is one document and the Working Record is another separate document. Further guidance is available on the OCR website.

Attention is also drawn to the need that candidates need to complete their Working Record individually. Answering set questions is seen as prescription. ‘It is not acceptable for centre staff to provide model responses or to work through responses in detail’ p41 of the specification.

Despite some minor problems in individual centres the examination was most successful with candidates having the opportunity to develop their skills in areas other than performance.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Facsimile: 01223 552553

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