

GCSE

Drama

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J315**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

© OCR 2014

CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Drama (J315)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
A581 From Page to Stage	1
A582 Drama in the Making	7
A583/01 From Concept to Creation	15

A581 From Page to Stage

The majority of Centres have a good understanding of how to deliver and realise this unit to ensure that their candidates fulfil their potential.

The best Centres choose a text which challenges the candidates and allows them to utilize skills and knowledge already gleaned from their experience of drama, and in particular performance work. Their Working Records are focused planning documents, divided into three clear sections with pertinent planning, analysis, justification and evaluation of the dramatic process and product. The marking scheme is applied with rigour and understanding to award achievement. Where more than one teacher delivers the course there is clear evidence of internal moderation having taken place. The DVD is of a quality that allows the moderator to identify and track the candidates with ease. All documentation is completed in full, and the addition and transference of marks is double checked for accuracy.

Such Centres respond quickly to OCR's sampling request and ensure that the sample and the documentation are sent promptly, thereby enabling the moderators to meet their deadlines.

The Text

Moderators commend Centres whose choice of script exploits the candidate's potential and also plays to the strengths of the performance space and facilities. Whilst 'Blood Brothers' continues to be the most popular script performed, Centres should ensure they are using the 'play' version, not the musical version. Centres are reminded that their choice of script must change every **two** years. If they do not do so they are not complying with the regulatory requirements for all GCSE Drama specifications. Listed below are some of the scripts which were performed this year and recommended by moderators.

Successful Texts

Coram Boy	Helen Edmundson
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night	adapted by Simon Stephens
Beasts and Beauties	Carol Ann Duffy
Merry Wives of Windsor	William Shakespeare
East is East	Ayub Khan Din
We Lost Elijah	Ryan Craig
Kindertransport	Diane Samuels
Othello	William Shakespeare
Hamlet	William Shakespeare
Be My Baby	Amanda Whittington
Antigone	Sophocles
The School for Scandal	Richard Brinsley Sheridan
Chat Room	Enda Walsh
Find Me	Olwen Wymark
Stuff I Buried in a Small Town	Mark Bartlett
Junk	adapted by John Retallack
The Children	Edward Bond
End Game	Samuel Beckett
Star Seeker	Phil Porter

Workshops

Prior to the controlled assessment, Centres deliver specific workshops which allow candidates to prepare and explore the context, background and the performance possibilities of their scripts. To this end, many Centres explore the text using the Six Areas of Study (as relevant), with particular focus on all aspects of stagecraft. Further exploration includes the intention of the playwright and the social, cultural and historical background of the script. Some Centres find it beneficial for candidates to produce mood boards; however, these form part of the candidate's research and it is not necessary for them to be sent to the moderator, unless they constitute part of the planning for the costume or set designs.

During the workshop period candidates may select from the text an extract of the required length which allows them to fulfil their potential, whilst also supporting the work of others where appropriate. The most successful extracts allow the candidate to establish and develop a single role throughout a discrete scene. Some candidates are less successful when they take on several roles within multiple scenes.

Centres are reminded of the requirements: 'maximum of ten minutes for groups of 5 & 6, less for smaller groups – 6 minutes for groups of 2 & 3 and 3 minutes for a candidates working on their own'.

Whilst moderators do see some excellent cross-gender performances, candidates should be advised to consider whether they are being true to the playwright's intentions and whether playing cross-gender will enable them to fully realise their potential. Such a decision should be fully considered and be justified in the Working Record.

The Performance Space

Some groups are by necessity still performing in class rooms. In this circumstance, good groups ensure they have thought about the use and preparation of the space, e.g. covering notice boards, posters etc. with black cloth or paper. They also consider where they will position the audience and how and where the actors will exit and enter the 'performance space'. In such situations some groups make good use of Power Point to convey a sense of setting and context. It is pleasing that more and more candidates are taking the opportunity to challenge the more traditional space, e.g. by positioning their audience in the round or to form a traverse, which was ideally suited to some of the scenes from 'Our day Out'.

Semiotics - Lighting

Centres are reminded that any decisions and choices about the use of semiotics should be made by the candidate, not the teacher. However, the majority of candidates have a good grasp of how to select and use a range of semiotics, including sound, costume and props. Least successful is the choice and use of lighting. Frequently the lighting states have to be used by all of the groups within a Centre, with no more than a change of lighting gels to add atmosphere and mood. Too often it is obvious to moderators that candidates have not had a technical rehearsal which would have allowed intensity of lighting to be defined and so enabled candidates to 'find the light'. Too frequently the lighting states do not transfer well to DVD, which means that either candidates are appearing in semi darkness or that all colour and facial expression is lost to the moderator. Good centres either use 'working lights' or ensure that the lighting enhances the performance, whilst also showing all candidates to good effect on the DVD.

Moderators were pleased to observe that candidates are moving away from the use of frequent blackouts and are instead exploring other methods of delineating scenes, such as cross-fades, moving set items whilst music plays, a split-stage approach or even a promenade performance, all of which help the continuity for the audience.

The Performance

Candidates are generally very good at establishing intentions for an audience, at being 'in the moment' and at establishing character through good voice modulation. However, good performances are sometimes undermined by poor physicality in the role, particularly when candidates play several roles. Of late, candidates have shown a better understanding of proxemics, helping them to establish clearer relationships and context on stage.

The most successful performances show a very good understanding of the genre and style of their script. The vast majority of candidates have spent time and care learning their lines. However, Centres are reminded that candidates who are insecure with their lines or are still reading from the script cannot be marked beyond the basic mark band. Centres should note that it is not permissible for candidates to rehearse beyond the controlled assessment time allowance - **such rehearsals constitute malpractice.**

Good performances are always indicative of candidates' time well spent preparing, developing and rehearsing their extracts.

The Working Record The First Section

It should be noted by Centres that writing frames are not allowed and their use constitutes malpractice.

Candidates who find it difficult to 'get their thoughts down on paper' may find it easier to record their 'unprompted' ideas on CD or DVD which can then be formatted and sent to the moderator.

The most successful Centres following the teacher-led workshops and allow one hour prior to the ten hours of controlled assessment for candidates to write the first section of the Working Record – Introduction.

'What the script offers – the intention of the playwright and social, cultural and historical background to the script;' this section may also include the choices and selection of the chosen extract.'

The basis of this section is how the research will inform key performance decisions, and so candidates should be dissuaded from including photocopied sheets from the internet, as they serve little purpose.

Moderators have generally found that the first section of the Working Record is usually the most comprehensive and well written of the three. Candidates show good understanding of the playwright's intentions and there is generally a good understanding of the historical and social background of the script. However, some candidates fail to write about how their research will inform their performance. Successful candidates make pertinent use of their research to inform their initial key decisions about the text and their chosen extract.

Here is an example of how some key decisions can be justified and explained, albeit simply: on playing Mrs Lyons in 'Blood Brothers' ...

" I will show her class by having only a slight Liverpool accent but I will also experiment playing her without an accent to help show the class difference between Mrs Johnston and Mrs Lyons. I will also wear smarter more expensive clothes and shoes, possibly a blouse and skirt and a pearl necklace to show the age and class of Mrs Lyons. I will have neat hair and perfectly done make up this will show the audience that she takes a lot of care with her appearance. On the sofa we will have some expensive cushions to show that Mrs Lyons has money and likes nice

things. I think Mrs Lyons will move at a slower pace than Mrs Johnston at the beginning of the scene as she doesn't have to work for a living but I will try moving faster when we start talking about the baby to show my enthusiasm."

The Second Section – Plan and Rehearse

During the ten hours controlled assessment, candidates prepare and rehearse their extracts and complete the second section of their Working Record.

"How the candidates interpret the selected extract – the key performance, Direction and Design ideas used, some of which may arise out of work done in exploration and rehearsal with the emphasis on the individual candidate's specific contribution."

Weaker candidates lean towards a descriptive approach, outlining the decisions they have made but with little justification or analysis to support their ideas. Moderators continue to observe that the diarist approach is rarely a successful format for recording the preparation and rehearsal period, as the majority of candidates document 'what they did' during a particular hour rather than saying 'why' and 'how', and analysing the effect of their decisions within the performance space. However, moderators commented that candidates are being exposed to the work and ideas of a range of past and present practitioners/theatre companies, and are becoming far more confident about using the knowledge they have gained to underpin the process effectively. However, the ideas and thinking of Bertolt Brecht still prove an enigma for many candidates. More successfully understood is the 'Stanislavski system', but some candidates tend to describe what elements of the system they have used, e.g. 'we used the magic if', rather than explaining 'how' these have informed the process and 'pushed' forward the character development and the extract. Candidates make frequent reference to using 'hot seating'. However, better candidates cite the responses and explain and justify exactly how the exercise has helped them develop and realise their character.

"When I was 'hot seated' as Faith (Kindertransport) I discovered that Faith had always felt emotionally closer to her gran, therefore on the stage during the argument with my mother I will look toward my gran for reassurance and even move closer to her away from my mother, using my facial expression to plead with my gran to 'back me up' during the argument."

Section Three – Review and Evaluation

Following the final performance, candidates are allowed a further hour to reflect and evaluate their work: "Review, a reflection and evaluation of the final performance, both the candidate's role that of one other candidate and audience response must be included."

Moderators noted that the most successful candidates write a detailed evaluation on all three counts, using subject-specific vocabulary and making salient and pertinent observations which showed understanding of the dramatic process and product.

Candidate's role

"As the narrator (Blood Brothers) I was saying the opening lines of the play, I spoke slowly with a strong voice as if I was in control, the audience were quiet they were listening it made me feel powerful as if I had a presence this was good as our intention was to show how important the narrator is to the play."

"One of Jamie's aims (Blue Remembered Hills) was to show the ruthless competition between the children, He did this through use of proxemics and semiotics. His group made centre stage a location to show authority and attention. This worked well as it was a really clear way of indicating which girl had his attention at which time. However, toward the end of the piece Jamie showed how ganging up can change the power of a child by cowering in a corner whilst the girls screamed and kicked him. By this point his voice had changed from a powerful shout to a pathetic cry of distress. This worked really well as it created a sense of sorrow for the character as the girls bring up his abusive past."

Audience Response

"The audience (for Blood Brothers) felt that we needed more performance space and the set was too cramped. This made some of the movement slightly awkward, as there wasn't much space to move in. For example the chair was too close to the backdrop and when the narrator needed to walk around the chair there was not enough room. We could have moved the audience back slightly, making more room for the performance, but the audience would still be close enough to make them feel involved."

The DVD

Moderators praise those Centres who spend time and effort placing the camera in a static position, allowing all the stage and all the candidates to be seen and heard without hindrance. Prior to filming, they have ensured the camera is focused correctly to allow facial expression to be seen clearly and as appropriate. Good Centres make sure that, just prior to the performance, all the group slowly and clearly say their names, candidate numbers and character names to camera, wearing the costume they will wear for the performance. Some Centres have taken the initiative to also give candidates signs to hold giving the information. Moderators cannot overemphasise how important it is that time is taken introducing candidates. As one moderator said, "Centres know their candidates and what role they're playing... we've never seen them before; we don't who they are".

The DVD must be chaptered and accompanied by a Performance Running-Order Sheet. All of this careful preparation and consideration aids the moderation process.

Marking the Work

Centres currently seem to place candidates too readily higher up within a mark band or even into the next mark band, particularly within the competent, skilful and accomplished bands. By contrast, marking at the bottom is often a little harsh.

It is important that Centres apply the marking scheme with due rigour, and are realistic about the standard of the candidate's work.

Centres that embrace the following model are much praised by moderators: following the 12 hours, the Centre marks the performances, ensuring that where there is more than one teacher responsible for the course they moderate internally. Teachers mark and annotate the Working Records to indicate how and why marks have been awarded. They hi-light the inside of the Centre Assessment Form and this allows them to reflect on the criteria and the 'best fit' application of the marks. They record detailed information on the front of the CAF, which gives the moderator a further insight into the Centre's application of the mark system.

Once the unit is completed, the Centre completes one Centre Authentication Form and the Performance Running Order Sheet. Teachers ensure the DVD is chaptered and formatted for ease of use. They complete the Centre Assessment forms in full and, the arithmetic checked, they transfer marks accurately to the MS1. The correct copy of the MS1 is forwarded to the

moderator. The Centre ensures that the required sample is sent to the moderator as swiftly as possible following the request for sample from OCR.

Where the Centre is making an application for Special Consideration to OCR it is useful for the moderator to be in receipt of a copy of the request. However, the moderator will moderate the work as seen and the Special Consideration Team at OCR will make the decisions about the final marks..

In Conclusion

Moderators frequently comment on the enthusiasm for this unit that they witness, as well as the hard work and dedication that has clearly gone into the delivery and realisation of the unit both by the Centre and the candidates.

New Centres should note that OCR produces a report on the examination and an individual report for each Centre in respect of the controlled assessment units. These reports are sent to the Examinations Officer at the Centre.

A582 Drama in the Making

Centres continue to produce strong devised drama for this unit using a wide variety of stimuli. The use of background research was a positive feature this year, especially where it was clearly identified how and why it was being used in the practical application. It was less relevant where information was presented on the stimulus or practitioners/genres, which was not directly linked to the practical work created. The inclusion of general research downloads without any indication of the relevance to the items should not be encouraged.

In the work presented this year there was a clear distinction identified by moderators between 'style' and 'substance'. Candidates who give weight to the content of what they are trying to communicate are the ones clearly embracing the purpose of the unit and producing the strongest work. Obviously it is a given that good content needs to be performed well to test out the validity of the ideas. However there is a tendency at some Centres to over emphasise 'style', with candidates too focused on how the ideas are presented in terms of semiotics. In the time allocation for controlled assessment for this unit this often leads to not enough attention being given to creating a strong scene in terms of content, character and dramatic tension. Ideas in this unit can be practically tested without the need for 'costume, set, lights'. Indeed where the focus is on these aspects it is counter-productive, as there is then less time to critically assess the quality of the actual 'play' being created. This is a unit with improvisation at its centre. Perhaps the best way to approach the unit is for the candidates to be in 'playwright' mode and not 'production' mode particularly for Item 1.

Administration

"In general, the standard of organisation and efficient Centres has increased this year on last. The record keeping and general understanding of staff with regard to the requirements of this unit was better." Moderator observation.

Firstly an apology, the adapted Centre Assessment Form (CAF/A582) was confusing and did not work. The form provided this year had removed a vital bit of information, the context box - Deviser, Designer or Performer. It had also caused confusion in how the marks for item 2 and 3 were combined. The re design had been an attempt to allow Centres to inform the moderator of the breakdown of marks for each of the two items. It failed to succeed in this aim. A new form will be in place for next year.

Key administration points from this year are:

- The MS1 and Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) are sent separately from the sample and should be sent to the moderator as soon as Centres are informed whom their moderator is. Most Centres did this but some put them in with the sample package or in a few cases failed to send them at all.
- Centres are reminded a Performance Running Order (PRO/A582) sheet needs to accompany the DVD. A large number of Centres did not include this form; it greatly assists the moderation even when Centres have captioned the DVD. It probably confused Centres that this information was also asked for on this year's Centre Assessment Forms, this will not be the case next year.
- Providing a well-prepared DVD is a vital. The quality of the DVDs has improved greatly and the professionalism of Centres producing a chaptered DVD with clear candidate identification is much appreciated by moderators.
- It would greatly assist the moderation if Centres included a copy of the stimulus used with the sample materials. Moderators reported it was not always clear what the stimulus used was and work is assessed in relation to the development of that stimulus.

Filming Candidates Work – requirements

A DVD that allows candidates to be identified easily and the work to be seen clearly is essential to the moderation process. A moderators comment on a Centre submission:

'The DVD evidence was super and the chaptered disc made it easier to navigate to tracked candidates. The accompanying paper running order also helped enormously.'

Centres where this is done have all addressed the following:

- The film footage **must be converted** into a DVD. No Quick Time files or raw footage from the camera involving the moderator having to find ways to play the files. If they can eventually be accessed it is still time consuming loading them down.
- The DVD also needs to be **chaptered**; each Item needs a candidate **identity parade** with name and candidate number given. It has been established as good practice for each candidate to hold their number in front of them on an A4 sheet in large letters. Moderators must be able to hear or see a candidate's details, if necessary the teacher must speak them **clearly**. The DVD should be accompanied by a paper running order, available on the OCR website, PRO/A582.
- It is not necessary for the teacher or candidate to give the Centre number, the unit number, the name of the school etc. and certainly not repeat it for every group. Too much unnecessary information also impedes moderation.
- Please check the DVD plays and is **chaptered** before forwarding it.
- Please **do not** put sticky paper labels on DVDs as this can cause damage to devices in which they are played. DVDs should be marked with the correct marker pens.

Use of Stage Lighting

The use of stage lighting has been commented on in all previous reports and in individual Centre reports. However this advice is being ignored by a large number of Centres. Stage lighting has an adverse effect on the filming, badly affecting the camera focus. Candidates' faces are whited out, lights shine directly at the cameras lens, candidates perform in unlit sections, and these are just some of the problems created. The lights are usually not rigged specifically for the performance area. Hence candidates move into unlit areas, random profile spots catch candidates as they move 'whiting out' faces, the ceilings are low making lighting angles too shallow. Blackouts are an absolute disaster in terms of moderation, the camera has to re-focus and the moderator loses sight of whom they were tracking. It would be greatly appreciated by moderators if Centres did not use blackouts in this unit. The annual appeal is can Centres please film under normal lights or an even wash of light. Where Centres did this, the candidate's performance work was in no way diminished and moderators could see them and appreciate the work being done.

Sound Quality

It is important to be able to hear the candidates, so make sure the camera is close enough to do this. The use of music backing tracks can also stop candidates being heard. With Item 1 such semiotics are not the prime concern.

Stimuli

There was a wide range of stimuli selected, which were generally totally appropriate for the unit. The stimuli had inspired candidates to develop some strong scenarios in terms of dramatic tension, characters and the issues being explored. Stimuli were not so appropriate when based on play text or genre, as in the first case the script already exists and in the second genre has to be allied to some specific content the candidates wish to investigate. Content comes first not

genre. A number of Centres use stimuli set on previous A583 papers and this is perfectly acceptable. Some examples of stimuli used this year:

Historical: Exeter Blitz; Civil Rights Movement; Evacuees: The Holocaust; The Elephant Man; Ruth Ellis.

Paintings/Exhibitions: The Scream; George Seurat; The Willard Suitcases.

Famous People: Marilyn Monroe; Nelson Mandela; Mary Shelley.

Social Issues:

Eugenics, Drug Addicts; Teenage Life 2013; Child Neglect; War; Image; Celebrity Culture.

Literature/story:

The Minotaur; The Red Shoes; The Seven Deadly Sins; Dracula; Into the Woods (Fairy Tales); The Woman in Black; Frankenstein; Simon Armitage 'Black Roses'.

News/Politics:

Sophie Lancaster; Hillsborough Disaster; 9/11.

Miscellaneous:

Diary of a Monster; Leaving your mark on the world; Dark Future; Through a glass darkly; The past is what you remember, imagine you remember; convince yourself you remember or pretend you remember; Every Word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness; The darkest places in Hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis; Stand up for your rights.

A583 stimuli: Predictions.

Working Record (WR)

The WR is an integral element of the unit and constitutes a third of the marks. Candidates who had organised the WR in the suggested format (outlined in previous reports) were not only easier to decipher, but it seemed to have aided candidates in approaching the unit in the spirit intended, a drama investigation. So it is worth repeating that advice:

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

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

Very few candidates use the Introduction to mull over potential ideas before starting the actual creation of Item 1. Here is an example of a candidate this year using the Introduction as a 'conversation' with themselves on some possibilities.

“Our stimulus is ‘Black Roses’ by the poet Simon Armitage. Here are some of my thoughts and ideas for item 1.

When I first saw the stimulus I thought the setting could be a busy City of London street, but not a particularly wealthy area so perhaps the East End. I wanted to start with this, because I wanted the setting to be as stereotypical as possible but not the characters, then I would have an indirect link to the poem. I also thought about a park at night in a rose garden to show the ‘Black Roses’, building on this I thought about the colours I could use. A black stage box with red spotlights for the idea of the roses might create an interesting atmosphere. Could we work with idea of roses in some way?

When thinking about a possible play to develop I had this thought of something like Romeo and Juliet. It’s like the situation of Sophie and Robert in the poem and how both couples weren’t allowed to be together and both stories ended the same. I could build on this and use the idea of a love story with a background of a hate crime.

I’m also thinking about themes I could use and thought of a scene using a character of ‘Fear’ and how fear develops in Sophie’s mind. I want to give the audience a message, but stay away from the obvious theme of Goths.

Thinking about structure I like the idea of an abstract plot line but still sending a message to the audience about Sophie Lancaster’s death. I don’t want to make it all shade so will need to think about some positive scenes, like the relationship between Sophie and Robert. Furthermore looking at the words of the poem I’d like to incorporate them in some way, because they really show Sophie’s life. It could be a good way of getting the audience to empathise with the characters.”

The candidate goes on to list some other initial thoughts and ideas. This is ideal use of the Introduction, the candidate is musing over possibilities, nothing is definite, and it can all be a bit indeterminate, as the work on the items has not begun. Definite decisions will arise as the investigation moves through the items. It is in the Final Evaluation where candidates will set out some more definite decisions. In many Introductions seen this year candidates seem to have already decided everything in the preparation period.

There has been less use of ‘writing frames’, which are of course not permitted for controlled assessment. However there is still a ‘checklist approach’ prevalent in some Centres, with lists of sub-headings, often the Areas of Study. The observation of moderators is this does not usually create the quality of response being seen by candidates who apply knowledge in context and not as a menu being ticked off. For instance all the areas of study are not going to apply to every item tackled. Item 1 is a preliminary improvisation opening up some possibilities, so areas like audience, genre and performance style will not necessarily be definite yet. Such areas of study become more important to consider in the Final Evaluation when you have created three pieces of work. Candidates need to identify for themselves what of value has arisen from the item. You can’t create a checklist for candidates for identifying what was of value in the items they created. They are likely to consider such factors as were the characters created interesting to act out? Did the role acted add anything to the scene? Was the content about anything interesting? Was there any tension? What words used in the script worked well?

For Item 1 candidates should have created an improvisation so stating for instance it is devised in the style of ‘epic theatre’ is usually very wide of the mark.

Very few candidates are creating a Final Evaluation to assess the potential of the stimulus to make an engaging play. Overwhelmingly candidates re-cap on what they did for the 3 Items. As stated earlier in this report, evaluation of each item should be done as they complete them. Where candidates do not complete an appropriate Final Evaluation this should be reflected in

marks awarded by Centres for the WR. Moderators will take this into consideration when making their judgements.

Moderators noted a common trend this year of Item 1 being well documented, but items 2 and 3 being covered in far less detail, even in some cases in a cursory fashion. A moderators comment:

'The Working Records were interesting to read. However whilst there was often a sound response to Item 1 including some analysis of audience feedback, Items 2 and 3 were not always so fully documented. There was also a lack of depth in response to Evaluation from all candidates which often prevented work from attaining the very high end marks.'

All three items need to be documented. Moderators noted the best WRs took you on a 'journey', you could see how the ideas and thoughts for the stimulus were progressing. With such candidate's WRs the responses got stronger as you progressed, which is as you might expect, the candidates are becoming more involved and drawing from an increasing range of ideas. It is keeping to the fore this is a **drama investigation** and it changes and develops as you proceed.

Candidates also need to remember that if creating a script or designs, there also needs to be some thoughts and reflection on these in the WR.

For the purposes of assessment it is helpful if Scripts and Designs are kept separate from the WR or as an 'appendix'. The WR then only contains the thoughts and reflections on the items. The reason for this is it makes it clear what is being marked as WR and what marked as an Item. Moderators thought that sometimes WRs might have been over marked, because the Centre was counting the actual script or design Item as WR. Also it makes clear to the candidates the actual volume of work that is marked as WR.

Item 1

Every year moderators see some very strong improvised work. Candidates are increasingly being more thoughtful and critical about the content of the work and hence the 'scripting' is improving. There are still many Centres viewing this item as the complete play rather than trying out an idea for a scene. The Centres are doing the whole unit in one item. The best work usually constituted a scene with minimal to no semiotics that had a good context, identifiable characters and clear intent. It was performed with good stagecraft and under normal lighting. Counter-intuitively in the time span available, too much attention on production takes the focus away from where it needs to be in this unit, ie are the content, situation and character worth an audience paying attention to. The bullet points from the mark scheme that are key for this item are 1,2 and 6.

There are a large number of Centres where Item 1 is far too long and contains multiple scenes, sometimes candidates thinking film rather than theatre, moving quickly to the next 'shot'.

A positive practice identified by moderators was where candidates had tried two or more ideas before settling on the one presented. Those rejected were charted in the WRs with reasons for the final selection given. This matched the purpose of the unit very well.

Moderators noted that sometimes when working in groups of 6 all candidates did not appear to have enough opportunity to demonstrate their ability. Groups of up to 4 seemed to work better in most cases.

Item 2 and 3

Candidates have three options, to perform, devise (write some script), or design. There were candidates offering items that did not fall into these categories and were more discussion material. A moderator went as far as to state; *'Some strange ideas about what constituted items 2 and 3.'*

Power Points may be useful additional WR evidence, but they do not constitute an Item. Moderators noted sometimes too much concentration was on creating the Power Point: *'Candidates can spend too long preparing well presented power points to the detriment of the design detail and ideas.'*

Any design or script must also be presented in a hard copy format for moderation not just seen on film. The exception being bulky models, however in the time span available it is not likely there will be time for creating such models.

In most cases candidates offered further performance work or some script writing for these items, although there were a significant number of design items. Moderators frequently reported the quality and depth of ideas was stronger than for Item 1. This is not surprising, as the students get more involved with the material. Moderators thought the fact that most candidates were now working in smaller groups seemed to enable them to push the work further. Monologues were popular and some very strong work was seen, although there was also a tendency in some Centres to use it as a 'convenient' way of ticking off an item rather than the best way to move the investigation on. A number of candidates wrote a monologue for an item and then performed it for the next. This is permitted, but is not really the best use of an item, as each item ideally needs to generate new material. It's to the candidates advantage to explore as much as possible, it gives them more to base their Final Evaluation on. Choices need to be made in terms of what is the best way to develop the potential play, and that may be a dialogue or three characters etc. Candidates, who decide for themselves what is the next best step, have more pertinent material to use in their WR.

Moderators commented on the strength of many of the written script items produced by candidates, there was a sense these candidates enjoyed the autonomy of being in sole control of the item. Moderators however also noted some of the script work did not pay enough attention to the conventions of scriptwriting, and did not establish an opening context or have closure. This was most noticeable with monologues, which sometimes gave little context or any stage directions. Some moderators did state the view that in some cases monologues were being seen as a bit of a 'soft option', a few inner thoughts and angst, without due consideration as to the function and contribution to developing the context. More candidates might consider the different function a duologue can play in developing the script potential. Some candidates produced poems, this worked well where the candidate was seeing it as part of a script which was written in 'verse'. However some candidates had created poems as a literary response to the stimulus without consideration of which character spoke it or its purpose in the play. This was not appropriate.

Moderators noted an increase in the number of candidates presenting design items using the appropriate conventions for this work. Design, where selected, is probably best done as item 3, because more of the devising has taken place. However design still remains overall the weakest element offered by candidates, but it has shown marked improvement on previous years. It is at its weakest when it appears the whole Centre has been 'instructed' to do a design item. Any item selected ideally needs to be moving the investigation forward. The message is don't waste an item always generate new material. Where candidates used the design item to select what a candidate could wear in a previous item, this was often adding little to the investigation. A moderator comment:

‘Sometimes there is little understanding of theatrical design, candidates design clothes not costumes and rooms not sets.’

It is often a functional selection of items with inflated psychological insight as to why they were wearing for instance a white T-shirt. Often the material was more appropriate as WR notes for a previous item. Where design for a previous item did work was where concepts were introduced which were going to add to or change the way that material might be interpreted. Or ideas for designing to an alternative performance style that was going to communicate extra/additional elements than those already worked on.

It was good to see candidates branching out to offer items on areas such as song composition and sound design. Song is categorised as script writing so needs to be placed in context of where it appears in the drama, have opening stage directions and closure. The candidates offering these items were invariably very committed and fired-up about the idea, this personal ownership had a positive impact on the work created. The converse of this is the danger of tackling an item for which the candidate has insufficient subject knowledge. Technical items like set design and lighting can fall into this category. Candidates can get round this to a degree by thinking as a director and setting out a detailed brief they would give to a designer. However moderators saw few examples of this approach. The approach requires the candidate to have a clear concept and specific details of what is needed and why.

Malpractice

The Centre Authentication Form (CCS/160) is signed to assure that the work has been completed under controlled conditions and within the allowed time span. The mark scheme is applied in the light of what can be expected within such a time frame. WRs should never leave the Centre and must be collected in following the end of every session. Candidates should not be organising extra rehearsal sessions outside of controlled assessment. Now while it is evident that the majority of work seen is created under suitable supervision and within the set time constraints, moderators have this year expressed some concerns. There have been doubts that in some instances the work could have been completed in the allowed time frames. There has also been evidence of candidates referring to completing work as homework in the WRs, of candidates referring to additional rehearsals and candidates with identical sections of WR. Centres should be aware that such malpractice could compromise results and lead to action by OCR.

Centre Application of the Mark Scheme

Moderators noted that Centres are generally using good discrimination between candidates when in applying the mark scheme. However there were two trends identifiable where application needed greater discrimination. Marking in the Accomplished Band at a good number of Centres was inflated with candidates placed at the top end of this band when the criteria for such a mark was not being fulfilled. There was also a tendency in some Centres to go to the maximum when this was not justified. Centres need to apply clear and critical discrimination in this band. The Accomplished Band reflects a very high level of achievement. At the other end of the scale there was a trend in a significant number of Centres to be harsh in the application of the mark scheme in the Limited and Basic Bands. Candidate's achievement was sometimes stronger than Centres were crediting. There is also a tendency to over mark design items, more attention is needed to the accepted conventions for this work and a stronger use of subject knowledge.

In Centres where more than one teacher delivers the unit it is vital the rigorous cross moderation takes place. The Centre must be confident that there is one valid Centre rank order. There needs to be a formal Centre cross-moderation scheduled and it would be informative for moderators if that were documented and the records forwarded with the moderation sample. A number of Centres provided moderators with a record of such cross-moderations listing dates

and outcomes, this was excellent practice. There were instances this year where it was apparent no such rigorous cross-moderation had taken place and the Centre rank order was not an accurate reflection of all the candidates' achievements.

Ethos of Drama in the Making

It is worth restating this as there were a number of new Centres to the specification this year and this unit is particularly distinctive in its rationale. The key phrase to hold onto is **a drama investigation**; candidates work from the stimulus and try three different ideas out with the purpose of assessing whether the stimulus has the potential to make a good play. The candidates are not making that play; they haven't got the time within the allocated time span. Also performing a completed drama is the focus of A581 and possibly A583. This unit is the stage before you have a play. It's rather like the playwright Caryl Churchill working with Joint Stock Company improvising around themes and ideas for an eventual play.

Moderators noted that the practical outcomes and WRs were strongest when it is clear the candidates are leading their own investigation. In some Centres this is not the case, it was apparent that the preparation period with the teacher had been used to broadly fix what was to be done for each item. In these cases there was a Centre format, for example monologue for item 2, Design for Item 3. In such cases the candidate's work did not have the same distinctiveness or ownership, which is a key element of this unit.

The preparation period is not really needed to explore the stimulus dramatically, as that is what is going to be done in the three items. Preparation, counter intuitively, can be overdone in this unit if candidates are over prepped regarding content. It is useful to cover the social, historical and cultural context of the stimulus, some general background on what is needed for a good script, the conventions of design, the rationale of the unit, are all potential areas for consideration. Candidates start the assessed part of the unit producing the Introduction to the WR (1 hour allowed), some initial ideas and thoughts. Item 1 is created and from what they do here they decide where to move the investigation to for Item 2, and then onto item 3. Lastly the Final Evaluation (1 hour allowed), has this stimulus got the potential to be turned into an engaging play.

Conclusion

More centres are embracing the ethos of the unit and giving candidates the licence to explore and develop script ideas. The test is about candidates following their own instincts and ideas and the Centre giving them the 'trust/licence' to do this. The fact that ideas are not fully developed in performance terms does not always lessen the quality of the acting. I see work as both a moderator and examiner and some of the strongest acting performances I saw this year were seen in improvisations for this unit. What marked these performances out was the candidate's connection to the material and the honesty and directness of the uncluttered performances.

A583/01 From Concept to Creation

General Comments

Once again Centres are to be congratulated on the smooth running of the examination. Most Centres visited provided the full spectrum of ability for assessment. Examiners were most complimentary about the quality of the work presented for examination. Centres were organised and had prepared well for the examination. Facilities provided mostly allowed for the examination to be conducted under appropriate conditions. There are still some Centres where extraneous noise interferes with the examination. Centres are reminded that the examination should be conducted under examination conditions. It was evident that most candidates were enthusiastic about their work and had found the experience enjoyable and rewarding. Centres commented that candidates had embraced and enjoyed the opportunity of working with a specific time period. Much excellent research had been carried out which informed the work of candidates. Some Centres had visited the Foundling Hospital Museum.

Candidates are increasingly linking their work to the theories of practitioners and justifying the choices made in reference to this.

Organisation

Centres have appreciated the logistical feat of organising an examination which includes four briefs; groups, solo performances and solo presentations and planned the examination day well, this is most commendable. New Centres coped very well with the requirements of the examination and were generally very proactive in communicating with examiners. Centres with large numbers of candidates and/or many individual performances/presentations built in natural breaks which examiners appreciated. Some Centres continue to use two spaces, one for performance and one for Designer and Deviser presentations. This enables the Designer/Deviser candidates to display their work should they wish to. The discreet space for the Devisers and Designers enables the timetable to run efficiently. There has been an increase this year in candidates performing/presenting to the examiner, teacher and technician. Most candidates benefit from having a supportive audience of their peers present.

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. The GITA forms should contain an estimation of the mark range the candidate falls into for both their presentation/performance and Working Records. Some Centres are still using “Competent”, “Skilful” etc. Some Centres did not chapter their DVDs – the specification requires this to be done. There was an increase this year in delays in sending DVDs to the examiner these should be sent within three days of the completion of the examination.

Comments on Individual Briefs

Performer Brief (text extract)

The candidates who chose to present the text extract mostly did so with energy and enthusiasm. The most successful and creative performances were those where candidates performed the whole extract using multi-role. Highly successful candidates created a real sense of theatre by using appropriate staging, lighting, sound, costume and make-up. There were many instances of the script being used to excellent effect demonstrating sensitivity and subtlety. Examiners commented on the highly effective use of emotion, tension, movement, gesture and sound.

Performer Brief (devised)

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

Examiners reported seeing instances of well devised and staged gothic horror, street theatre, agit-prop, documentary theatre as well as some beautifully crafted two and three-handers. Centres are to be congratulated for encouraging their candidates to explore a variety of genre and style.

The most popular themes explored were child poverty, slavery, kidnapping – both fictional and true life stories, fate, refugees the role of women in 1800's and modern day, divide between rich and poor, illegitimacy and the fate of children who did and didn't get into the Coram Hospital and their mothers.

Candidates exploring the stimulus item created some exciting and stimulating work on themes such as prejudice and poverty. Some Centres commented on the potential for comedy with candidates bringing to life the comical and satirical nature of the painting.

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

More candidates preferred to work alone or in pairs this year. Candidates choosing to work in smaller groupings seemed to focus on the language and setting of their pieces – there was some exceptional work seen here. Where candidates work in groups of up to 6 Centres must ensure that each candidate will have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability. There was an increase this year in examiners reporting that some candidates did not have enough stage time. It must be emphasised that the maximum size of a group for examination is 6. Monologues tend to be particularly difficult for weaker candidates. Centres should encourage candidates to make choices based on their strengths. Centres are reminded that performances should be a maximum of ten minutes. Again this year examiners are reporting that some performances are extending to fifteen minutes and beyond. Few long performances are of the highest quality. The dress rehearsal should give Centres the opportunity to ensure all performances are of the required length. Again this year examiners saw some candidates produce pieces which required many scene changes punctuated by black-outs. This tends to diminish the flow of the piece and is to be avoided.

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

Deviser Brief

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

Designer Brief

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

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

Presentation

Most candidates this year presented their work enthusiastically to the examiner. Examiners repeatedly reported that candidates seemed very proud of the work they had created and relished the opportunity to share their thought processes. Candidates who had prepared their presentation in advance were generally more confident when talking about their ideas. It would benefit some candidates to present their ideas in a more informal way – sitting with the examiner rather than ‘presenting’ from the front.

Working Records

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

- ‘The reason we have done this is.....’
- ‘We have chosen to include.....’
- ‘We chose to set the scene in....’
- ‘We have included an overseer character to....’
- ‘This had a better outcome because....’
- ‘We added the element of....’

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

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

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

Final Thoughts

The use of a specific historical period seems to have found favour with most Centres. Candidate feedback has been very positive and the quality of work produced is testament to some exceptional teaching in Centres. Centres are to be congratulated for embracing this examination and supporting their candidates to produce such wonderful work.

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

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2014

