

## **GCE**

### **Performing Arts**

Advanced GCE A2 **H546**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H146**

## **OCR Report to Centres June 2016**

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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.

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

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## G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

The assessment criteria for the unit asks for

- a case study of **two** different organisations (between **2 000** and **3 000** words)
- an individual presentation that investigates **one** particular role within **one** of the organisations.

These are presented in

- a written portfolio that includes the power-point presentation
- a recording of the presentation itself.

Centres understand that teaching one organisation to their cohort of pupils and then encouraging each candidate to choose a different second organisation has been an expedient delivery method. Most candidates have selected appropriate organisations that could be explored in detail rather than organisations that are too large-scale to provide meaningful content that can be fully engaged with. Conversely a one-person outfit such as may be found working as a technician in a centre also limits scope for research. It is important that both organisations can be looked at equally and that candidates are able to draw sensible comparison and contrast conclusions.

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

Funding challenged many candidates but most candidates are able to discuss income – ticket sales, wages, energy, services, etc. as well as understanding subsidies – grants, and how any deficits are met. Centres considered the inclusion of a staffing structure diagram as fulfilling the specification and few candidates expanded and further explored implications of hierarchy and /or structure in relation to perceived and actual success of the venue or organisation.

The word count is flexible and should not inhibit candidates providing sufficient content or expanding on areas that will aid their access to higher mark bands.

It is clear that most centres understand the need to choose a role to detail from one of the organisations rather than taking one from the industry generally.

## G381 Professional Practice: Skills Development

The assessment criteria for the unit asks for

- a skills-development plan (to include a record of repertoire, roles or techniques attempted and skills achieved);
- appropriate evidence, e.g. video, artefact, documentation, show reel, of **three** pieces of work ( **two** in progress, **one** complete);
- a commentary on how these examples show their skills development;
- an observation report on how these examples show their skills development by an appropriately-skilled observer

The best practice seen are where centres video the rehearsal process showing the development stages from lifting the text off the page, learning of lines/songs/dance sequences, through to performance standard. Clearly a range of art-forms and styles are apparent throughout the cohort but there is a consistent use of appropriate technical language used by centres and students. Where this is not apparent it is generally acknowledged by centre marking.

Centres should ensure that all DVD's can be played on both DVD players and laptops, occasionally some moderators had problems watching enclosed DVD's which slowed down the moderation process. The issue of identification of candidates remained an issue and while some centres recognise the absolute need to be able to access the evidence of a candidate quickly and expediently, there are still many centres where this consideration is not predominant.

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

Most research included the social, historical and cultural aspects of each piece found in their portfolio and then how this information has influenced their own performance. It is apparent from candidate submissions that those who have completed detailed research and applied it to their performance gain a far greater understanding of the work and in turn achieve marks in the higher bands.

Health and safety was included in the majority of portfolios with detailed vocal and physical warm ups. Health and safety should be integrated throughout their work and embedded in their practical evidence as witnessed on the DVD.

Most candidates include a skills development plan. These were detailed and thorough, with good candidates showing that they clearly understood the planning process, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and skills they needed to develop. Successful plans are realistic and candidates refer back to them throughout their portfolios.

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

## **G382 Professional Practice: Performance and G383 Professional Practice: Production**

As indicated in the introduction the general context of the specification is of a small and diminishing group of centres where there is a clear understanding of the demands of the units. In the examined performance units this is often more apparent. Consequently most centres performed well against the assessment objectives and criteria.

That is to say that teachers who understood the content of the whole specification with regard to repertoire, the need for an audience and the full range of health and safety, were able to equip their students with the knowledge, skills and understanding to respond appropriately to the demands of the tasks and evidence needs and to produce evidence that met the higher descriptors of the criteria. The vast majority of centres responded appropriately to these demands.

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

In the mark scheme there are clearly significant marks to be gained by engaging with, and understanding the needs of the audience and some confident performances failed to recognise the importance of this. Both AO2 and AO3 are framed with reference to communication and engagement with the audience; this can be in a range of contexts. To access the criteria fully there must be careful thought put into getting an audience, understanding what impact the performance is intended to have both from an ensemble and from an individual perspective and knowing what the target audience is.

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

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

### **Written evidence (G382)**

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

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

physical well-being before moving on to discuss the tripping over wires, technical staging, risk assessments etc.

**Realised design/participation in production (G383)**

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

**Design portfolio (G383)**

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

## G384 Getting Work

### Unit G384: Getting Work

The assessment criteria for the unit asks for

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

These are presented in

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

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

### Promotional pack

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

At this level it is essential that candidates talk to working professionals and experience the vocational context in both replicated events or in real visits to professional venues and spaces. These 'spaces' should include the websites of professionals. Many candidates understand the importance of social media and websites in their professional promotion – in this they are realising through their research and networks that this is how the industry is working currently in most areas of the industry.

### Plan of first year of work

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

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

Generally, there was some effective research, clearly presented, with good evaluation of interviews. Some candidates had a range of professional interviews, not all using the same two

or three, and this approach paid off in providing a range of experience and allowing them to select and apply useful information. However, in some centres all candidates were still offering the same two interviews with professionals, some without applying them in a focused way.

### **Analysis of the plan**

Those candidates that provided coherent packs and plans know clearly where the strengths and weaknesses of the market and professional area were and used this to contextualise their own personal analysis.

Most portfolios had very succinct analyses because they had looked at their overall plan and projections and done a focused SWOT analysis of the market and where relevant and appropriate of their own abilities and personal characteristics. A few candidates analysed current economic circumstances of the industry.

Better candidates did more than just provide a SWOT, there were introductions and conclusions that placed it in a much wider context. These candidates took a step back and used their knowledge and understanding of the industry to weight up their chances of success with clarity and honesty. Most candidates were good at identifying the strengths of their plan since this was often closely related to the skills outlined in the résumé.

## G385 Exploring Repertoire

### General comments

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

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

Exceptional centres approach the research in a serious, focussed and structured way with attention to academic detail through which candidates diligently append correctly cited sources and academic authorities and provide an organised and comprehensive bibliography in accordance with standard academic practice.

Teacher annotations were, generally useful and guided the moderator to how, and where, marks had been awarded. This helped moderation.

Practical work was once again generally sound and in some instances very strong. Setting and costume was generally very appropriate for genre and some care had gone into this. Standards of performance are generally high. The majority of centres selected very appropriate contrasting texts.

The continued popularity of Shakespeare is welcomed and contemporary settings for Shakespeare have been mostly successful with some good examples of spoken verse. Practical work was well delivered and candidates seemed to relish material that stretched their boundaries.

Good bibliographies were frequently linked to relevant citations included in the body of the work. Candidates are beginning to look beyond the basic websites (c.f. Wikipedia) and also to actually look at some books. Centres are again reminded of the value of *Google Scholar* and to use YouTube for examples of historic performance work that would assist with their mastery of other performance styles.

The vast majority of centres have engaged effectively with this unit. There was some excellent work seen again this year. Some centres demonstrated real academic rigour and research evidence which was applied most effectively to process to produce performances of great merit and moderators have experienced significant levels of creative and academic integrity.

## G386 Producing Your Showcase

### General Comments

In some centres it was evident that there had been a good level of teacher input and support to guide candidates towards the professional context of the unit in terms of performance. Technical support was also more apparent which embraced the production values essential to providing candidates with a professional setting.

The majority of candidates generally selected a suitable range of contrasting pieces, demonstrating breadth and depth, drawn from repertoire, with many candidates supplying scripts and scores as required by the specification. Many candidates are choosing to perform in more than one discipline simply in order to achieve contrast, with most recognising the need to tackle pieces that would allow them to showcase their skills and abilities. This sometimes resulted in an inappropriate level of challenge for candidates.

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

Most centres provided an appropriate venue for the showcases, with enthusiastic and supportive audiences providing both encouragement and a focus for the candidates.

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

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

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

Most candidates showed evidence of thorough and thoughtful preparation and rehearsal, with clear application of social, historical, cultural and practitioner influences characterising much of the work. Examiners reported that candidates selected a suitable range of contrasting pieces demonstrating breadth and depth. In a performing arts specification it is axiomatic that there will be a very wide range of art-forms, genres and styles represented.

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