

A LEVEL

Moderators' report

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459

For first teaching in 2016

H459/11/12 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

Contents

Introduction3

General overview4

 Administration4

 Marking5

 Practitioners explored5

 Texts6


 Most common causes of centres not passing6

 Common misconceptions8

 Avoiding potential malpractice8

 Helpful resources8

 Additional comments10




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Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by our moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements; identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation and comments on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. This report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost to other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks are detailed on the Moderation Adjustments report, which can be downloaded from Interchange when results are issued. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

General overview

It has been a pleasure for my team and me to moderate an incredibly diverse range of Research Reports, Portfolios and devised theatre this year. Candidates from across the country have engaged and experimented with a range of practitioners and created some truly unique devised drama.

Overall, the candidates that have been the most successful were those who explored contrasting practitioners, experimented with a series of exercises and then used the practical skills they learnt to experiment, create and devise. These candidates took a holistic approach to the component, using the exploration of practitioners to directly influence the creation and make up of their devised piece.

Among the abundance of stunning work this year we saw a beautifully crafted 'Romcom' inspired devised piece using Stanislavski and Frantic Assembly, a highly charged Berkovian exploration of abuse and gender and a Punchdrunk | Artaudian reflection on the world of suicide. As Principal Moderator it was wonderful to see candidates across the board experimenting with practitioners, creating unique theatre and by all accounts thoroughly enjoying the process!

For those of you who entered candidates for the June 2019 exam please make sure that you have downloaded your moderator's report as these have been written to support you in further teaching this component.

Many of you will have had your attention drawn to the [Practitioners in Practice Delivery Guide](#) to support you delivering this component. The delivery guide is written to sit alongside the specification and to be used to guide you through the component – so please take a look.

Administration

Centres are advised to adhere to the recommended maximum length for the Research Report and the Portfolio as outlined on page 27 of the H459 specification. A number of candidates exceeded the recommended lengths and often this impeded the clarity of what was written.

A number of centres are now using encrypted memory sticks with a code to access files, can centres make sure that the encryption code is clearly written on paper including the centre name and number and is sent promptly at the same time as the candidates work.

All memory sticks need to be labelled with the centre name and number. This year we had an increasing number of unnamed memory sticks and blank DVD's. If in doubt label everything with centre name and number. Memory sticks also need to be compatible with all operating systems.

Centres are reminded to identify candidates directly to camera before the devised performance saying the centre name and number and each candidate's name, number and role/s. It would be very helpful for centres to make sure that all candidates have some clearly recognisable feature to make them easily identifiable. Centres that gave each candidate a different colour t shirt, sash or badge helped the moderation process.

Similarly to last year, centres are advised to position the camera close enough to the stage to allow the moderator to clearly see the faces of candidates. The DVD | USB memory stick evidence of the performance is there to support the marks you have given so it would be good practice to run a couple of quick test shots before you film to make sure the candidates can be viewed clearly. Positioning a camera, on a wide shot at the back of a full theatre can make it very difficult for candidates to be identified throughout the performance and therefore difficult for the marks given to be moderated successfully.

It is a requirement of this component that 'A group must contain between 3 and eight performers and may contain one learner per design role' Groups of two students for the Performance option 11/12 is unacceptable.

Marking

This year saw an increase in centres that awarded full marks to candidates for this component. Centres are advised to pay attention to the A* grade boundary for this component when marking. For the Practitioners in Practice exemplars available on the OCR website (<https://ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/drama-and-theatre-h059-h459-from-2016/>) and those used for OCR CPD the highest standardised mark was 114 out of 120 which should give centres an indication to the allocation of top band marks for future cohorts of candidates.

Practitioners explored

This year again saw a wealth of practitioners being explored by centres across the country. Successful centres combined a practitioner who has a character based, experiential approach with a practitioner with a more stylised, physical /epic approach offering candidates increased creative options within the devising process.

This year saw Brecht topple Frantic Assembly at the top of the Practitioner leader board with the most popular five practitioners explored being:

- Brecht
- Frantic Assembly
- Stanislavski
- Berkoff
- Artaud

Berkoff was more popular this year with centres often combining the Berkovian style with either Stanislavskian or Brechtian based characters.

The most successful and popular combination of practitioners was Stanislavski and Frantic Assembly, Brecht and Berkoff and Stanislavski and Brecht/Artaud. These combinations saw candidates creating devised theatre with truthful and believable characters, in a stylised setting, using a variety of movement based techniques.

Similarly to last year where centres chose two contemporary practitioners with a similar canon of work the experience candidates had and the opportunities for exploration were diminished. Within the Research Reports there was evidence of confusion by candidates over the artistic and practical approaches when practitioners were too similar. The exploration of contrasting practitioners allows candidates to gain a range of skills that can be then be used to create theatre. When the practitioner choice and depth of exploration is limited, candidates often struggled to achieve marks in the top band.

Centres are expected to explore the latest teachings on a chosen practitioner and candidates are advised to explore exercises that best reflect the practitioners working methods and ideas.

For Design candidates, choosing practitioners such as Brecht or EG Craig during Section 1 gave them a clear style to design to and evidence within the portfolios.

Texts

This year saw a varied mix of classical and contemporary plays being used for Section 1. Although the text may be used as a stimulus for the devised performance this does not have to be the case and candidates can create theatre in Section 2 and 3 from any stimulus.

Of the text chosen to be explored for Section 1 approximately 70% of the playwrights were male. It is important for candidates to respond to both male and female voices and as Principal Moderator I am keen for candidates to have the opportunity to explore and experience the work of many contemporary female playwrights. In the Resources section of this report I have listed some examples of stunning plays by female playwrights as suggestions for you to use with future cohorts of candidates.

Most common causes of centres not passing

Section 1 - Research Reports

This section is designed to allow candidates to explore and experience practitioners learning and developing a series of skills that can then be used when devising and creating theatre.

The Research Report is the evidence of that practical exploration. The criteria shows that there are four key areas to cover, three focus on practical exploration and one more factually based research. The Research Report is a document to evidence how the candidates have explored the two practitioners and worked on text, so we are primarily looking to see how candidates have explored exercises on a practitioner rather than deliver paragraphs of factual information.

A number of centres only evidenced the exploration of the practitioner with text and not the exploration of the practitioner before using text. It is vital to this component that within the Research Report we see evidence of exploring practitioners before working on text. If you are exploring Berkoff, you would first explore exercises to understand Berkovian technique and then put them into practice with the text.

The exploration of text within Section 1 is exactly that, an exploration and not a performance. So for Stanislavski, candidates would choose an extract and then use Active Analysis to explore that extract using the exercises they have explored on the system to help.

Successful candidates combined evidence of practical exploration with their initial research of the chosen practitioners allowing them to fully use the recommended word count for the Research Report. The use of subheadings by many candidates was seen as an effective way of structuring the Portfolio and would be effective when used with the Research Report for example 'Exploring Mitchell practically', 'Practicing Actions', 'Exploring Berkoff with text'. Candidates are advised to explore exercises that best reflect the practitioners working methods and ideas.

For Design candidates, choosing practitioners such as Brecht or EG Craig during Section 1 gave them a clear style to design to and evidence within the portfolios.

Analysis and Evaluation

The Analysis and Evaluation mark is given across both the Research Report and Portfolio, successful candidates used a series of subheadings to outline their evaluations – for example 'Using Frantic exercises with text' 'Evaluating the performance' 'The intention of our piece'.

Section 2 The Portfolio

We saw a range of portfolio evidence from highly detailed scrap book style evidence to some wonderfully filmed portfolios. The most successful portfolios were those that followed a clear journey through the devising process with connections to the practitioners explored. The use of annotated rehearsal images became more popular this year allowing candidates to highlight key areas of the devising process for the moderator.

For Design candidates successful candidates included rig layouts, material chosen, gels experimented with colour, all allowing candidates to evidence the experimental and collaborative journey they have been on.

Section 3 Devised | Designed Performance

There was some truly wonderful, practitioner based, devised drama created this year that showed how the depth of the exploration work done in Section 1 really helps candidates to achieve marks in the highest bands.

The range of performance was incredible- from haunting Artaudian inspired immersive theatre to high intensity Berkovian theatre, emotional rollercoaster Stanislavskian drama and some truly beautiful Frantic | Gecko | The Paper Birds inspired movement pieces.

Candidates used a number of techniques to great effect creating promenade sets, immersing the audience and using music and sound in highly imaginative ways.

My lasting impression of the work produced this year has been how committed and enthusiastic candidates have been in creating theatre and the real sense of joy that comes across to the audience.

A number of centres gave a flurry of top marks for the Devised Performance | Artistic Intention which, it was felt, didn't allow for differentiation for their top band candidates. The 30/30 mark is there for the very best performers at A Level. Over the last two years we have not seen any candidates 'working beyond A Level standard' and for this component full marks within the performance are to be given for the most accomplished of performers.

Candidates that successfully explored two practitioners in depth within Section 1 by and large created the most inspiring and unique devised theatre across the cohort. The devised performance allows candidates to use the skills they have learnt in exploration of practitioners and use that as a springboard to developing their own theatre.

Where Design candidates contributed to the performance there was a real sense that Performance and Design candidates were working together to create a show which resulted in some fantastic collaborative theatre.

Common misconceptions

- The practitioner choice is there for candidates and centres to experiment with a range of influences and practice. The highest achieving candidates have succeeded exploring a variety of different practitioners and there is no preferred 'house style'.
- The most successful performances had clear evidence of the practitioner influence throughout with candidates using the devised performance to experiment with all they have explored in Section 1.
- Where in the specification there is reference 'the work of others' there is an expectation this will be the practitioners explored in Section 1 and 2.
- The Research Report is not a factual essay it is an 'evidence of practical exploration' report.

Avoiding potential malpractice

- Centres are recommended to use the most recent, up to date practical resources on a practitioner.
- Out-dated and badly researched practitioner resources are too be avoided.
- All candidates must 'perform for a sufficient time to justify the marks given with a minimum 6 minutes exposure per learner in the performance'.
- Groups have to consist of 3 performers.

Helpful resources

It was felt a number of centres and candidates didn't show the depth of practical exploration needed within their Research Reports and Portfolios, centres are recommended to evidence the exercises they used and highlight them in bold within the Research Report. Examples of exercises in the boxes below are taken from successful candidate's Research Reports.

Examples of Berkoff exercises evidenced within the Research Report

- The Base Pulse
- Exploring chorus
- Finding the Mie (from an image stimulus)
- Finding the gesture (from a visual stimulus)
- Exploring voice, movement and physicality
- Exploring Kvetch with our extract
- Using Berkovian style make up with characters
- Using Berkoff's physicality and voice with characters from Metamorphosis

Examples of Stanislavski exercises evidenced within the Research Report

Work on the actor

- Imagination exercises
- Exploring free body relaxation
- Communicating using invisible rays
- Practicing actions

Work on a role

- Finding the objective
- Exploring my character's before time
- My character's super objective
- Using Active Analysis with text

Structuring Section 1 of Practitioners in Practice

Below is a simple structure that can be followed when exploring Section 1 (this is for guidance, you are of course free to structure the component to best suit your students):

- Explore the first practitioner (for example Stanislavski) spend a number of weeks exploring and experimenting with a series of exercises from the system allowing students to evaluate and analyse as they go along.
- Students to write this up under the first heading 'Exploring Stanislavski and the System'
- Work on the chosen text (for example That Face by Polly Stenham) and use exercises from the system to explore an extract/s.
- Write up this section of the Research Report under the heading 'Exploring Stanislavski with That Face'.
- Explore the second practitioner (for example Artaud) spend a number of weeks exploring and experimenting with a series of exercises allowing students to evaluate and analyse as they go along.

Write up this section of the Research Report under the heading 'Exploring Artaud'

Suggested female playwrights and plays to use when exploring practitioners in Section 1

Fleabag	Pheobe Waller-Bridge
Oil	Ella Hickson
Yen	Anna Jordan
That Face	Polly Stenham
Machinal	Sophie Treadwell
Crave	Sarah Kane
The Effect	Lucy Prebble
NSFW	Lucy Kirkwood

Additional comments

As a team we are committed to providing support for you when delivering Practitioners in Practice. In addition to this report you should have received the report from your moderator with your results. If you have any questions please e mail them into our Drama team drama@ocr.org.uk and we will answer any questions you have.

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