OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A LEVEL

Moderators' report

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459
For first teaching in 2016

H459/11/12 Summer 2022 series

Contents

Introduction

Our moderator' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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General overview

It has been a real pleasure, after two years away from moderating, for my team and I to encounter and enjoy such wonderfully original, practitioner inspired, devised theatre. Centres producing such creative work during the difficulties of the pandemic are to be congratulated on their outstanding efforts.

Similar to 2019, the candidates that found the most success across the whole cohort were those that showed clear evidence of exploring and experimenting with practitioners. The essence of the component is candidates exploring exercises and techniques on their chosen practitioners, evidencing this in the research report then going onto create and perform theatre using the skills they have learnt and documenting the process in the portfolio.

This year saw some fascinating, immersive work with candidates taking their practitioner influence and channelling that into creating unique, devised work. Successful centres combined the skills and practices explored in Section 1 to give candidates an opportunity to be given marks across the bands for their devised performance. It was fascinating to see examples of candidates incorporating a whole range of practitioner influence from a candidate's exploration of a Maria Ouspenskaya's animal exercise to enhance their character's physicality, to candidates using Artaud to push the boundaries of immersive, experimental theatre.

For those of you who entered candidates for the June 2022 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.

Administration

The vast majority of centres now send their performances by memory stick, and it is vital that these memory sticks are clearly labelled, often a memory stick will go on several journeys during the moderation season and those not labelled are likely to cause delays to the moderation process. Simply stick a label on the memory stick with the centre name and number. Some centres went to great lengths to wrap up memory sticks labelling the wrapping but not the stick itself!

This year we saw a number of overly long research reports, 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.

If centres could sort the research report and portfolio evidence together for each candidate that would greatly aid moderation, rather than having an individual candidates work separated.

Centres are reminded to ident candidates directly to camera before the devised performance saying the centre name and number and each candidate's name, number and role/s.

With ensemble, immersive, masked performances it can be difficult to track a candidate through a performance especially if all candidates are dressed the same and in black. 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 aided the moderation process.

Camera position
Centres are advised to position the camera close enough to the stage to allow the moderator to see the faces of candidates and to hear them effectively.

Marking

There were a number of instances of overmarking by centres especially in the awarding of full marks for a candidate/s. The A* boundary consists of 17 marks to be awarded to Band 5 candidates and centres are expected to use the full range of marks. 120 out of 120 is a mark reserved for the very best candidate/s across the entire cohort. With 5-mark points across the component it is likely that candidates will score better in one component over another, and centres are asked to examine every full mark they award to determine if that is the correct mark for the candidate.

Centres that awarded more than one 120 per cohort are advised to differentiate their marking for candidates within the 17 marks currently available for A* candidates. If 120 is the top mark, that is the top mark across the whole cohort not the top mark in the centre - there are no candidates working beyond 120.

Full marks 120 out of 120
With 17 marks available at A* the awarding of full marks 120 out of 120 is reserved for the very best across the whole country.

Section 1 - Research Reports

This continues to be the area that most candidates need support, a number of candidates wrote theory dominated essays based on practitioner research. This is only one part of the research report – the main body should be the practical exploration of the exercises on the practitioner **followed by** the use of the practitioner with text.

A number of candidates also omitted the evidencing of practitioner exercises and went straight onto working on text. Exercises on a practitioner prior to working on text are important to evidence how the candidate has explored and understood a practitioner's ideas and practices.

For example - successful candidates exploring Berkoff - first practically experienced Lecoq exercises, moving onto exercises to help them understand Berkoff's style and then they went onto using Berkoff with an extract from text.

Or Stanislavski – explored exercises on work on the actor (imagination, communication, free body) then exercises on work on a role (given circumstances, objective, action) then used these with their chosen text.

Research report suggested structure
• short section outlining research on practitioner 1
• evidence of practical exercises used to explore practitioner 1 with analysis and evaluation
• the key stages of exploring practitioner 1 with text
• short section outlining research on practitioner 2
• evidence of practical exercises used to explore practitioner 2 with analysis and evaluation
• option of using practitioner 2 with text.

Misconception
? The Research Report is not a theory essay - it is the evidencing of practical exercises explored on the candidates' chosen practitioners.

Practitioners

It was wonderful to see the breadth of practitioner influences explored across the country for this cohort, with a real increase in the different practitioners being explored by centres.

The most effective combinations were:

- Katie Mitchell with Frantic Assembly
- Stanislavski with Brecht or Berkoff
- Mitchell and Artaud /Kneehigh.

These combinations allowed candidates to fully achieve marks across the marking criteria.

Once again, our previous 2019 champion Brecht finished just ahead of Stanislavski in the top spot on our 'Practitioners used by centres' leader board with the top five practitioners explored being:

1. Brecht
2. Stanislavski
3. Frantic Assembly
4. Berkoff | Artaud
5. Mitchell | Kneehigh.

Both Mitchell and Kneehigh were more popular this year with candidates using Mitchell's forensic style in character creation and Kneehigh's style to structure their performances.

Contrasting practitioner choice

Candidates in centres struggled where two practitioners were chosen that had a very similar canon of practical work.

Centres are advised to choose contrasting practitioners, combining a practitioner who has a character based, experiential approach with a more stylised, physical /epic approach.

For design candidates, thought should be given to the choice of practitioners in Section 1 to give candidates a clear style to design to and evidence within the portfolios.

Exploring a practitioner

Start the component practically, choose a practitioner then get the candidates up on their feet exploring and experiencing exercises.

Texts

This year saw a varied mix of classical and contemporary plays being used for Section1. 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.

Similar to 2019 a large proportion of the texts chosen to be explored, as part of Section 1, were from white, male playwrights.

> **Diversity in your choice of text for Section 1**
>
> When choosing your text to be explored in Section 1 think about choosing a global majority or female playwright.
>
> Below is a link from the Royal Courts 150 plays from Playwrights in the global majority to use when choosing text.
>
> [150 plays from Playwrights in the global majority.](#)

Analysis and Evaluation

Successful candidates embedded analysis and evaluation of exercises throughout their research reports and at the end of the portfolio included a section on evaluation of the whole devising journey. The A and E mark works across both the research reports and portfolio evidence so centres with successful candidates evaluated key exercises and milestones of the devising process throughout.

Section 2 - The Portfolio

We saw a range of portfolio evidence with some highly detailed scrap book style evidence. 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

With all the constraints put on centres the performances across the cohort showed a real willingness to experiment and to create meaningful theatre.

Centres created immersive spaces, using the stage area in highly imaginative ways. The most successful performances were those where candidates had taken the practical experience gained in Section 1 and fed it into creating unique original theatre. Performances where candidates had explored Mitchell / Stanislavski with Frantic Assembly / Berkoff saw truthful and believable characters immersed in a non-naturalistic, ensemble, stylised setting to great effect. Many candidates effectively delivered truthful and believable character monologues as part of an ensemble performance allowing them to access marks across the bands for the devised performance.

There were a number of instances of several candidates in a centre being given full marks for artistic intention and the performance when a diverse range of performance abilities existed among these candidates. Centres are recommended to use the full range of marks at the top band when marking their Band 5 candidates. Often there would be three candidates in a group being given 30/30 for performance where one candidate was clearly more accomplished than the other two which immediately raises issues with the centre marking.

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.

Appropriate content, clothing, and behaviour

It was felt by my team and me that there is a fine balance between exploring issues of an adult nature and creating performances that are inappropriate for post-16 students. There were a number of examples of what we deemed as inappropriate touching of a sexual nature during performances that added little to the overall piece. A number of scenes that involved touching in a sexual way could easily have been stylised or suggested rather than portrayed realistically and I think we all have a responsibility to guide candidates to find theatrical solutions that ensure all individuals are respected and not put in an uncomfortable and possibly harmful position. It is seen as good practice to discuss in the early stages of the devising process the nature of close physical contact and how each individual feels about it.

Candidates who did well generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well generally did the following:
- explored contrasting practitioners - evidenced practical exercises in the research report - wrote within the suggested 2000-word limit for the research report - analysed and evaluated throughout the research report and portfolio - created unique original practitioner-based performances - included a character monologue within their piece.	- explored practitioners of a similar canon - focused on theory and not practice in the research reports - went way over the suggested word limit for the research report - wrote narrative portfolios describing what they did with little evaluation and analysis - create performances with little practitioner influence - limited characterisation and overall contribution to the devised piece.

Helpful resources

There is an expectation that at A Level, students will explore the most up to date resources on a chosen practitioner and explore exercises that truthfully reflect the practitioner's work.

OCR have produced a range of practitioner resources delivery guides to use as a starting point and for a variety of practitioners there are recommended resources at OCR Practitioner resources

Supporting you

Post-results services

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the OCR website.

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