OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A LEVEL

Moderators' report

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459
For first teaching in 2016

H459/11/12 Summer 2023 series

Version 1

ocr.org.uk/drama

Contents

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Introduction

Our moderators' 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.

Online courses

We have created online courses to build your confidence in delivering, marking and administering internal assessment for our qualifications. Courses are available for Cambridge Nationals, GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016).

Cambridge Nationals

All teachers delivering our redeveloped Cambridge Nationals suite from September 2022 are asked to complete the Essentials for the NEA course, which describes how to guide and support your students. You'll receive a certificate which you should retain.

Following this you can also complete a subject-specific Focus on Internal Assessment course for your individual Cambridge Nationals qualification, covering marking and delivery.

GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016)

We recommend all teachers complete the introductory module Building your Confidence in Internal Assessment, which covers key internal assessment and standardisation principles.

Following this you will find a subject-specific course for your individual qualification, covering marking criteria with examples and commentary, along with interactive marking practice.

Accessing our online courses

You can access all our online courses from our teacher support website [Teach Cambridge](#).

You will find links relevant to your subject under Assessment, NEA/Coursework and then Online Courses from the left hand menu on your Subject page.

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

General overview

There have been some fascinating and creative practitioner-based devised work that has been created by candidates across the country.

Like last year we saw a large range of work, from immersive style, Artaud inspired pieces to experiential character-based Stanislavski and Mitchell performances. There was some truly thought-provoking, issue based, total theatre, with centres inspired to use a variety of physical techniques to support their pieces.

The centres that were most successful across the component were those that practically explored two practitioners and evidenced this practical exploration. With so many different practitioner choices within the component the range in devised performances was huge and there were some unique and inspirational practitioner-based theatre.

A special word must go to the large centres that can have up to ten devising groups on the go at the same time; their entries are a logistical triumph.

Administration

Please label memory sticks with centre name and number; a solitary memory stick can go on quite a journey during the moderation season and if it isn't correctly labelled the chances of it going missing or being attached to a different sample increase dramatically.

This year again we saw several 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. Several candidates exceeded the recommended lengths and often this effected 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 candidate's work separated.

One centre labelled the performances by candidate numbers within a group on a memory stick which, especially with large cohorts, greatly aided to the moderating process.

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. 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.

Filming the performance

The devised performance video evidence is there to support the marks given to candidates; therefore, the quality of video impacts the moderation process. The camera should be positioned in the best possible location to capture the performance and near enough that we can see the candidates' faces. It is better to half the performance space and have a close-up view of candidates than have small figures appearing in a vast space.

Centres are advised to balance lighting for the performance with lighting to aid moderation. Before you run your piece/s for filming - run a scene, film it, then watch it back and see if the candidates' faces can be seen clearly.

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

This year saw many centres take a more reasoned approach to marking at the top end. Often centres that had previously given full marks for their best candidate used the whole top band more effectively in the awarding of marks. For larger centres with a spread of marks across the bands it is worth paying special attention to the candidates in the lower bands and how their marking has been affected by the numbers in the centre.

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

Research Report

Overall, there has been a step change in how centres have tackled the Research Report. There were many well-structured reports highlighting how centres had experimented with the exercises and techniques of their chosen practitioners, going on to explore text in the light of one of their practitioners and then evaluate and analyse the experience.

It should be clear how a candidate explored a practitioner's exercise, analysing and evaluating the experience. After outlining the exercise, it is not so much how Frantic or Berkoff or Mitchell think and feel about an exercise –it is the candidates' personal experience of the exercise. Think 'I explored Mitchell's Time and Place exercise…..' rather than 'Mitchell in rehearsal does this or that………'

As part of the Research Report candidates must explore their practitioner practically and evidence this **before** embarking on text exploration.

Centres that took a purely theoretical approach to the Research Report were putting their candidates at a disadvantage as key elements of the marking criteria were missed.

Candidates need to explore and experience the latest teaching of a practitioner – outdated resources giving a version of a practitioner's practice that does not effectively represent the practitioner's true intentions are not deemed acceptable for A Level assessment. Similarly, some candidates used established 'drama games' and credited them to a particular practitioner when we need to see them exploring and experiencing the exercises and techniques that their chosen practitioner uses/has used in the studio.

Candidates will often take what is on the internet as gospel and happily quote it or reference it within their reports. Candidates should be reminded that not all online practitioner information is an actual representation of a practitioner's practice. One example of misleading online information was a 'Stanislavski' blog referenced in a Research Report where the blog post recommended actors pinch their inner arm and twist the skin to help them cry when acting – this apparently is how to act emotion.

Students are recommended to use established practice-based texts/textbooks from recognised publishers where a peer review process guarantees candidates are exploring a practitioner in the correct light. If you have an old scheme of work on a practitioner and are not sure where the exercises came from it is recommended that centres use the practitioner resources on the OCR website as a starting point.

> **What the specification says….**
>
> 'The Research Report has a recommended maximum of 2000 words and will include a detailed breakdown of the **practical exercises completed** and the stages of exploration using the extract of performance text.'

> **3 practical to 1 research**
>
> The marking criteria for the Research Report is 3 to 1 in favour of practical exploration over research and context. It is recommended therefore candidates replicate this 3 to 1 ratio in their reports.

Practitioners

The range of practitioner combinations chosen by centres were most successful this year where centres chose contrasting practitioners to give candidates a broad experience and a variety of tools to use when devising.

The most popular/effective combinations typically were:

- Stanislavski and Brecht
- Stanislavski/Mitchell and Frantic Assembly
- Brecht and Berkoff/Artaud.

After two years of Brecht dominating the choices, we now see Stanislavski as the most popular.

The top five most popular practitioners were:

- Stanislavski
- Brecht
- Frantic Assembly
- Artaud
- Berkoff

Candidates can easily go through their entire A Level experience primarily encountering a white, male perspective on theatre. Candidates should be encouraged to explore a global majority or female practitioner as part of this component.
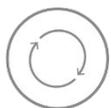
> **Assessment for learning**
>
> As one of your two practitioner choices let your students experience a global majority practitioner, for example: Tamasha.
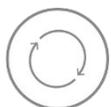
> **Assessment for learning**
>
> Candidates in centres struggled where two practitioners were chosen that had a very similar canon of practical work.
>
> Centres are advised to choose contrasting practitioners, combining a practitioner who has a character-based, experiential approach with a more stylised, physical /epic approach.

Texts

Like last year we 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.

Remember the text is to be explored practically using your chosen practitioner, so it makes sense to choose a practitioner for use with text that has a canon of practical work relating to text for candidates to use.

What the marking criteria says….
'Practical exploration of the exercises on their chosen practitioners with an accomplished/confident/competent exploration of the text including **subtext**.' Remind candidates on the importance of delving into the subtext.
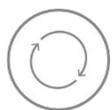
Assessment for learning	
Like 2019 a large proportion of the texts chosen to be explored, as part of Section 1, were from white, male playwrights and below are six suggestions of texts from Global Majority playwrights to explore in Section 1.	
The Empress	Tanika Gupta
Lions and Tigers	Tanika Gupta
Leave Taking	Winsome Pinnock
Rockets and Blue Lights	Winsome Pinnock
Scenes from 68 Years	Hannah Khalil
Ear for an Eye	Debbie Tucker Green

Analysis and Evaluation

Centres have become good at evidencing the Analysis and Evaluation mark through subheadings and sections within the portfolio to allow candidates to reflect, analyse and evaluate. Remember the Analysis and Evaluation mark is drawn from both the Research Report and Portfolio evidence.

Portfolio

There is always a variety in the style of portfolios produced by centres with successful ones showing the candidates' journey through the process as they explore devising. Successful candidates embedded practitioner influence as they went along, with evaluations and reflections at key points. Candidates are advised to document their journey combined with the embedding of their practitioner influence and their artistic intention. Some candidates got stuck in simply narrating what they did scene by scene which lacked opportunities for in-depth analysis.

There were some very long portfolios and centres are asked to follow the guidance on portfolio length.

What the specification says….

The maximum length of a portfolio should be:
   • 30 sides A4 which may include: notes, sketches, diagrams, scripts, storyboards, photographs and annotations
OR
   • 20 minutes of recorded presentation which may include: video diary/video blogs, recording of performance activities created through the devised performance and slides/titles with audio commentary
OR
   • 3000 words of continuous prose

For design candidates, successful work included rig layouts, material chosen, gels experimented with for colour; all allowing candidates to evidence the experimental and collaborative journey they had been on.

Common misconception – Devising stimulus
?   The play you explore with a practitioner in Section 1 can be the stimulus for devising but doesn't have to be. Candidates are free to choose the stimulus for devising and the direction they want their piece to go in.

Devised and Designed Performance

There was a number of differing performance styles on offer this year which is a credit to the creativity of candidates across the country. Candidates that fully used the range of their practitioners' techniques usually were the most successful, for example with centres taking traditional Frantic exercises and techniques and creating whole Frantic inspired sequences that fitted seamlessly with their devised work, or centres that created Artaudian settings supported with truthful, believable characters. Candidates can be encouraged to use all their practitioner influence, so if you have explored Mitchell in Section 1, introduce Live Cinema elements within your performance; it can be as simple as a camera projecting an image of a character on a screen at different points in the piece.

For groups with a design candidate, integrating the design into the message or narrative of the devised piece was successful.

If, when marking a devised performance, there is doubt that the candidate should be given full marks then use the range of marks within the band. A 30/30 really should stand out within a performance as truly accomplished, and centres are encouraged to think of the national picture when marking the devised performance.

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

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 about how they explored the practitioner in the first person • 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 • wrote about how the practitioner works with no experiential input • went over the suggested word limit for the Research Report • wrote narrative portfolios describing what they did with little evaluation and analysis, • created performances with little practitioner influence • had limited characterisation and overall contribution to the devised piece.
Candidates who did well generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well generally did the following:

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Reviews of marking

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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For the June 2023 series, Exams Officers will be able to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts' for all of our General Qualifications including Entry Level, GCSE and AS/A Level. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our website.

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ExamBuilder is **free for all OCR centres** with an Interchange account and gives you unlimited users per centre. We need an Interchange username to validate the identity of your centre's first user account for ExamBuilder.

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👍 **I like this**　　👎 **I dislike this**

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