

Moderators' report

A LEVEL

DRAMA AND THEATRE

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in
Drama and Theatre

H459

For first teaching in 2016

H459/11/12 Summer 2025 series

Contents

Introduction	3
General overview	4
Administration	5
Filming	5
Marking	5
Research report	6
Practitioners	6
Text choice	7
Portfolio	7
Devised and designed performance	8
Helpful resources	8

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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 the 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 comment on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. The 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 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.

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 Cambridge Nationals suite 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 module on Online courses – NEA for their subject. These courses provide subject-specific information about course content; how to prepare for planning, marking and submitting; and support with understanding the marking criteria.

Accessing our online courses

You can access all our online courses from our teacher support website [Teach Cambridge](https://www.teachcambridge.org).

These free online courses currently cover the end-to-end NEA process for teachers. You'll find the link to the **Online courses** under the **Assessment** or **Training** tab – hover over **Assessment** or **Training** on the horizontal menu and select **Online courses** from the dropdown.

These self-paced online courses are intended for any teachers. During the course, you will engage with interactive content on subjects such as guidance on unit content, structure and administrative processes.

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

General overview

The moderators had the privilege of viewing a range of practitioner-based devised work this year, reading fascinating reports that explored key practitioner exercises and devising journeys, as outlined in the portfolio evidence. The range of work was as diverse as ever from the truly epic Brechtian pieces to emotionally charged Frantic Assembly. Several pieces challenged the very core of the society we live in, reflecting the socio-political aims of practitioners chosen, such as Splendid Productions and The Paper Birds.

Practitioners in Practice is an opportunity for candidates and centres to explore and experiment with practitioners and then to create their own unique devised theatre. Centres that are the most successful put dedication and hard work into this component, supporting the joyful discoveries that candidates make on the way. As before, large centres are applauded for working on and creating numerous polished devised pieces.

A key takeaway from this year is for centres to remember that the research report is, in essence, a document to evidence and evaluate the practical work candidates have explored on the two practitioners, followed by applying such practitioner techniques to the centre's chosen text.

Candidates who did well generally:	Candidates who did less well generally:
- showed evidence of exploring their practitioners pre-text - explored contrasting practitioners - wrote succinct portfolios - put evaluation and analysis at the heart of their written evidence - were experimental throughout the devising process - filmed 'polished' final performances.	- evidenced no practical work before work on the text in the research report - explored practitioners theoretically rather than practically - wrote factual research reports rather than practical explorations of practitioners - had little practitioner influence in their final performance - did not 'polish' their performance before filming.

Administration

If all centres could label the memory stick with the centre name/number, that would aid the smooth running of the moderation process. Some centres label a plastic wallet with the memory stick, however once the memory stick is taken out of the plastic wallet, it essentially has no label.

For centres submitting work online through the new Submit for Assessment portal please label each file correctly for example:

Candidate name - Candidate number - Research report

This year, again there were some 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 [A Level Drama and Theatre Specification H459](#). Some candidates exceeded the recommended lengths and often this impeded the clarity of what was written.

Centres need to make sure candidates are entered for the correct option with H459/11/12 for the performance option and H459/13/14 for design.

Centres are reminded to make sure candidates identify themselves ahead of the performance in video with name and candidate number.

Filming

For moderation purposes, moderators need to be able to clearly see the candidates' faces. Centres are therefore advised to make lighting choices that do not impede the ability to see candidates' faces. Likewise, centres will often use the whole stage space, resulting in the camera being far away from the performance; centres should consider using a small performance area to allow for a closer shot of candidates. Centres are also reminded that the performance should be filmed from the viewpoint of the audience.

Filming the performance

Take a test shot before filming, with the candidates lit, so that the lighting and camera angle can be checked, ensuring that the moderator will clearly be able to see candidates' faces.

Marking

This year has seen centres taking a generous approach to marking their top candidates. Centres are advised to use the full range of marks across Band 5 when assessing candidates. The top of each mark point in Band 5 is reserved for the strongest candidates. Full marks across all five mark points is reserved for the strongest candidate/s of the cohort across the country.

For large centres it is perfectly acceptable to have some candidates on the same mark with different combinations across the five mark points. Centres are recommended to check where their lowest candidate lies as, this year, we have had a number of low candidates marked overly harshly at the lower end of the mark scale.

Research report

The main concern with the research report this year was centres ineffectively evidencing the practical work on practitioners before working on their chosen text. For example, if candidates are exploring Brecht, they could explore Brecht's 'Taxi Driver' exercise, his 'Folding Linen' exercise and his 'Characterisation of a Fellow Actor' exercise. The report would evidence the exploration of this practical work, followed by evidence of applying Brechtian techniques to the chosen text. It is in the candidates' best interest for them to explore a practitioner that has a recognised series of exercises that centres can work through and evidence **before** working on text.

Within the research report, the marking criteria favours in a three to one split of evidence of practical exploration over actual theoretical and contextual research therefore the report needs to mirror this. The main focus of the research report is documenting how the candidate has explored a practitioner, evaluating and analysing this.

From the specification



'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**.'

The research report's word limit is there to focus candidates on precisely evidencing the practitioners they have explored, with successful candidates embedding their research within this.

Refreshing practitioner choices



Consider your cohort of students and decide which practitioners you think would work best with them.

There is no live theatre review element to the research report



Some candidates needlessly reviewed various theatre productions they had seen as part of the research report – this is not a requirement here.

Practitioners

The most explored practitioner this year was Stanislavski with Brecht and Frantic Assembly respectively. These combinations allowed centres to explore Stanislavski's system before applying it to a text. It also allowed for contrasting practitioner techniques to be explored, feeding into candidates devising. These combinations allowed some centres to combine believable truthful characters with physical and stylised ensemble elements, supporting the marks given across the bands.

Another highly successful combination was Brecht and Berkoff where candidates would use Berkovian characterisation and language within a highly charged, comedic epic frame.

The choice of practitioners continues to be an area that can cause difficulty for centres – the key issues being where centres:

- choose two similar practitioners
- choose a practitioner without a clear set of exercises to explore before text work

- use outdated resources or dubious online resources that do not reflect the practitioner's true practice. There is an expectation at A Level that candidates explore the latest recognised practice.

Misconception



Each year moderators see work where candidates struggle due to centres selecting practitioners whose work is primarily devising based. More successful candidates, as evidenced in the research report, portfolio and devised performance, have explored practitioners with recognised exercises and techniques that can be used directly with a text and in their own devising.

Text choice

This year saw centres choosing a text that best supported their practitioner choices with a wide range of texts explored from across the canon of theatre. Some centres successfully refresh their text choices year on year to suit their different cohorts and practitioner combinations. There is starting to be some parity between male and female playwrights across the cohort with more centres choosing female playwrights to explore.

Misconception



Candidates are only **required** to explore one practitioner with the chosen text.

Five contemporary plays from female playwrights to explore

<i>The Writer</i>	Ella Hickson
<i>That Face</i>	Polly Stenham
<i>A Tupperware of Ashes</i>	Tanika Gupta
<i>The Wasp</i>	Morgan Lloyd-Malcolm
<i>Random</i>	Debbie Tucker Green

Portfolio

The portfolio evidences the journey a candidate goes through in the process of creating their devised piece, evidencing practitioner influence and how that aided the process. Centres are reminded that the portfolio is not a summary and evaluation of the final performance; it is an evidenced journey of devising choices that were made, evaluated and changed, resulting in the final performance.

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

Misconception



The mark for Analysis and Evaluation (30) is taken from both the research report and the portfolio evidence.

Devised and designed performance

It is envisaged that each devised performance is unique to the candidates within that group. This component is designed for candidates to be experimental, take artistic risks and follow their creative urges. The devised performance is created through the lens of the practitioners explored, with centres using their early experimentation to influence an array of performance styles.

Performance misconception



There is no preferred style of performance for H459/11-14, with centres across the country producing a wide variety of performances.

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 and [delivery guides](#) to use as a starting point. For a variety of practitioners, there are also recommended resources in topic exploration packs, available via Teach Cambridge.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

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](#).

Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. 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](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

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Free for all OCR centres with an Interchange account, it allows unlimited users per centre. We require an [Interchange](#) username to verify your centre's users for ExamBuilder.

If you do not have an Interchange account, please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username.

Once you have an Interchange username, use the form on [this page](#) to sign up for ExamBuilder, or ask an existing user at your centre to create an ExamBuilder account for you.

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

Online courses

Enhance your skills and confidence in internal assessment

What are our online courses?

Our online courses are self-paced eLearning courses designed to help you deliver, mark and administer internal assessment for our qualifications. They are suitable for both new and experienced teachers who want to refresh their knowledge and practice.

Why should you use our online courses?

With these online courses you will:

- learn about the key principles and processes of internal assessment and standardisation
- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
- be able to track your progress and achievements through the courses.

How can you access our online courses?

Access courses from [Teach Cambridge](#). Teach Cambridge is our secure teacher website, where you'll find all teacher support for your subject.

If you already have a Teach Cambridge account, you'll find the link to the **Online courses** under the **Assessment** or **Training** tab – hover over **Assessment** or **Training** on the horizontal menu and select **Online courses** from the dropdown.

If you don't have a Teach Cambridge account yet, ask your exams officer to set you up – just send them this [link](#) and ask them to add you as a Teacher.

Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

Which courses are available?

We recommend all teachers complete the module on Online courses – NEA for their subject. These courses provide subject-specific information about course content; how to prepare for planning, marking and submitting; and support with understanding the marking criteria.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

How can you get support and feedback?

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

We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the online courses and make them more useful and relevant for you. You can share your views by completing the evaluation form at the end of each course.

Tell us what you think

Your feedback plays an important role in how we develop, market, support and resource qualifications now and into the future. We want you and your students to enjoy and get the best out of our qualifications and resources, but to do that we need your honest opinions to tell us whether we're on the right track or not.

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