

Performing Arts

Advanced GCE A2 H546

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H146

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

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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.

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Overview

Centres in the June 2013 session demonstrated a greater understanding of the performing arts industries and provided effective approaches that allowed candidates to acquire skills and techniques in specialist areas. Candidates were able to realise performance work by applying these skills in a vocational and work-related context which allowed them to access the full range of marks available. This was influenced by innovative research, which many candidates used to inform their outcomes. There were some candidates who were able to show a thorough understanding of professional practice across all units.

The facilitation of technical, spatial and specialist areas enabled candidates to achieve improved outcomes. Candidates were encouraged to use appropriate technical language and critical vocabulary in order to make informed and articulate judgements.

Many good candidates displayed a thorough and perceptive understanding of the nature of the two organisations studied in G380, their missions, operations, audiences and funding; these candidates provided a reflective and sensitive explanation of how both organisations operated. Skills selected for development in G381 demonstrated self-management that underpinned work of a professional standard. G384 saw many candidates able to produce a comprehensive plan of work for their first year of work that demonstrated a sensitive understanding of work opportunities, keen awareness of the marketability of their skills and the need for contingency.

In the performance units many centres had explored all aspects of professional practice. G385 candidates worked towards demonstrating expert handling of the stylistic conventions. This was supported by written commentaries that reflected confident and effective assimilations of the appropriate stylistic features and made suggestions on how these could be realised for a contemporary audience. G382/6 was impressive as centres again raised standards and adopted high production values, providing well-supported technical environments that reflected the experiences of the professional stage. Good candidates were able to exhibit a fluent integration of the required skills, alongside individual expression, within the context and aims of the performances.

G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

Moderators commented on a slight improvement in the work submitted. Many candidates applied research to reinforce their understanding of how the selected organisations worked and the range of roles within each structure. Attempts at comparative analyses were improved with some candidates displaying interesting and high quality work about the way organisations continue to operate and survive in the current financial climate.

There are still some issues with regard to the selection and study of organisations. All candidates studying the same two organisations and carrying out a presentation on the same job role is not acceptable. The study of one organisation, collectively, by the centre is acceptable. The second organisation and job role must be from independent and self-directed research carried out by each candidate.

Centres must also take note of the moderators' comments that marking is too lenient. Just because candidates have mentioned a particular area does not constitute full marks. Centres must read and apply the marking criteria correctly to ensure that marking submitted is correct.

There are still issues with the study of a job role. Too many candidates are focusing on the person instead of the job. Centres must ensure that the candidates undertake an in-depth study of a person doing a particular job, with the focus on the significance of that job within the organisation itself.

G381 Skills Development

Many centres did not apply the marking criteria correctly or follow the unit requirements as laid out in the specification. This meant that outcomes were affected for some candidates. The unit clearly states that work must be selected from repertoire and that self-devised work around a theme is not acceptable. Candidates are required to undertake three pieces of work, which should include both solo and ensemble work. Two pieces can be work in progress but one piece must be a finished performance. Too many centres had employed a 'scattergun' approach where candidates were submitting too many pieces for consideration. This saw a lack of depth and little mastery of skills and did not allow candidates to focus on specific skills development.

Good practice saw candidates formulating skills development plans and evidencing their progress with regular DVD footage that showed progression and the acquisition of various skills and techniques. This is a very important aspect, as just submitting one DVD recording of the work does not show the development of the skill from its starting point and may hinder the marks available to candidates if development cannot be evidenced.

The best portfolios included detailed Skills Development Plans alongside regular logs or diaries that recorded the development of the selected repertoire and skills acquired. Target setting through regular feedback and progression of the work undertaken underpins the success of this unit. Centres that record this journey from the initial rehearsals to the finished piece are able to justify the marks awarded and confirm the development made.

G382 Professional Practice: Performance

Many centres performed well in this unit as they had responded to the demands of the unit in terms of professional replication, choice of appropriate repertoire material and an improved depth of analysis in their written evidence. High production values in some centres provided the right kind of resources and technical support needed to allow candidates to access the full range of marks available. Many centres aspired to produce polished and sophisticated performances that reflected industry conventions. Centres have understood the role of the audience in establishing engagement for the candidates.

The selection of material remains an issue for some candidates. Candidates must be able to display a range of skills and techniques and have sufficient exposure time to ensure that they can access the full range of the marking criteria. Examiners were still reporting issues with gender opposite pieces where girls just cannot master the necessary components required to successfully undertake the role of a man. Self-devised work and thematic approaches, particularly in music, also make it difficult for candidates. Centres who select these types of pieces are in fact limiting the candidates' ability to access the higher range of the marking criteria.

Written submissions were generally improved with many centres understanding the importance of a regular diary to record the development and progression of the work. Improvements in research were demonstrated but many candidates still did not demonstrate that they understood the importance of the social, historical and cultural aspects. Health and Safety was still underdeveloped, with many candidates unable to access the full range of marks. This is due to the inclusion by many centres of a generic framework and approach. Candidates must develop their own personal approach to health and safety by applying their knowledge to their actual performance work.

G383 Professional Practice: Production

There was only a small entry for this unit so generalisations are difficult. Good candidates had really considered the design and operational aspects in this unit, embracing the importance of Industry standards and conventions.

Good practice was seen where candidates had undertaken lighting and sound and applied them to full-scale performance work where there were opportunities to display a range of scenes and effects.

The candidates produced much better responses to their brief in terms of the written portfolio and the practical demonstration, including industry compliant software and process as well as industry standard diagrams, scales and terminology. Less successful areas were noted in make-up and costume where candidates did not seem to understand the range and depth of technical evidence that is required both in the portfolio and the production demonstration.

G384 Getting Work

Many centres provided opportunities for candidates to discuss professional practice with people whom currently 'make their living' in the industry, evaluating and learning from their experience.

Good portfolios produced comprehensive plans for their first year of work that demonstrated a sensitive understanding of the possible work opportunities, keen awareness of their own marketability and the need for contingency. These candidates demonstrated understanding of a complex range of work opportunities. By drawing upon the research they had conducted and analysing the demands and benefits of the various types of work in their plan, they could clearly articulate their overall strategy for gaining employment.

Promotional packs were persuasive with professional photographs and leaflets alongside the inclusion of show reels and web sites. Quality in the outcome is essential to attract the professional agencies and employers. The inclusion of social media and networks proved to be a very useful tool for marketing purposes. Candidates were using Facebook and Twitter to establish lines of communication. The inclusion of links to websites also worked well.

G385 Exploring Repertoire

There was more evidence of in-depth research, which is being well applied. Research is crucial and the better portfolios reflected social, cultural and historical links rather than just a list of dates.

The best candidates had selected two contrasting performance pieces in clearly defined styles or genres. Some candidates had not selected appropriate material and selected two contemporary productions where they selected the piece on its setting rather than on when it was written.

Some candidates were able to demonstrate that they understood the socio-historical contexts in which the selected works were written and performed and applied this research showing the stylistic awareness in their performances. The best portfolios included research using a wide range of sources including books rather than just Internet research. There was an improvement in the use of footnotes, citations, acknowledgement of websites and bibliographies but candidates must adhere to the word count.

G386 Producing Your Showcase

Overall, the standards were slightly higher than had been seen in previous June sessions. Candidates appeared to have understood the value of planning and had considered not just the content of their Showcase, but also the performance techniques required to realise it. Good candidates produced authoritative and absorbing performances creating effective engagement with their audience through technical accomplishment and a mature and sophisticated approach.

Selection of material remained a key issue. Where the selection was impressively sophisticated candidates were able to display breadth and depth. Many candidates continued to select works that were unsuitable for their skills and abilities. This often meant that the candidates did not

show any real understanding of what they were performing, resulting in a lack of mastery of the material and dynamic performances. This prevented many candidates from accessing the higher mark bands.

All centres must adhere to the time allocation and candidates must perform their 3 pieces in one slot, one piece after the other. This allows the candidates to access the full range of marks available and tests their strength, endurance and ability to be able to change style and character expeditiously.

Technical support provided by most centres did enhance candidates' performances. Centres who are not providing suitable performance spaces and technical support should seek to improve this.

G387 Production Demonstration

In this session there was evidence of good practice where candidates had embraced all elements of working in a professional context. Preparatory notes included industry standard software that enabled candidates to produce detailed and labelled drawings and diagrams alongside detailed cue sheets and operational guidance. Weaker candidates in this unit struggled to understand that their work must reflect industry standards. A few hand drawn diagrams are not acceptable. The unit specification clearly outlines what is expected in this unit and centres must read and follow these guidelines.

Centres are advised to read all Unit Reports.

G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

General Comments

There was some improvement in the quality of the portfolios presented during this session. Portfolios included aspects such as funding, sponsorship and products. This meant that candidates were able to display a good understanding of the business activities that underpinned the chosen performing arts organisations and discuss the operations in considerable depth and detail.

Centres have drawn attention to the difficulty candidates face in reaching the upper mark bands while keeping within the 2000-3000 word limit. Candidates are required to be succinct. There is no room for long introductions about the history or buildings of the organisations that do not address the assessment objectives.

All candidates studying the same two organisations and carrying out a presentation on the same job role is not acceptable. The study of one organisation, collectively, by the centre is acceptable. The second organisation and job role must be from independent and self-directed research carried out individually. Candidates need to be advised that websites are often there for promotional purposes and may not present an unbiased view.

Weaker candidates continued to talk, sometimes at great length, about the individual who performs the chosen job role rather than the job role itself. Candidates from more than one centre described the effect of the job on the holder's social life. This does not relate to the assessment objectives and detracts from the brief.

Marking by centres was occasionally lenient. Candidates presenting relevant data were sometimes given credit for 'a competent understanding' or 'an analytical account' even when they had not 'discussed' or shown any comprehension of the information presented. Centres must read and apply the marking criteria correctly to ensure that marking submitted is correct.

Please note that it is important to use the URS form effectively to guide moderators to examples of key evidence and to annotate the work to show where and how the marking criteria have been met.

AO1.1

Candidates who had reached the upper mark bands showed a deep understanding of the operations that underpin their chosen organisations. They used pie charts to illustrate funding, presented data tables on audience profiles and bar charts to show the success of different products (programs).

Showing an understanding of funding challenged many candidates; many thought that this began and ended with grants. To reach the top band candidates are expected to be able to explain income (ticket sales, merchandise, catering, premises hire etc.) and expenditure (premises, wages, energy, services etc.), showing how subsidies (grants) may meet any deficit. They may not always be able to quote actual figures, but must show a perception of the issues.

AO1.2

The majority of candidates were able to list and comment on 'most or all job roles' as required. Most provided organisational charts but few candidates were able to 'discuss the structures' of the companies. There needs to be evidence of 'thoughtful discussion' to merit marks beyond the lower band.

Choosing organisations to study proved critical for many candidates. Small organisations (partnerships and sole traders) prevented candidates from showing any depth of understanding of organisational structures. Those who chose very different companies sometimes found it was impossible to find suitable roles to compare. This limited the marks available to them.

AO1.3

Most candidates could 'display a secure understanding of the essential features' of the job role. Weaker candidates, who were unable to describe the role in terms of its significance to the organisation, tended to evade the issue by talking about the life and career of an individual who performs the role; meriting marks from the lower band only.

It is often proving essential to include a recording (DVD) of the presentation as candidates invariably showed a greater understanding when talking through their slides than that evidenced by the bullet points alone. Candidates reaching the top band described the role to classmates, describing its demands and the responsibilities in detail, usually talking for eight minutes or more.

For the first time candidates were presenting evidence as Pptx files; these included candidates' audio commentary with their slides. This proved a successful means of evidencing this component but please send such files on a disc rather than a memory stick.

AO4.1

Many candidates included reviews in the form of conclusions; these successfully compared the organisations and made commentaries on their 'effectiveness'. The stronger candidates cited mission statements and supported opinions by quoting reviews or other measures of success. Discussing 'structure and purpose' however tested many, especially those who had not investigated organisational structure for AO1.1.

AO4.2

Most candidates were able to recount factual information about the job role but few were able to present 'analytical accounts'. To reach the top band candidates are also expected to show a perception of the 'generic issues concerning working practice'. Candidates meeting this assessment objective explained pay and conditions, union membership and most importantly, the type of contract offered. This was related to the significance of the role and the value placed upon it by the studied organisation.

G381 Professional Practice: Skills Development

General Comments

Centres are strongly advised to revisit the specification to refresh their understanding of the requirements of this unit. Many centres had moved away from the specification and had not applied the marking criteria correctly; this meant that outcomes for many candidates in this session were affected.

Several of the issues that arose in this unit stemmed from the use of self devised work or thematic ideas that were only loosely linked with repertoire and then developed by candidates in a self devised way. In many centres candidates appeared to have been encouraged to study a variety of pieces and include all of the work in a 'scattergun' approach, which is not acceptable. The unit requirement is that candidates undertake the development of skills through the selection of three pieces of repertoire work. This must include taking part in performances in both lead and supporting roles. Two of these pieces will consist of work in progress but largely complete, one piece will be complete. Centres that allowed candidates to submit a range of works did not fulfil the requirements and left candidates unable to identify or establish any depth or mastery of skills and did not allow candidates to focus on specific skills development, as the focus was on the selected pieces, rather than on the skills required to realise them.

Administration

Centres generally understood the moderation process, with few clerical errors in this June session. Only a few centres had problems with the paperwork. It is essential that centres do submit the correct paperwork so that the moderation process runs smoothly. Centres are reminded that internal moderation is a key part of the process and must be undertaken to ensure that both the standards of work and the marking process are checked and consistent across the centre before final marks are submitted.

Portfolios

Portfolios arrived in time for the moderation process. Unfortunately, some centres had not filled in the URS form fully, especially the location column. The approach to placing annotations within the body of the portfolios was at times very vague, making it difficult to see where the marks had been awarded. URS sheets must be completed with detailed signposting to locate the appropriate evidence. Centres that had ensured candidates included a contents page, page numbers and clear skills to be developed often had candidates that were able to demonstrate a logical and appropriate approach to skills development.

Developing skills (A02.2) was varied in this session with a wide selection of repertoire used; however dancers and musicians tended to use more technical vocabulary and appeared to take a more professional approach to their work.

Many candidates included workshops on practitioners, which is good practice and appropriate to skills development. However, some candidates did not apply what they had learnt to their chosen pieces of repertoire and enhancement of skills which made the inclusion of the workshop irrelevant and meant that they were unable to access the full mark range.

Some candidates had very detailed portfolios but the practical evidence did not always relate or reflect the written word, with many candidates unable to achieve the professional standard in their performances as required by the unit specification. High marks cannot be justified in A03.1 unless the skill development is of a consistently high standard. Portfolio logs also need to include what was achieved in the rehearsal and also work that requires further progress, setting

or adjusting targets and evaluating their progress if any. Taking into account all the above points, many portfolios seen lacked in detail, technical language, content and structure.

Research / Handouts

Too many handouts were included in candidate's portfolios, which were generic in nature. All candidates need to research the social, historical and cultural aspects of the time of their chosen work and then show how they have applied this information to their own performance, particularly where there has been a major impact on the work studied. It is essential that candidates have an understanding of both the stylistic features and the meaning behind their chosen pieces to be able to access the higher mark bands. Internet pages with no annotations or reference to the skill development on the plan are largely irrelevant and disregarded as evidence.

Effective research resulted in deeper understanding and this enabled candidates to develop and improve their pieces further.

Health and Safety

Many candidates showed some awareness of health and safety procedures however; too many candidates are not embedding health and safety into their practice and are only really adding it into the appendix or producing a standalone generic sheet. Candidates should be able to show how they have used the information and knowledge in their practice.

Choosing Repertoire

Selection of appropriate material is crucial in this unit. Candidates must be able to develop skills through the selected material and choosing pieces that require a very specific skill set may hinder candidates' development. Candidates must select works that suit their ability or talents and identify which skills they want to develop.

Candidates do not have to select repertoire from different art forms. They can work within one genre as long as what they have selected enables them to develop a range of skills and techniques. Candidates must show evidence of leading and supporting roles. Recommendations include solo, duo and ensemble works. Centres must also make sure that pieces are sufficiently long in order to display the skills under development. GCSE works are not suitable, neither are dance/music examination pieces that have a narrow focus on a particular standard or grade.

It would benefit centres greatly if they revisited the specification and guided candidates sufficiently to produce detailed and thorough work that includes:

- A skills audit and Skills Development Plan (SDP)
- An action plan
- Three pieces of repertoire:
 - 2 pieces of repertoire in the rehearsal stage (need to be close to completion), reading from a script is not acceptable and 1 piece (the finished product) performed to an audience
- **1** of the three pieces must be ensemble/duo work
- All pieces **must** be repertoire. Devised work, however loosely connected to repertoire is not acceptable and candidates will be unable to access the higher mark bands if devised work is offered for moderation.
- Annotated copies of pieces of repertoire performed
- Teacher observations
- Responses to feedback
- Targets that are clearly linked to existing skills, but are not generic in nature, and are attainable.

Extracts of an appropriate length are more suitable to facilitate meaningful skills development, than full-length works. More successful centres adapt a linear approach in which students plan to adopt three or four skills across the three pieces with on-going opportunities for feedback, review, reflection and adjustment, all showing good practice.

Many centres still produce more work than is asked for in the specification. Unfortunately, moderators only look at three pieces of work. It is therefore essential that it is clearly stated at the front of a candidate's portfolio which work is to be moderated.

Front Sheets

Good practice was clearly seen in centres where a front sheet was included for each candidate which stated the skills selected for development and the names of the three pieces of repertoire that have been chosen, through which the skills can be realised. Further details relating to when the piece was written, who performed it and where, were also included. There should be an explanation about which version of the repertoire they are using and how they have adapted it for performance. This is particularly important because if the work cannot be identified as repertoire then it will be disregarded as evidence.

Candidate Identification

It is important that candidates can be clearly identified both through their portfolios and on DVD. Centres must ensure that candidates introduce themselves to the camera by name, candidate number, title of repertoire piece and the skills that they are focusing on. There should also be a clear running order that accompanies the DVD.

The Location of Evidence

Portfolios do need to be well structured with the use of numbered pages and sub-headings. This helps with locating the evidence and to justify the marks awarded. By providing this information, alongside detailed annotations on the work as well as on the URS forms it clearly shows the moderators how the assessment criteria have been applied. Most centres used detailed annotation but some centres did not complete the location column with sufficient detail. Centres must also record timings and chapters on the DVD and record these on the URS form. If the moderator is unable to locate the evidence the work will be returned to the centre.

The Skills Development Plan

Candidates need to outline the knowledge or techniques they wish to acquire, processes or equipment they wish to understand and operate, or set pieces that they would like to perform in a Skills Development Plan (SDP). Successful centres adopted a dedicated and well-planned approach. Good candidates were able to show that they understood the planning process and were able to take stock of their skills and recognise their strengths and identify skills that they needed to acquire or develop. These candidates were able to outline a realistic timescale to work to and at key times following assessments, adjust their plan in response to advice and feedback given on their progress.

Successful plans are realistic and useful documents, which encourage candidates to develop their evaluative skills. The SDP is the framework for the unit and should include notes on workshops and lessons. Candidates must refer to the SDP throughout the portfolio and explain how they have adapted it in response to feedback and self-evaluation. Some centres did this in the form of a table and this worked very well. Candidates who do not have a SDP cannot successful evidence how they have made progress and developed.

Commentaries

Candidates must record each stage of the development process through detailed commentaries or logs. These should ideally be in a written form and need to be detailed demonstrating candidate ownership. Candidates need to review their technical skills and the way in which they are developing by keeping a record of their work as it progresses and using this as the basis for the written commentaries that they submit in their portfolio. Candidates also need to consider the comments on their work and on the observation sheets from their teachers.

Observation Reports

Please note teacher observation reports need to be signed and dated as well as being a summative evaluation detailing the reasons for judgements made and should not be a tick box pro forma, as this does not show the candidates' process or journey in the work covered.

Appropriately skilled observers who use appropriate technical terminology and their experience to make artistic judgements should write the observation reports. Peer assessments cannot fulfil this role. Good centres established a starting point and worked through milestone assessments in order to capture and document progress made.

Recording of rehearsals and performances on DVD

The use of DVDs to record development of the work was completed successfully in many centres. Where centres ensure that the development of the piece from first attempt through rehearsals to the final performance was recorded, candidates were able to evidence good skill development. The work in progress also needs to evidence development and should be explored beyond just a read through. Final performances should be in front of an audience and adopt all of the production values of professional practice.

Some centres still do not clearly identify the students and the quality of the recording is poor, making it difficult to see or hear the performances. Producing DVD's that evidence the rehearsal process is needed, especially where teachers are seen to be giving feedback/directing and/or encouraging candidates to discuss their work and the progress being made. It would also help the moderation process if teachers included a running order with timings against each candidate and the piece of repertoire. DVD's that zoomed in and out too often did not help candidates, neither did loud background noises that were distracting.

Including a recent photograph at the front of a portfolio of the candidate would help overcome some of the issues identifying candidates, especially with regards to group work.

Conclusion

It is clear from this session that there were some issues with the quality of work submitted. Centres who followed the specification and applied the marking criteria provided solid opportunities for candidates to develop good skills and techniques. Centres must revisit the unit requirements to ensure that candidates can access all aspects of the marking criteria. Portfolio submissions must reinforce performance work and centres must remember that the essential part of this unit is to show development of skills. Candidates must not offer devised work in this unit. Moderators do not count a devised piece of work as one of the three works, either in progress or final performance. **Only repertoire work is acceptable on this unit.** Centres are strongly advised to seek advice from OCR if they are unsure about their choice of repertoire pieces.

G382 Professional Practice: Performance

General Comments

A range of responses were seen from candidates. Administration of the examination process was generally good with most Portfolios and DVDs arriving on time. Standards of performance work were varied and examiners reported that they were applying the full range of marks. Issues of repertoire had improved but remain, albeit, a small but significant issue in some centres. Where issues arose with repertoire candidates were unable to access the full range of marks. Some centres are promoting performances with very small audiences, which limits some access to criteria for the candidates. With smaller cohorts there has been a slight increase in centres using non-examined cast members, these centres do need to explore very carefully how this may impact on assessment. Written materials have continued to respond to better structures and contexts provided by centres.

Centres with G383 candidates have continued to extend the range of evidence recording both the interviews and backstage and other technical operations; this gives a comprehensive range of supporting DVD evidence. Most G383 students did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of professional contexts in their chosen technical areas to be able to replicate professional practice, skills and documentation. This remains a major concern in this unit.

Individual tasks of the units

Performance (G382)

The candidates that performed well were those that had responded to demands of the unit, the assessment criteria in terms of professional replication, choice of appropriate repertoire and depth of analysis in the written evidence. That is to say 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 the evidence needs and to produce evidence that met the higher descriptors of the criteria. ***When the criteria refers to 'full engagement with the material' (AO3 Performance MB3) this is clearly within the context of repertoire.*** The small amount of centres reproducing dance school or rock school pieces and who still produce self-devised dance pieces remain a problem since they limit candidates' ability to access this higher range of the criteria. Undertaking a thematic approach such as '60s music' also presents issues, as the repertoire for this is wide and ill-defined (it is much better to perform 'The Beatles' or the songs of Carole King).

Candidates did not do so well where they did not respond to professional production values as outlined above. Again descriptors in the top band that refer to control, fluency and accuracy do so within the context of the tension provided by an audience and a finished production.

Centres also responded widely in the demand for Health and Safety in portfolios but tended to exclude personal, art form based considerations and choose to concentrate on generic risk assessments.

Candidates that produced appropriate performances fully understood the vocational and technical demands of the unit and contextualised their preparation with reference to assessment criteria and demands. Consequently, candidates that generally achieved well in the task of producing a performance were immersed in professional practice and choose clear repertoire pieces. Within this context there was evidence of a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding.

A range of approaches are expected given the choices and resources available but centres must give candidates the opportunity to produce evidence that tests their understanding of professional practice against the assessment criteria. 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. For example examiners this year saw some very innovative approaches involving direct contact with the audience, cabaret and 'club' settings, site-specific pieces, promenade and more traditional forms. 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 did not fulfil the unit demands and were unable to access to the higher mark bands.

Written evidence (G382)

Portfolios from better candidates augmented their portfolios with committed and 'owned' responses that drew 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. The use of writing frames or pro-forma inhibited independent and autonomous work from candidates.

Health and Safety contents were improved with the use of risk assessments, annotated photographs and appropriate warm-up activities that all contributed to an enhanced understanding. There were some good examples where candidates had really tried to link Health and Safety to their own performance 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 also a requirement of any professional practice context. The criteria are framed from this individual and not generic approach to Health and Safety. In the best portfolios candidates started with themselves and their own Health and Safety 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 memoires 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.

G384 Getting Work

General comments

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. There is reference to appendices below, but additional appendices can be used to show annotation on documents that need to be pristine for the self-promotion pack. There was evidence that candidates 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. Candidates demonstrated that 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.

Conversely, some candidates showed less understanding and knowledge of the industry and these portfolios were characterised by much less fluency and depth. Weaker responses failed to project forward effectively or make ambitious and fully aspirational decisions based on best-case scenarios and well-researched vocational routes. These portfolios were generally characterised by interviews with random arts professionals or none at all, out of date information on conditions of service and overly ambitious prospects or in contrast ridiculously realistic prospects; there is no point in candidates following the line that they are not likely to get a job in the first year however 'realistic' this may be.

Administration

All documentation from centres was completed and sent in good time. There a number of centres where Centre Authentication Forms were not included with the samples and centres are reminded again that this is a requirement of entry.

Almost all comments on the URS forms and the annotations in the portfolios were helpful in understanding how marks had been allocated. However, there were still a few centres where there was insufficient information and comment on these forms to back up the marks awarded, e.g. some did not provide enough detail about location while others relied on simple ticks to indicate where work was of a good quality but without referencing this to criteria.

Many portfolios were well organised and well presented, with appropriate use of contents pages and appendices. However, in some instances no page numbers were used, or portfolios were simply paper-clipped together. There are still some candidates who do not use an appendix effectively or any appendix at all. Appendices can include research notes, drafts and details of arts organisations, and enable the assessed evidence to be carefully edited and selected for optimum impact. Some portfolios were encumbered with too much material; at the other end of the scale, some were very thin. It is essential that centres follow guidelines on content, layout and presentation more closely, these guidelines aid the moderation process by making where the demands of the unit and the criteria have been addressed more readily apparent and clear.

Promotional pack

There was a wide range of promotion packs. Some were produced to a very high standard and effective with a strong sense of what was needed to persuade and sell the candidate in a professional context. These candidates had drawn on their research and experience which enabled them to speak directly and with focus to those potential employers working in a specific vocational area. Here there was a good underpinning of knowledge and understanding.

Weaker candidates had little of this underpinning knowledge and were working in a very narrow context, one often provided for them by the centre and entirely focused on their own anecdotal or school-based knowledge and not on interviews conducted with freelance professionals.

The best portfolios included evidence that candidates had talked to working professionals and experienced the vocational context in replicated events or in real visits to professional venues and spaces. These 'spaces' included the websites of professionals. Many candidates demonstrated that they have begun to understand the importance of social media and websites in their professional promotion – in that they realised through their research and networks that this is how the industry is working currently in most areas. Generally however, not much use was made use of online access to professional formats, although there was more use of social media and the creation of an 'online presence'. Some professional quality photos were offered – but very few. Most photos are still without a clear 'target audience', or having a clear idea of what the photo said about them as a performer.

The promotional pack needs to work with the work-plan and some candidates made good links between, for instance, a set of credible qualifications in a resume and what could be reasonable expected in the first year of work. Some candidates had very modest CVs based on what they had actually done and wildly ambitious plans for their first year. Candidates can have fictitious resumes and qualifications: they just need to be *credible* and *sustainable* and working in a well-informed professional context.

Plan of first year of work

Again, a wide range of responses with a variation in the number of years forming the basis of projections, some very ambitious earnings and some unrealistic ideas of what work might be available in the first year. Most candidates however, kept to the prerequisite for 50% contract and 50% freelance although some didn't always understand that the contract work should be in a related area rather than any part-time casual work. Most candidates chose teaching or workshop leading in this area, but there were also examples of setting up companies and writing. Some plans were sometimes over-optimistic about what might be achieved in a first year, and thus lacked some credibility. Some candidates divided the year into two blocks of freelance/contract work in an unrealistic way. Many candidates offered the first year plan based on a hypothetical 'post-training context'. A few identified the skills provided by specified training / named training establishments and considered how this might enhance work prospects. Some candidates still did not pay enough attention to contingency planning or professional development.

There were good examples of plans that 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.

There was often a sound knowledge and understanding of work opportunities in a very localised area, but some candidates did not discuss in enough detail how interviews they conducted with workers in the industry helped in the creation of the plan of work for the first 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.

The use of 'strands' of work proved mostly useful providing structure and focus to the material. As previously indicated the best candidates linked the plan very closely to the promotional pack giving the overall evidence credibility and coherence.

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.

Few candidates placed their first year in the context of impending cuts to arts funding and the general financial climate.

Analysis of the plan

Those candidates that provided coherent packs and plans knew clearly where the strengths and weaknesses of the market and professional area were and they used this to contextualise their own personal analysis. Weaker candidates tended to restrict their analysis just to their strengths and weakness and even this was not done very effectively.

Much of the weaker work was in response to a misunderstanding of the purposes and intention of a SWOT analysis. The best portfolios had very succinct analyses because they had looked at their overall plan and projections and completed a focused SWOT analysis of the market. Where relevant and appropriate they were able to apply this to 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 weigh up their chances of success with clarity and honesty. Most candidates were good at identifying the strengths of their plan as this was often closely related to the skills outlined in the résumé. Weaknesses were more difficult for candidates to identify. In terms of opportunities, the most able candidates could see that the nature of their work could grow in relation to their professional development and this provided a good source of discussion. Threats were more difficult to identify, but the strongest candidates were able to locate the work in a context that did identify such threats. Good candidates placed their analysis into a wider professional context and related it both to a specific professional area and their place in it. Given the current economic climate it should be a given for candidates to mention both their own personal issues and contexts in the SWOT analysis as well as the effect economic downturn has on the industry and audience behaviour.

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 offered opportunities for candidates to perform in a clearly defined style or genre. There were some centres which chose two contemporary pieces instead of one contemporary and one historical piece which was not accepted.

Essays

There was evidence of a general on-going 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. This is still relatively unusual however and in many centres the research component is often seen as a 'bolt on' with the performance dominating the centre's approach and often dictating, and thereby limiting, the scope and depth of the research. Exceptional candidates approached the research in a serious, focused 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. It was noticeable that the more effective the research, the more apposite, and therefore high scoring, the practical work.

Instances where the research process lacks depth and rigour were still common, with centres offering generic research material lifted from popular websites without endeavouring to isolate and explore particular aspects of unique skills, style and genre, using this research to demonstrate understanding through its direct application to performance processes. The socio-historical context of the times of the work does not often figure significantly, even when it clearly had a major impact on the work studied. Furthermore, many candidates tend to approach this kind of research using a simplistic 'GCSE performance logbook' approach. Consequently, centres were generally over marking this element and, not setting high enough expectations for candidates. For example, there is a lot of insistence on the 'simple' approach i.e., the biography of the production, how long it ran on Broadway etc. Such responses cannot achieve marks higher than the lowest band.

There continued to be examples of insufficient thought being given to the question 'how do we make this historical piece relevant to a modern audience *without* compromising / losing the original genre?' Some essays were dominated by directorial decisions and performance ideas, which were not then related through the discussion to the stylistic conventions that should be a central feature of the research.

There was still a tendency for candidates to write from a narrative practical stance i.e. 'what we did'. In the least effective cases this descended into discussing absenteeism, casting problems, what material had been rejected and why. Such issues are irrelevant to addressing the Assessment Criteria and should be disregarded. Conversely, teacher-led structures including paragraph headings are not helpful to more astute candidates who find themselves constrained by such well-meaning devices.

Practical Work

It is appreciated that centres often find the production requirement of this unit quite challenging. Pressures on resources are often considerable, especially when there is an expectation to produce a single 'whole school' type of production. Where this is the case, inevitably, the bulk of resources are channelled in this direction and consequently all remaining productions have to be

run on a shoestring. Whilst this approach could be argued as producing what is a very important contribution to candidates' understanding of real-world financial constraint the result is that often at least one production for this unit adopts the 'one studio with plastic chairs and school uniform' approach. It must be understood that production values are very important for all sorts of reasons, many of which can be related to the Assessment Objectives and hence to marks awarded. It is not necessary to spend a lot on a production to achieve quality production values and experience has shown that the chief operative agent here is resourcefulness. Centres should endeavour to create contacts in sympathetic industries to enable them to obtain or borrow materials and equipment just as professional small touring companies do.

There are continuing examples of centres with a one-off candidate in a particular art form being 'fitted in' to a production. An example of this is using a dancer to perform 'period' dance before a Shakespeare play. Candidates often don't consider its purpose, what the context is and how its inclusion can be justified. Instrumentalists are another example. With some thought and preparation these diverse art forms can be made not so much to 'fit' but to be *integrated*, however, to allow this, the research has to be done first and it is this research, not the directorial decision which provides the justification for its inclusion.

Candidates sometimes found it hard to differentiate between AO3.1 (employing stylistic features) and AO3.2 (using these to communicate intention to an audience). That confusion still exists and can be seen in centre marking where there appears to be uncertainty about distinguishing between an understanding of stylistic integrity and strong performances and strong adaptations. By way of reiteration of existing OCR *Guidance to Centres*, centres are requested to familiarise themselves with the following definitions of criteria:

AO3.1

The performance/production work in *both* extracts demonstrates an understanding and application of performance and stylistic conventions/production elements/technical method *specific* to that genre/period. The evidence should relate *directly* to that presented under AO2.2 and should effectively demonstrate a practical application of the specific stylistic conventions inherent in the repertoire studied. Assessment should focus exclusively on relevant skills appropriate to the piece studied and should not consider generic performance/production skills, which are assessed in G386/7. It is understood that there will likely be major contrasts between the historical and the contemporary extracts and this may entail significant differences in approach by candidates. Assessors should make allowance for this.

Finally, assessors are reminded that candidates who may not be naturally gifted performers can still do well in this unit, since it is their ability to demonstrate understanding and application of a set of skills different to those examined under G386.

AO3.2

The performance/production work in *both* extracts demonstrates an understanding of the processes involved in communicating/adapting performance for a *contemporary* audience. The assessment should therefore be targeted at the candidates' ability to create audience relationships through the application of performance conventions/production elements/technical method. The practical demonstration will enable candidates to explore ways of communicating with an audience and, in the case of *historical* repertoire they will need to demonstrate how production/stylistic conventions, stage directions, language, music and dance from another era may be adapted to communicate with a contemporary spectator. Assessors should focus on evidence of how the candidate has applied historical research and adapted it to performance in a way that satisfies the expectations of a modern audience. It will be helpful to the assessment process if only key moments in the performance are considered in this light since it is unlikely that candidates will be able to discuss the entire extract in these terms. In the case of *contemporary* repertoire, assessors should look for evidence which demonstrates that

candidates have understood and applied the intentions of the author of the work, paying attention to the *milieu* within which the extract is set and how this provides opportunities to engage with an audience and build moments of communication.

Notwithstanding the above comments, practical work was once again generally sound and in some instances very strong with assessment criteria applied appropriately, albeit with a tendency to slightly overrate, especially at the top.

It has been found necessary to reiterate a point made in previous reports, namely that there are centres which continue under the misapprehension that because a text is set in a historical period it is, *de facto*, an historical text - even when the text was created in the 21st Century. In similar vein there have been examples of centres presenting a contemporary dramatic reworking of a historical play and citing this as a historical text e.g. a modern rewriting (NB *not* translation) of an ancient Greek classic.

Centres are advised to consider most carefully their choice of texts since in some cases there is not enough scope to explore different styles of performance, particularly in the case of some musical theatre productions. It should be remembered that performers are assessed on everything they perform and consequently a good actor who cannot sing or dance to an equal standard is going to be disadvantaged if s/he fails to do so.

Academic standards

Centres are again reminded that all candidates must include citations and a full bibliography for each essay. Citations, bibliographies and word counts are still being omitted and where present, word counts were often exceeded. However, the overall standard was an improvement on previous sessions. Bibliographies were frequently linked to relevant citations included in the body of the work. The use of proper footnotes is a skill that should be encouraged as where it is in evidence the academic credentials of the written work improves discernibly.

Candidates should be encouraged to research 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.

Production Candidates

There were only a few candidates following this pathway. There has been a slight increase in the quality of submissions but there is still a discernible gap between what candidates submit and what can be considered 'fit for purpose' when measured against Industry standards. Essay work tended to follow the same pattern as Performance Pathway Candidates with some specific bias towards the chosen skill being woven into the fabric of the discussion and sometimes along the 'best fit' approach discussed above. Production Candidates need to submit adequate additional material to support their understanding and application of the production process. A few sketches or a roughly drawn plan with one or two photographs is wholly inadequate. Stage Managers are expected to supply the 'Book' along with detailed documentation relating to production meetings/props management and the like. This should be produced to a high standard and not in the form of casual scribbling in margins. Lighting designers are expected to submit detailed CAD designs together with identification, disposition and allocation of channels and lanterns according to industry practice.

The same degree of rigour applies to designers in the fields of sound, costume and set. It is suggested that such candidates produce a separate DVD in which they walk and talk the viewer through the production process highlighting technical methods and good examples of what they have achieved. The group performance DVD alone is insufficient in this respect

Administration

It cannot be too highly emphasised that clear, unambiguous candidate identification is of paramount importance. During this session examiners had frequently to contact centres seeking clarification, especially where no photographs of candidates were supplied or when DVD 'identity parades' were either indistinct or rushed. Centres are still not providing the proper photographs and many of those which do accompany the work seem to only show the candidates in costume. In other cases photographs have been entirely absent or present in the form of blurred monochrome photocopies from which it is impossible to discern the appearance of the candidate.

Centre notes on both the URS sheets and on the essays were of invaluable help to the moderator. These notes were often quite detailed and most linked effectively to specific Assessment Objectives.

Following the loss of some work in the post it is suggested that Centres keep copies of everything they send out so that they can be moderated in the case of loss.

DVDs

Many Centres still do not have the candidates introduce themselves on video before the performance. This is particularly important when they are part of a 'whole school production' where there may be many other performers who are not examination candidates. It helps if the non-assessed members of the cast identify themselves as well as 'non-assessed'. Some centres 'tag' them on the video (i.e. superimpose their name and number on to the video upon their first entrance or appearance) and this is very helpful. It also helps identification if Centres include a few production stills of the candidates.

Video evidence is still very varied in quality, with obscure camera angles and the camera situated so far from the stage that the individual actors are virtually indistinguishable. It is strongly urged that Centres obtain the services of a capable camera operator to ensure viewable results.

Conclusion

It is important to express admiration for the way many centres have engaged with this unit. There was some excellent work seen this year. Some centres demonstrated real academic rigour and research evidence, which was applied most effectively to process to produce performances of great merit. Centres continue to improve in the presentation of this module and examiners have experienced significant levels of creative and academic integrity.

G386 Producing your own Showcase

General Comments

Administration in centres was generally good. Centres ensured the paperwork arrived in time, providing running orders and details of performances. With the convenience of email, communications are significantly better and there appeared to be good contact between the centre and the examiner with regard to the details of the examination. Candidate photographs were, however, often missing.

There was a range of works and variable standards seen during this session. Overall, the standards were slightly higher than had been seen in previous June sessions. Candidates appeared to understand the value of planning and had considered not just the content of their Showcase, but also the performance techniques required to realise it. The encouragement by staff was evident and many candidates adopted a more holistic approach to the unit. Candidates were also well supported by appreciative audiences of friends, family, staff and students. The presence of an audience enhanced the communication and awareness for the candidates, giving them that sense of occasion in performance and a move towards the professional context of work. Technical support was also more apparent which embraced the production values essential to providing candidates with a professional setting.

Examiners reported that good candidates selected a suitable range of contrasting pieces demonstrating breadth and depth. Material selected was generally drawn from repertoire; however, there are still issues with dance material. Many candidates took their pieces from TV dance shows. These pieces are often very short and do not always allow the candidates to display a sufficiently wide range of skills and/or techniques. Other issues arose where candidates were selecting group dance pieces and adapting them for solo performance. The candidates' were effectively selecting the movements they liked or could perform and turned the group repertoire into a solo dance routine.

Many candidates continued to select works that were unsuitable for their skills and abilities and were far too difficult for them to cope with. This often meant that the candidates did not show any real understanding of what they were performing, resulting in a lack of mastery of the material and dynamic performances. This prevented many candidates from accessing the higher mark bands. Whilst candidates should be encouraged to stretch themselves they must have an understanding of the stylistic features and the meaning of their chosen pieces. In part this was a reflection of their lack of research but it also reflects the need for greater guidance from teaching staff about matching appropriate pieces to the abilities of their students.

Centres now seem to understand that it is not necessary for candidates to choose pieces from different art forms to show contrast. Candidates should always be advised to work to their strengths. This is not the opportunity to try something new in a discipline they have little previous experience in because the candidates want to challenge themselves. It is about consolidating the skills and techniques acquired and performing to the candidates' strengths.

Several centres seem to have abandoned or forgotten the element of 'show' in Showcase. There were some examples where candidates had put minimal thought into the presentation of their pieces so that there were no costume changes, no props and limited attempts at staging. This is the opportunity for students to show what they can do and yet many of these performances lacked polish and refinement.

All candidates understood the selection of two solo pieces but many again selected duo/duets/duologues that were in fact solo or group pieces that they had adapted or merely provided accompaniments for singers. The duo performance must show evidence of two

distinctive parts and of the candidates working together.

Candidates must perform all three pieces, one after the other with no gaps between their pieces. This unit tests the candidates' ability to perform all three pieces back-to-back with regards to stamina and strength and the ability to move from one style of piece to another. There are still some centres that have to be reminded of this and they must be aware that candidates are unable to access all of the available marks if they do not perform their pieces within the allocated time. Teachers must check the timings of the showcases and ensure that costume changes, set changes and any transition PowerPoint presentations are included in this time.

Provision of DVD-recorded evidence of the examination was generally good during this session. Centres particularly at the end of the session worked hard to ensure that DVDs were sent as soon as possible after the examination. All performance work was on DVD with some very impressive DVDs submitted; some centres produced excellent DVD material with clear chapter labels and candidate identification. This is very useful and helpful for the examiner. A few centres did not adhere to the three-day turnaround and had to be reminded to send the DVDs.

The positioning of the examiner is crucial and centres must consider this. Seating an examiner at the back of the auditorium may infringe their ability to see facial expression, gestures and body language as well as not being able to actually see through the audience. Centres must remember that this is still an examination and not just focus on the 'public performance aspects.' There were a few centres where the examiner was not considered and the event was produced for the public audience to view whole school showcases or compilation evenings. Centres should be discouraged from including non-examined performance pieces and should focus on the showcase performance as a discrete event. Where centres have booked professional settings they must ensure that the showcase remains an examination.

Preparatory Notes

Examiners commented on overall improvements in the preparatory notes, with several centres clearly using the specification and marking criteria to provide guidance on what should be included. Many candidates still do not appreciate the importance of research ignoring the social, historical and cultural contexts of their chosen pieces. Others think that the context of the piece means nothing more than writing a very brief synopsis or stating whom the piece is by and when it was produced. Some candidates included a short paragraph on the context of the pieces, but this was simply to comment on events that were current at the time the pieces were written. They were unrelated to the pieces themselves with no connection made to the performance to be given. In many instances poor contextual work affected the overall preparatory notes mark as well as impacting upon the quality of the performances. Centres need to be reminded that the preparatory notes need to contain evidence of each stage of the preparation process and that a diary/log is necessary.

Dance candidates are increasingly submitting DVD evidence and/or Internet links of the dances they are to perform. This is very helpful as it provides undisputed evidence that the pieces are repertoire and it makes the marking much easier, as a direct comparison can be made between the performance and the original pieces. All dance candidates should be strongly encouraged to follow this example.

As in previous years, there were instances where the discussion with the candidate 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. Stronger candidates displayed a professional approach to planning for performance, with their research into potential pieces and selection procedure explained rather

than merely described, with relevant research into the social, historical and cultural context of the pieces actually applied to the final performance.

Weaker candidate submissions were little more than basic descriptive logs, with little research taken from the Internet that was not applied. There was little evidence of the use of action planning and feedback to develop the work. Candidates who did not produce and submit any working notes were disadvantaged and unable to access the higher marks. The preparatory notes are worth 20% of the final grade and both centres and candidates must be aware of this. There were some candidates who were unable to achieve a grade that supported high quality performance work due to poor quality portfolio submissions.

The Discussion

Examiners reported that candidates were well prepared for the discussion. Many candidates displayed a knowledge and passion for their selected pieces taking ownership of their work and talking openly about their research, intentions and preparation. The discussions gave the candidates the opportunity to discuss the selected pieces and inform the examiner of their intended interpretation. Discussions allowed candidates to demonstrate and expand the progress they had commented on in their preparatory notes.

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 no reported self-devised pieces although some candidates were producing dances 'in the style of...' which of course limits the marks available.

Music candidates discussed details of style, genre, technical language and influences from the industry. Stronger candidates discussed their own interpretations and related them to historic, social and cultural influences. There were many singers who had selected pieces that they knew or liked with little regard for whether or not they were suitable for their vocal ability. Many candidates were choosing pieces without looking at key signatures and the range of notes covered. This meant the pieces caused difficulties with breath control, pitch and tuning. There were quite a few instrumentalists who had good knowledge of their selected pieces but really needed to consider the performance aspects further.

Drama candidates were able to discuss their characters and had considered some aspects of the plays from which they had taken them, but quite a few of them failed to really understand their chosen pieces in terms of the playwrights' intentions or the context of the work. Good candidates were able to discuss influences, style and context as well as characterisation, period, mood and atmosphere. This enabled them to inform the examiner of their intended interpretation.

The Performance of the Showcase

There was a wide and interesting range of performance pieces with some innovative choices. Stronger candidates showed attention to detail in every aspect of their performance, fully understanding the material and its potential, alongside technical excellence. Successful candidates were able to perform in contrasting styles and showed a good range of skills and techniques covering a wide range of genre, and art forms. Some high levels of skill were demonstrated; many of these candidates had adopted a professional approach showing the capacity to integrate a variety of appropriate features into their performances. Candidates had made every effort to be self-assured and take ownership of their work.

Some of the outstanding performances reflected professional practice, these were the result of centres giving good advice over the choice of material, strong direction and matching pieces to students' abilities. However, too many candidates attempted pieces that they clearly did not understand, or chose pieces that were unsuitable for relatively inexperienced young performers; this resulted in weaker performance work. There were noticeable differences in the standards across the centres in terms of the suitability of the material.

Stronger drama candidates displayed good focus on both physical and vocal techniques. Pace was an issue and a number of drama candidates tended to rush monologues or lack adequate variety in their vocal technique. A few candidates had selected pieces that required the use of an accent but then performed without it. These candidates must consider whether they should take a piece of repertoire if they are unable to tackle the accent. Shakespeare pieces were generally weak, with many candidates struggling with the understanding of iambic pentameter, clear diction and clarity of voice. Too many candidates performing Shakespeare pieces did not have a secure understanding about the structure of the language and its performance aspects. The language had been learnt but the candidates were only able to regurgitate the lines and had been unable to mould and shape the work. Candidates must also be aware that if they are using a 'silent partner' in a monologue then that performer can make no contribution to the piece. On a positive note examiners did report that candidates were displaying a stronger audience awareness and communication at all levels.

Music candidates were well represented with a range of singers and instrumentalists. Musical Theatre continues to be a popular choice with candidates, who are required to demonstrate techniques across a range of singing, dancing and acting. There was an increased entry of instrumentalists who were able to demonstrate a good level of skills and techniques. Instrumentalists must remember that part of the examination is marked on audience awareness and they must work to engage with the audience. Too many instrumentalists performed very insular pieces with little or no regard for the audience. Many of the pieces were performed with backing tracks, although it was nice to see an increase in the amount of centres providing live music accompaniments.

Good dance candidates were performing impressive dance routines from repertoire. They were tackling a variety of different genres, in order to show a range of dance skills and techniques. Stylistic elements and technical ability were evident alongside balance and contrast. Examiners reported a general improvement in performance techniques. However, even stronger candidates needed to improve strength and endurance to make sure that all three pieces of dance were performed in a polished and refined manner. Dancers must ensure that their choice of costume is appropriate as too many dancers were adjusting their costumes during the performance.

Technical elements such as set, props, costume and lighting, to enhance the professionalism of the pieces were used by most candidates, although poor quality sound continues to detract from the work of some singers and dancers. Many candidates are making an attempt to link their pieces, which is a good idea but this needs to be rehearsed. Candidates who are linking with PowerPoint Presentations need to be mindful of time constraints. A few candidates are moving through one piece to get to the next. This overlap, with transitional links, is not really necessary and does have a tendency to affect the opening of the next piece. Audiences do not need to watch costume and character changes and there are no additional marks for the extra work involved. Technical support in many centres made a real difference to the quality of the performances. Good centres had provided sound and lighting as well as a suitable performance space that was well lit and appropriate. Many were able to provide projections and media coverage that enhanced the overall look of the performance.

In a few centres, a number of candidates seriously exceeded the time limit of fifteen minutes for the whole showcase, which should include two solo and one paired performance as well as transitions. Over-long pieces give the candidates more work than necessary and hinder the smooth running of the examination as a whole. Also, the candidates must be allocated a fifteen-minute time slot and should not be interspersed with other candidates in a themed compilation show.

Candidates at the highest level showed a committed personal style. It was extremely impressive to see candidates displaying such a high level of skills and a perceptive understanding of the professional context of the work, producing authoritative and absorbing performances, which really engaged with the audience.

G387 Production Demonstration

There were only a few entries for this unit, which makes generalisations quite difficult. Historically, candidates in this unit have struggled to understand that their work must reflect industry standards.

In this session there was evidence of good practice where candidates had embraced all elements of working in a professional context. Preparatory notes included industry standard software that enabled candidates to produce detailed and labelled drawings and diagrams alongside detailed cue sheets and operational guidance. Candidates were able to demonstrate excellent independent ability and worked with initiative. Weaker candidates were able to produce a design brief and respond but needed to refine their work further in light of industry standards.

Centres are reminded that the work for this unit needs to be in two distinct parts: the portfolio of work and the product demonstration. Candidates must submit both their preparatory notes and their portfolio containing their designs as well as pictures, photographs and DVD evidence of their production demonstration.

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