

Performing Arts

Advanced GCE **A2 H546**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H146**

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

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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

There was evidence in all of the unit reports of effective approaches that embraced the vocational aspects of professional practice. Centres have developed structures and resources that support the candidates and allow them to access the full range of marks available to them. Candidates who were well prepared using thorough research to aid their understanding alongside academic rigour and refined performance work demonstrated outstanding practice in all units.

Examiners and Moderators reported that centres had a better understanding of the unit specifications facilitating additional preparation and enabling candidates to achieve developed outcomes. G380/4 saw good candidates submitting detailed case studies, which reflected in-depth research and commendable use of analysis in their studies. The use of technical terms and industry conventions alongside an appropriate vocabulary supported the vocational aspects of the specification. Skills selected for development in G381 were challenging and evidence submitted demonstrated the high standards that candidates were achieving in this session. Stylistic techniques were adventurous and well developed in the work submitted for G385. Performance work in G382/6 was impressive as centres adopted high production values providing well-supported technical environments that reflected the experiences of the professional stage.

Many candidates worked confidently across the units and it was pleasing to see that there was more parity evident across the units showing that candidates were able to achieve comparable results as they tackled the various tasks and assessments required by each unit.

G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

There was more evidence of effective practice in this unit as centres have started to develop their understanding of the requirement necessary to access the full range of marks. More candidates were able to display how research had shaped their understanding and enabled them to gather a depth of knowledge in their case studies. Attempts at comparative analyses were improved by this understanding with some candidates displaying interesting and high quality work about the way organisations continue to operate and survive in the current financial climate. Good practice saw information sourced extremely well presented, using graphs, pie charts, data collection charted for comparative analyses and PowerPoint used to deliver the job presentation.

Centres do need to ensure consistency across the two organisations and ensure that candidates approach both organisations equally. It is recommended by the Principal Moderator to study one organisation collectively followed by independent research and study of the second organisation which then allows the candidates to produce autonomous and independent responses. Areas of weakness centred around the staffing structures and the effectiveness of particular jobs within the organisations. Many candidates needed to provide more substantial evidence of both their research and findings in this area.

Issues with regard to the type of jobs selected for the PowerPoint presentations meant some candidates were unable to access the higher marks as they failed to set the role thoroughly in context of one of the selected organisations. Generic studies were seen where candidates had not selected an actual person from one of their organisations but chosen to look at a job within any organisation. The task is to take on an in-depth study of a person doing a particular job and the significance of that job within the organisation itself.

G381 Skills Development

Outcomes in this unit were high as candidates worked confidently on their skill development. Good practice saw candidates formulating challenging skills develop plans and evidencing their progress with regular DVD footage that showed progression and the acquisition of various skills and techniques. Submissions showed that many centres do understand the demands of this unit. Many candidates submitted a detailed Skills Development Plan (SDP) alongside a regular log that recorded the development of the selected repertoire and skills acquired. Targets that are regularly visited and updated through feedback and progression of the work undertaken underpin the success of this unit. Centres that record this journey from initial readings to the finished piece are able to justify marks awarded and show the development made.

Good evidence through both written submissions and DVD footage captured the necessary evidence to support marks awarded. There were some excellent examples of chaptering different stages of the development, which showed how the candidates were modifying and improving giving an insight into the progress the candidate had made rather than just the end product.

There was an improvement in the selection of material and less self devised work (which is not permitted). Centres have understood the requirements to select pieces from repertoire however, problems were obvious where candidates had been instructed to select one piece of work in each discipline but had no obvious skill or talent to develop. This can disadvantage candidates as standards in their non-specialist areas can be poor and development of skills may be slow.

G382 Professional practice: performance

Examiners reported that candidates performed well where centres had responded to the demands of the unit in terms of the professional replication of selected works. Production values are extremely important in providing the right kind of resources and technical support needed to allow candidates to access the full range of marks available. Many centres really tried to provide challenging projects where candidates could aspire to professional standards in front of a 'live' audience.

Selection of material is still an important factor for centres and they must ensure that careful consideration is given to the suitability of material to enable the candidates to display a range of skills and techniques as well having sufficient exposure time to access the marking criteria.

Other issues such as gender opposite pieces, stylised genres and self-devised additions were still evident. Centres must understand that by selecting this type of material for candidates that they are in fact limiting the candidates' ability to access the higher range of the marking criteria.

Many candidates were well prepared and rehearsed. Centres must ensure that the performances are supported by suitable spaces, which include the use of technical support in an attempt to make the performance reflect high production values and professional practice.

Candidates were able to perform to audiences as centres recognised that the inclusion of an audience allowed candidates to communicate and engage with them giving the event a real sense of occasion. This enhanced the opportunities for candidates to demonstrate audience awareness and communication. Good centres demonstrated appropriate and effective interaction with everyone involved giving a feeling of unity and coherence.

There were many improved written submissions across the centres, however, quite a few centres failed to ensure that the written submissions reflected the quality of the practical work. Whilst there were improvements in research and information about the skills and techniques required, diary logs were often lacking in detail and did not evidence the journey made from page to stage. Health and Safety remains largely underdeveloped and candidates fail to secure marks in the higher bands. Too many candidates continue to lose valuable marks on poorly produced diaries.

Good practice was seen where candidates showed clear evidence of planning, target setting, diaries that contained reflective comments on progress and clear application of skills and techniques. These candidates were attempting to apply industry practice to their own work through detailed logs in rehearsals, performance awareness and risk assessments.

DVD Recordings

Centres must realise the importance of capturing the candidate performances on DVD and are reminded that they must send the DVD recording to the examiner within three days.

G383 Professional Practice: Production

Examiners reported that there had been some improvement in the design and operational aspects in this unit. Numbers of candidate submissions were low so it does make it difficult to generalise. Centres had extended the range of opportunities to capture evidence, both in the interviews and also during the performance. Some centres had embraced the importance of Industry standards and conventions.

There was evidence of some good practice seen in lighting and sound, where candidates were producing 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. 'DVD' diaries showed the examiner the preparation work that production candidates had been involved in, as well as what was going on before, during and after the performance. These candidates also submitted portfolio work that contained further evidence to support their work. Weaker 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

There was evidence of some impressive submissions in this unit that demonstrated that centres have responded well to the demands of the unit. The complexities of the unit demand thorough research and application, showing embodiment and understanding of how the industry works in terms of securing employment. Candidates must demonstrate knowledge of their marketability and the appropriate avenues open to them in an achievable and realistic way. Candidates must also ensure that their predictions are credible and realistic based on the work of professionals.

The candidates who had a genuine awareness of the professional context of the work displayed a real sense of the income they could achieve, alongside an understanding of the business and the professional aspects of getting employment. Promotional packs were persuasive, through visual evidence, as well as being realistic in content. Quality in the outcome is essential to attract the professional agencies and employers. Weaker submissions failed to project forward effectively or make aspirational decisions based on well-researched vocational routes.

Centres do need to read the Principal Moderators report for further guidance.

G385 Exploring Repertoire

Moderators suggested that there had been some excellent submissions in this session. The academic rigour and research undertaken was applied effectively allowing candidates to demonstrate in depth stylistic awareness as they moved this knowledge into performance. Centres had used the assessment criteria correctly and marking was more in line with national standards, but there is still a tendency to mark slightly generously at the top end.

Historical selections did challenge many candidates as they struggled to grasp the appropriate conventions necessary in terms of performance style and application. A greater knowledge and understanding of the selected piece through more in-depth research would help candidates to bridge this gap. Centres must also take note of the Principal moderators notes about the selection of material in the both the historical and contemporary sections and ensure they look at when the pieces were actually written. Centres do need to be aware that equal marks are attached to both performances as too many centres are producing one high quality full-scale production and one production that lacked the same production values.

Written submissions lacked rigour in many cases. Quality research is essential for candidates to understand the socio-historical contexts in which the selected works were written and performed. There were not enough in-depth evaluations where candidates had discussed how they had applied their research into performance. Candidates do need to focus on key moments and describe how research has been applied. There was an improvement in the use of footnotes, citations, acknowledgement of websites and bibliographies. Candidates must state and acknowledge what they have read and where they have learnt about their selected pieces. Word counts must also be adhered to so that candidates are not penalised.

G386 Producing Your Showcase

Centres continued to improve the quality of candidates performance work during this session. More centres have taken on board the comments suggested in reports and worked to improve production values. Candidates are encouraged to take a holistic approach and this was evident in some of the high quality submissions seen. As centres have continued to improve their approach to supporting candidates to produce a showcase, standards have continued to rise, particularly at the top end of the marking band. Examiners reported that where there was evidence of a sophisticated understanding of the interpretative skills required the performance work was impressive, mature and absorbing.

Selection of material remains the key to success. Candidates who selected material that was suitable to their skills and abilities were more successful in their performances. Many centres realised the importance of selecting suitable material, as well as balance and contrast. Teachers were guiding candidates through the unit and this meant that they were able to display a greater understanding of what they were actually trying to communicate. Candidates achieving high levels of performance also had a perceptive understanding of the professional context of the work.

Centres must read the Principal Examiners Report and ensure that they respond appropriately to the organisation of the performance work. Running orders should be emailed in advance for the examiner to check. All centres must adhere to the 15-minute time allocation and must avoid dispersing candidates in a compilation style programme. All 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.

Many candidates had made a real effort to perform their pieces using effective lighting, sound, live music, costume and make up. Centres were more aware of the standards required of this A2 unit. Centres who are not providing suitable performances spaces should seek to improve this.

Centres must continue to encourage candidates to produce working notes that match performance standards as the preparatory notes remain the weakest area of this unit and many candidates do lose valuable marks.

G387 Production Demonstration

A small entry on this unit does make it difficult to generalise. Examiners reported similar practice to previous sessions where candidates had selected a technical realisation but were unable to document the process and subsequently, delivered an end product that did not meet the demands of the unit. Whilst there were a few stronger submissions, candidates did not consider the idea of collecting evidence to support what they were doing, only presenting an end product/demonstration.

Preparatory notes and portfolios were generally weak, which meant candidates were unable to achieve a mark that reflected their practical ability.

All centres must ensure that the interview/discussion with the examiner and production candidate is recorded. Evidence is often difficult to provide for the production candidates and every opportunity to capture it should be undertaken. Those candidates that did comply with DVD diaries were able to capture work undertaken that may not have been obvious in their portfolios and awarded marks which may have been lost without DVD evidence.

Centres should ask for guidance on this unit to ensure they are complying with the specification.

G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

During this session many centres used this unit effectively to teach about the business of the performing arts industries and the way that organisations are sustained by creating income from ticket sales, sponsorship or public funding. It is important that young people engaging with the industry either as potential recruits or as customers understand this.

Please note that it is important to use the URS form effectively to guide moderators to examples of key evidence and to annotate work to show where and how the marking criteria had been met. Centres are advised of the JQC guidelines:

10.2 Subject to any further guidance contained in specifications, one of the following approaches should be adopted:

- summary comments either on the work (usually at the end) or on a cover sheet;
- key pieces of evidence flagged throughout the work by annotation either in the margin or in the text;
- a combination of the above.

The specification asks centres to look at the entire range of performing arts organisations in their work for the unit and this is appropriate. It is proving hard for candidates to reach the upper marking band however when they have chosen to case study small companies with a limited number of employees. There is not the scope to show an understanding of organisational structure when the company is a sole trader or one with few employees. Studies of mid-range, mainstream organisations provided the best opportunity of gaining higher marks.

Many centres used a local performing arts centre as their first study and investigated this as a group. Candidates then chose a different organisation to make an individual enquiry, as recommended. Some candidates used the internet to research organisations. This is acceptable but candidates need to be advised that websites are often there for promotional purposes and may not present an unbiased view.

The specification suggests that contrasting organisations should be chosen for case study but some of the best studies have compared organisations that may be thought of as similar. We saw studies of two repertory theatres that showed how each had similar artistic policies (missions) but had to present contrasting programs (products) to reach different audiences (markets). The studies concluded by describing how each needed to be staffed and structured differently to meet their aims. In this industry it would be hard to find two organisations that cannot be contrasted in a significant way.

Most candidates were able to make comparisons between the two organisations in simple terms of size, location and products. Stronger ones were able to show how differences were driven by policy or marketing (product, price, promotion, place) demands.

Discussing the effectiveness of organisations and relating this to structure continued to defeat many candidates. Stronger candidates were able to express opinions and support them with reference to measures of each organisation's success – profitability, popularity, attracting high profile acts, ticket sales, reviews, successful bids for public subsidy etc. The strongest ones were able to relate success to effective management and deployment of staff but this was rarely seen. This section was often generously marked.

Many candidates used graphs and charts to help illustrate income and expenditure, funding streams and audience profiles effectively and this was welcomed but candidates needed to show that they understood them in discussion; merely pasting in a graph did not confirm any appreciation of what it meant.

Candidates are asked to describe each organisation's structure and it is clearly very difficult to do so without including an organisational chart. But again this needs explaining, as just inserting a chart does not confirm understanding. Again higher achieving candidates used terms such as hierarchy, line management and talked about tall or flat structures.

The unit evidence indicator suggests a word count of 3,000 words for the case studies but it has proved difficult for candidates to reach the upper mark band and meet this limit. Candidates will not be penalised for exceeding the guide but should be reminded to be succinct. There is no room for the inclusion of material that will not gain marks.

Job role investigations had been well researched and more candidates answered the question posed by the unit: what is the significance of the job role to the studied organisation. Weaker candidates drifted away from this focus and talked about the person in the role. They gave careers orientated talks about qualifications and experience often in great depth but this did not merit marks above the lower band. The stronger candidates analysed the role, described its place in the organisational structure and explained how important the role was to the success of the company. They were able to show how the significance was reflected in the type of contract offered, pay, hours, benefits and the function of the unions.

Talks need not be about high profile roles as a top scoring presentation featured the role of an usher on a casual contract. The candidate explained how the role was important to customer service and safety, that performances could not take place without a given ratio of stewards and how they had to respond in a range of situations to meet customer and company expectations. The candidate described the role's place in the organisational structure and that of the line manager. The role required high level personnel skills and training was given but it did not prove difficult to recruit suitable staff; pay and conditions were described as reflecting this.

Most centres included a recording of candidates presenting their talks. Whilst this is often useful as candidates will expand on the bullet points of their slides to show a greater understanding candidates should ensure that their portfolio of evidence is as comprehensive as possible.. A DVD Video, print out and script is recommended. Please remember that all recorded evidence for this unit must be in DVD video format and it needs to be chaptered or timings for each candidate given.

There continues to be some concern where centres allow candidates to case study the same two organisations as there are inevitable similarities in the presentations. Issues often arise in substantiating the validity of candidates' work. Centres must guard against this, preferably by ensuring that each candidate selects a different organisation for their second study. Of greater concern is when every candidate in a centre presents a talk on the same job role; a procession of candidates giving identical talks is not inspirational and also it defeats a learning opportunity.

G381 Professional Practice: Skills Development

Administration

Most aspects of the moderation process went well. Centres generally understood the sampling process and enclosed the correct documentation. It is important that centres send all documentation promptly. Centres must send work on time and not wait to be chased by moderators. Internal moderation should take place in good time before the OCR deadline for submission.

Centres must ensure that an internal moderation of the work takes place, where DVDs and portfolios are looked at carefully and marks on the URS are checked.

Choosing repertoire

Some candidates entered three pieces of repertoire choosing one from each art form. This does not always succeed in demonstrating the development of skills as too little time is spent in each art form. Candidates must show evidence of leading and supporting roles. One way of achieving this is for a drama candidate to work on a monologue, a duologue and a group piece. Please make sure that pieces are sufficiently long in order to display skills under development.

Recording of rehearsals and performances on DVD

DVDs must be sent with the portfolios and centres should not wait for moderators to request recorded evidence. DVDs should be checked and played before they leave the centre. Please make back up copies in case DVDs are damaged in the post or will not play. Please package the DVDs in padded bags to avoid breakage. Some DVDs arrived with their cases broken and this could be harmful to the DVD itself. The moderator must be able to play the DVD on a DVD player. Moderators had problems with DVDs that would not play on any laptop or computer or DVD player. In some cases, even when a second DVD was requested it would not play.

Some centres produced DVDs that presented the candidates by including a still shot taken from one of the performances and added the name and number of the candidate. This was extremely helpful to the moderator when identifying candidates. DVDs should be chaptered and show the progress made through various rehearsals through to performance.

It is very helpful if each candidate has their own DVD of evidence with their portfolio. Each recorded performance should appear in chronological order so that the moderator can assess the development of skills being made by the candidate. The final performance of one piece of repertoire should be in front of an audience. Centres **SHOULD NOT** send DVDs of three final performances as two of the works must be works in progress. Moderators need to be able to perceive the progress made by a candidate through the unit. The final performance in front of an audience should be the end of the journey that the candidate has made.

CANDIDATE IDENTIFICATION

Centres must identify the candidates on the DVDs. Ideally **candidates should introduce themselves to camera by name, number and title of repertoire piece.**

DVDs should be accompanied by a **running order.**

There should be a recent **photograph** of the candidate and in a column on the running order there should be details concerning their appearance on the DVD such as a brief **description of their costume** so that the moderator can identify them.

DVDs should be **chaptered** with a clear indication on the running order sheet of where the candidate appears on the DVD for example John Smith 0234 enters stage left at 10 mins 30 seconds. Too much time is wasted by moderators searching for candidates' performances on the DVD.

If the candidate cannot be identified, the evidence will be disregarded.

The **position of the camera** in relation to the stage needs careful consideration. Sometimes moderators could not see the candidates at close range and could not assess the performances. The most helpful recordings showed work in progress at close range so that the facial expressions and eye focus were obvious to the viewer.

For final performances with live audience, the camera is naturally placed further away. The camera should remain static and avoid over use of zooming.

Some of the best DVDs showed a development of the piece from first attempt through rehearsal to the final performance. Final performances must take place in front of a live audience in an appropriate venue. Rehearsal rooms and studios are not likely to produce the best type of final performance for the candidate. Camera work has improved and many centres had remembered to ensure that the candidates present themselves to the camera BEFORE the performance and state their name and candidate number.

Candidates must not offer devised work in this unit and far fewer centres offered devised dance instead of repertoire work. **DEVISED WORK IS NOT PART OF THIS UNIT.** Moderators do not count a devised dance piece as one of the three works, either in progress or final performance. **Only repertoire work is acceptable on this unit.**

Front sheets

Centres should include a front sheet as page one of the portfolio clearly stating the skills chosen for development and the three pieces of repertoire with details of titles of work and the names of the playwrights, composers and choreographers eg "Teechers" by John Godber, "Hurricane" by Christopher Bruce (1987).

Candidates should have researched the repertoire and be able to give detailed notes relating to when the piece was written, who performed it and where. 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 for dance pieces and physical theatre. Stand up comedy should not be devised. If the work cannot be identified as repertoire then it will be disregarded as evidence.

The location of evidence

The pages in the portfolios should be numbered and centres should use these numbers when referring to the location of evidence.

Centres should apply the assessment criteria rigorously and provide detailed annotation on the pages of the portfolio and on the URS to justify the marks awarded. Reference should be made to the DVD to help locate the evidence. Please state exactly where on the DVD the evidence is located using minutes and seconds eg John Smith chapter 3, 2 mins 35 secs., Hamlet monologue. If DVDs are chaptered, a reference to the chapter by title or number is sufficient. If the location column is not filled out using page numbers and DVD timings/chapters, the moderator will send the portfolio back to the centre for this information to be given on the URS. Most centres are using detailed annotation but some centres are still not filling in the location column with sufficient detail.

Research and handouts

Portfolios should be unique to the candidate and art form and relevant to the skills chosen for development. Internet research and studies of practitioners must be relevant to the repertoire chosen for performance and annotation of research should make this clear. Please do not allow candidates to include downloads and teacher handouts which have not been annotated by the candidate. Whole scripts should not be included.

The Skills Development Plan

The Skills Development Plan (SDP) should be detailed and include a summary of what the candidate has already achieved. This should be a resume of no more than 500 words and can be in the form of a CV or short biography. There were some excellent examples of CVs and biographies this session. The SDP should outline which skills are to be worked on and state the three pieces of repertoire work (two in progress and almost complete and one finished piece performed in front of a live audience.) The SDP should be adjusted as the unit progresses. 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.

Extraneous material

There were some portfolios containing material which was not directly related to the skills under development and the three pieces of repertoire. Some candidates had included certificates which they had been awarded at festivals and for grade exams. This is not appropriate. Please just mention the highest grades achieved in the relevant discipline on the CV. If the material is not relevant to the three pieces of repertoire and the skills development, please do not include it. Portfolios which are over 300 pages long are unlikely to have a sharp focus on the chosen skills and the three pieces of repertoire.

Presentation of portfolios

Please do not send portfolios in bulky ring binder folders, hard back photograph albums or scrapbooks. As long as the pages are kept together in a soft project folder or by treasury tags, the moderator will have no difficulty finding the evidence. There must be a contents page and all pages must be numbered.

Commentaries

Commentaries should be in written form or presented on DVD. They need to be detailed and demonstrate candidate ownership. There have been some very informative and detailed commentaries presented on DVD which have provided good evidence.

Tick box approaches and proforma documentation are not conducive to in-depth analysis and they hinder personal engagement. The commentary should be an independent document which explains how the repertoire demonstrates the skills development. The candidate can write notes throughout the portfolio detailing development and then a commentary at the end.

Observation reports

Observation reports should be detailed analyses of the candidates' work and development, written by appropriately skilled observers who use appropriate technical terminology and their experience to make artistic judgements. In order to document the journey made by the candidate throughout the unit, it is helpful to make observations at the beginning and end of the unit and at key points on the way. Some centres did not sign or date these reports rendering them invalid. There should be at least one observation report.

The unit has presented a wide range of work this session. Some candidates were stretched by working with challenging texts such as *West Side Story*. Some very mature performances were presented across the art forms.

However, three final performances and a weak portfolio did not gain high marks. The essential part of this unit is to show development of skills. For each piece, there should be recordings of first readings, rehearsals, dress rehearsals and final performance in the case of the finished piece. It is good practice to show a candidate marking through a dance and then rehearsing it once the routine has been learned.

Health and Safety

Most candidates showed good awareness of Health and Safety procedures which clearly shown in the portfolios. There needs to be a constant update of Health and Safety regulations to encourage candidate awareness. Health and Safety should be embedded in the portfolio not merely added in an appendix. Candidates should be able to show how they have used the information and knowledge in their practice. One centre filmed the candidates preparing the drama studio for a run through of a drama piece. They offered a commentary concerning Health and safety as they moved around the room clearing obstacles out of the way, checking cables were secured to the floor and generally ensuring that the space was safe for performers and audience. This was an effective way of demonstrating the application of theory to practice.

Performance venues

Dance performances should take place in a room with a sprung floor. The majority of centres chose appropriate spaces for their rehearsals and performances. However, some drama and music performances took place in computer rooms which are not appropriate performance spaces. If possible, try to give candidates a variety of spaces in which to perform.

One centre had used a church for their final performance. This was challenging for the candidates on many levels but produced a performance showing development of skills such as spatial awareness and vocal delivery.

G382 Professional Practice: Performance

G383 Professional Practice: Production

It is clear from examiners individual comments that a range of responses from centres is apparent but in general terms:

- Administration of the examination process is good
- Issues of repertoire remain a very small but significant issue in some centres
- Written material continues to respond to better structures and context provided by centres
- Portfolios and DVDs arrived on time
- The full range of marks is awarded by examiners.
- 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 do not have the 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.

The general context is of a small and diminishing cohort of centres where examiners are providing evidence based on small samples – 3 or 4 centres mostly.

Individual tasks of the units

Performance (G382)

Centres performed well where they responded to demands of the unit and to the assessment criteria in terms of professional replication, choice of appropriate repertoire and depth of analysis in 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 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 do self-devised dance pieces remain a problem since they limit candidates' ability to access this higher range of the criteria.

Centres 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 mentality.

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

Centres 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 is 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.

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 the higher mark bands.

Most centres now seem to be fully aware that candidates cannot elect which art form they wish to be assessed on and understand that a candidate is marked on their entire performance.

Written evidence (G382)

Portfolios had improved with candidates responding to some very useful and comprehensive structures from centres. Better candidates were able to augment these with committed and 'owned' responses drawing 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. Writing frames or pro-forma helped to elicit evidence from weaker candidates but also inhibited independent and autonomous work from higher achieving candidates.

Health and safety contents had improved with the use of risk assessments, annotated photographs and appropriate warm-up activities which 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 and this should be encouraged 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 a requirement of any professional practice context.

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 rather than students who had been left to get on with it themselves.

G384 Getting Work

Administration

All documentation from centres was completed and sent in good time. There were no problem centres.

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.

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. Some portfolios were encumbered with too much material; at the other end of the scale, some were very thin. Some centres need to follow guidelines on content, layout and presentation more closely.

General comments

The assessment criteria for the unit asks for

- an understanding of work opportunities in the industry
- use of appropriate terminology
- a plan of work showing marketability and contingency
- research with arts professionals
- evaluation

These are presented in

- self-promotion pack
- plan of work for the first year
- written analysis (including SWOTs)

Candidates that performed well in the unit had understood the need to structure their portfolios appropriately. They had 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. They had evidence that they 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. 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, archaic information on conditions of service and ridiculously ambitious prospects or in contrast ridiculously realistic prospects.

Promotional pack

There was a wide range of promotion packs. Some were highly produced and effective with a strong sense of what was needed to persuade and sell the candidate in a professional context. These candidates were clearly drawing on their research and experience to be able 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 obviously working in a very narrow context, one essentially 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.

At this level it is essential that candidates talk to a working professional and experience the vocational context in both replicated events or in real visits to professional venues and spaces. These 'spaces' should include the websites of professionals. Many candidates are beginning to understand the importance of social media and websites in their professional promotion – in this they are realising through their research and networks that this is how the industry is working currently in most areas of the industry. Over time this part of the unit would need to respond to this and begin to accept links to websites as the norm with show-reels, CDs and links to YouTube and Spotlight (or simulations of these links) already uploaded.

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 here 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. There were quite a few instances of contingency plans not being considered.

There were good examples of plans which 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.

Analysis of the plan

Those candidates that provided coherent packs and plans clearly knew where the strengths and weaknesses of the market and professional area were and used this to contextualise their own personal analysis. Weaker candidates tended to restrict their analysis just to their strengths and weakness and even here not 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 done a focused SWOT analysis of the market and where relevant and appropriate of 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 since 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

There was a range of good imaginative repertoire choices on offer in which time honoured classics combined with new and sometimes demanding contemporary pieces. Historical selections continued to prove the most challenging for candidates who exhibited difficulty in grasping the appropriate performance style and application to performance. This was probably a result of inadequate research and preparation.

Essays

In a number of cases (but by no means all) the research process lacked a degree of rigour and it was common to find centres presenting a caricature of a given historical genre rather than an informed rendition or reinterpretation of it. The application of research is central to the process and though there is increasingly reference to historical performance, little of this is demonstrably applied to candidate process – especially in the case of skills. There was also evidence 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?’

There was still a tendency for candidates to write from a practical stance i.e. ‘what we did’. In some 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 not be included.

Practical Work

Practical work was once again generally sound and in some instances very strong with assessment criteria applied appropriately albeit with a tendency for centres to be slightly more generous in their marking especially at the top. Shakespeare was done well, with candidates universally expressing in their essays an intention to bring it up to date but this was not always successful. The strongest work seen was when it remained true to text, all the weaker elements being manifested in context of the various adaptations.

The use of ‘Music Hall’ productions containing predominantly musical material should be approached with caution. Centres have produced work that purports to be ‘Music Hall’ that contains collections of songs from modern shows such as ‘Oliver!’ and ‘Mary Poppins’ on the basis that they are set in Victorian times. If actors want to explore that period then there are large numbers of authentic melodramas that are more appropriate and might be included in a ‘Music Hall’ production if musicians are also being assessed.

There is also an alarming number of centres which seem to be under the misapprehension that because a text is **set** in a historical period it is, *de facto*, a 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 novel and citing this as a historical text e.g. a late 20th century play based on a Dickens novel. Such productions are inadmissible.

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 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.

Teacher marking was found to be highly focused on performance ability with less strong performers, who nonetheless demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of style, not rewarded as highly as the strong performers. Performances of *Antigone*, *Lorca* and *The Laundry Girls* (social realism) illustrated the application of stylistic conventions particularly well. Choosing a style that is new to the candidates can be an advantage to them since as it is counter intuitive; their response is often more carefully considered. 'Bought in' workshops on such areas as Brecht and Commedia del 'arte were in evidence and clearly had a very beneficial impact on those candidates who had the opportunity to attend them.

Academic standards

Centres are again reminded that all candidates must include citations and a full bibliography for each essay.

Citations, bibliographies and word counts were still being omitted and where present, word counts were often exceeded. The overall standard was a great improvement on previous sessions however. 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 since 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. This is perfectly acceptable. However, 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. It is suggested that such candidates produce a separate DVD in which they walk and talk the viewer through the production process highlighting technical method and good examples of what they have achieved. The group performance DVD alone is insufficient in this respect.

Administration

Centre notes on both on 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.

Centres are still not providing the proper photographs many of which seem to either 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. It is recommended that centres keep copies of everything they have sent the moderator.

DVD

Many centres still did not have the candidates introduce themselves on video before the performance. This is particularly important when they are part of a 'school production'. 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 person to ensure viewable results!

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the caveats described above 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. There is no doubt that centres are gaining in confidence in the presentation of this module and work continues to improve year on year.

G386 Producing your own Showcase

General Comments

This session saw a range of works and variable standards across centres. Candidates appeared to have been better prepared, understanding the value of planning and rehearsals. It was good to see that the candidates had been encouraged to approach the unit holistically embracing all of the skills and techniques acquired in other units. Most centres gave the examination status and credibility by inviting audiences to support the candidates, which helped candidates to work on communication and audience awareness. In some centres it was evident that there had been a good level of teacher input and support to guide candidates towards the professional context of the unit in terms of performance.

Examiners reported that more candidates generally selected a suitable range of contrasting pieces demonstrating breadth and depth. Most of the pieces seen were drawn from repertoire, although candidates must be aware that they must avoid interpreting a piece in such a way that it takes it too far away from its original intentions. Writing additional monologues and adding in sections must be discouraged, as this does not constitute repertoire. Candidates still need guidance and support and should not be left to select, rehearse and perform without their teacher's input. There were still many candidates however, who had selected works that were unsuitable and far too difficult for them to cope with. This often meant that the candidates did not show any real understanding of what they were doing resulting in a lack of mastery of the material and dynamic performances. Fewer centres seemed to be encouraging candidates to perform in more than one discipline as a means of achieving contrast, although several still appeared to be insisting on at least one historical piece.

Despite advice suggesting candidates do not select pieces written for the opposite gender some candidates still selected pieces that were not transferable to the opposite gender and were unable to interpret and perform them in the right context. There is a wide range of material available to candidates and they must select more appropriate pieces that allow them to access the material, both physically and emotionally.

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

A few centres had not understood the process for the performance of the showcase, which caused difficulties for both the examiner and the candidates on the examination day. 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. Centres must adhere to this and ensure that they have organised their running order correctly. All costume changes, lighting, props or movement of set must also take place within that fifteen-minute slot. Likewise the introduction of DVD and PowerPoint between pieces is commendable and helps to cover changes but must be contained within the specified time limit. Centres must also check the running times of candidate showcases, as in some centres the pieces were far too long. Selecting pieces that are under two minutes each resulting in a very short showcase that has not shown skill development or a range of techniques is also unacceptable. It is essential that centres submit their running orders to their examiner to check that they have the correct running order, well in advance of the examination, so that if there are any alterations the candidates have time to adjust.

Examiners reports again commented on a session of variable standards of performance work, but of a higher standard than in previous sessions. Selection of material was based more on candidate strengths rather than likes and dislikes which meant stronger performance work. Examiners commented on the adventurous and challenging pieces seen and although outcomes were variable it was encouraging to see this taking place. Many centres have moved away from 'trying something new' and focused on material that matches their candidates' skills and abilities with a more holistic approach. A lot of candidates did say that they had selected pieces because they had wanted to challenge themselves. Whilst this is commendable they must ensure that they have the skills to do this!

The administration in centres was good. 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. Good practice was seen in centres that ensured the paperwork arrived in plenty of time, provided a running order and details of candidates' performances. Examiners reported that many centres were not adhering to the request for work to arrive 14 days before the examination. This meant that the examiner had less time to mark the preparatory notes.

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. Too many centres however, did not adhere to the three-day turnaround, with some centres failing to send DVDs at all. Centres must submit a DVD recording as evidence of the showcase performance. Centres must ensure that the submitted DVDs are in the correct format to be played, mini-discs are not acceptable. Centres must also check DVDs, as there were several that had to be sent back as they either had no sound or visuals. Identification of candidates and a running order are also essential.

Having seen an improvement in performance spaces last year it was slightly disappointing to note from examiners that quite a few centres had used classroom/lecture theatres spaces for performance this year. Centres must provide a suitable space that includes access to technical equipment and support. Performing at the front of a classroom space where the candidate has a CD player beside them, which either they or another candidate is operating, does not provide the professional context intended for this unit. Candidates who performed in studio/theatre spaces were able to consider the theatrical elements that would enhance their performance. Many centres are now using lighting and sound amplification, which does enhance the performance aspects of the work considerably.

Many examiners commented on the provision of adequate breaks in long programmes. Centres must also remember that positioning of the examiner is crucial. Seating an examiner at the back of the auditorium may infringe their ability to see facial expression 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.'

The Discussion

Candidates talked about their vision and interpretation of the selected pieces. Many candidates showed a good understanding of the creative process as well as Health and Safety and warm-up procedures. Fewer candidates were interviewed alone; many chose to discuss their programme with their performance partner. This provided detailed discussions and gave many candidates confidence in what they perceived to be quite a stressful situation.

The discussions gave the candidates the opportunity to discuss the selected pieces and inform the examiner of their intended interpretation. Many candidates took ownership of their work and talked openly about their research, intentions and preparation. Discussions allowed candidates to show their understanding and many candidates offered more in the discussion than they had noted in their required preparatory notes.

Drama candidates generally displayed an understanding of the process, but quite a few of them failed to really understand their chosen pieces with little appreciation of the playwrights' intentions or the context of the work. Good candidates were able to discuss their ideas for performance of the pieces, influences, style and context as well as characterisation, period, mood and atmosphere. They had excellent knowledge of the style of their pieces, as well as detailed character analyses. This enabled them to inform the examiner of their intended interpretation.

Dance candidates discussed where they had taken the work from and issues that have arisen in taking a dance from DVD or paper and creating it in its repertoire form. Good candidates had researched their pieces thoroughly and could talk about influences of dance practitioners and performances seen. They described the choreographic process employed to learn their work. They were aware of stylistic influences and were able to put the dance into context, describing the purpose of the pieces, the intended audience and its impact. There were still a small amount of dance candidates who did not select a 'particular work' from repertoire. Therefore, they were unable to discuss any of the above.

Music candidates gave an understanding of style, genre, musical awareness, how the composer communicated the work, technical language and influences. Good candidates were able to discuss their own interpretations on style and content and relate them to historic and social influences. Singers must ensure that they select songs that are suited to their vocal ability. Too many singers were choosing pieces without looking at key signatures and the range of notes covered. This meant the pieces were not suited to the vocal range and caused difficulties with breath control, pitch and tuning. It is not acceptable to select a song and then change the note structure because it is not suitable for the vocal.

The Performance of the Showcase

Performances spanned a wide range of genre, art forms and styles. Successful candidates were able to perform in contrasting styles and showed a good range of skills and techniques. Overall, performance material was varied and the diversity of material selected for the showcase was very encouraging. Some high levels of skill were demonstrated; vocal work was generally much better than in previous years and more candidates showed the capacity to integrate a variety of appropriate features into their performances. However, there are still many of the weaker actors and some very capable musicians who do not pay sufficient attention to aspects of stage presence and movement about the performing space; wandering vaguely about the stage, fiddling with clothing, face and hair and not having the necessary equipment they need to hand. These aspects all detract from the impact of the performance.

Many candidates made full use of technical elements, like set, props, costume and lighting, to enhance the professionalism of their pieces, although poor quality sound continues to detract from the work of some singers and dancers. Candidates are making an attempt to link their pieces, often by announcement, which is a good idea but needs to be rehearsed and executed with clarity and confidence. 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.

Some centres encouraged their candidates to produce stylistically impressive, dynamic and absorbing performance work, while others allowed candidates to be under rehearsed, unimaginative and tentative. Examiners reported again that too many candidates attempted pieces that they clearly did not understand, while others chose pieces that were unsuitable for relatively inexperienced young people. There were noticeable differences in the standards across centres.

It must be noted that there were some outstanding performances that reflected professional practice, which were the result of centres giving good advice over the choice of material, strong direction and matching pieces to student ability.

Dance repertoire was much more in evidence. Good candidates were performing impressive dance routines from repertoire. They were able to show understanding of the stylistic elements and display a good technical ability. Many dance candidates had considered balance and contrast selecting pieces from different genres, in order to show a range of dance skills and techniques.

The dancers seen were able to show awareness of Health and Safety issues. They had discussed various aspects of footwear, jewellery, hair and costume in their preparatory notes. Spatial awareness and the performance space were also highlighted. There was also evidence of costume and appropriate setting and style. Dancers must ensure that their choice of costume is appropriate as too many dancers were adjusting their costumes during the performance.

Examiners noted that too many drama candidates selected pieces that they did not really understand and this resulted in some weaker performance work. Stronger candidates displayed good acting skills with emphasis on both physical and vocal techniques. A number of drama candidates tended to rush monologues slightly or lack adequate variety of pace. Articulation also needs greater attention as many 'moments were lost through candidates 'swallowing' their lines'. Accents tended to be left out and candidates must consider whether they should take a piece of repertoire if they are unable to tackle the accent. Shakespeare pieces were evident but were not so well done this year with 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. Good drama performances had considered the audience and how to engage with them. Good candidates were using a range of skills, techniques and drama conventions.

Singing remains the weakest area of performance, mainly due to selection of material. Musical Theatre continues to be a popular choice as candidates are able to demonstrate techniques ranging from singing, dancing and acting. It is important to ensure that candidates are able to cope with all of the aspects of Musical Theatre. If candidates present the material in the form of Musical Theatre, then it is essential that they are competent in all three aspects of acting, dance and singing. Most of the pieces were performed with backing tracks, although it was nice to see a few centres working with live music.

Many candidates were able to produce dynamic performances of their Showcase showing complete mastery of their selected material. They were able to shape and mould their material, displaying a sophisticated understanding of the interpretative skills required. 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. Good practice saw a number of candidates producing authoritative and absorbing performances, which really engaged with the audience.

Preparatory Notes

There were encouraging signs of improvement in the preparatory notes, with several centres clearly using the specification and marking criteria to provide guidance on what should be included. This helped candidates to make relevant comments on their skills, their strengths and weaknesses, how they chose their pieces and what they did to rehearse and get ready for performance.

This year most candidates got the balance right and covered the selection process fairly briefly, explaining the reasons for their choices. They then concentrated on researching and preparing their chosen performance pieces for performance. Some candidates tended to bury their own work in masses of research material, some of which should be discarded and the rest placed in an appendix to be referred to in the main body of the notes as appropriate. Many continued to describe rather than explain and evaluate the decision-making process, although this year more candidates included a rehearsal log or diary that contained reflections on their progress and targets for future development. Most candidates conducted an investigation into the context and performance history of their pieces, although, only a few candidates explained fully how their research actually impacted on their decision-making in relation to how they developed a range of aspects of their performances. Many also looked at the work of one or more practitioners, but this was not always relevant and more often not clearly applied.

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. The best examples 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. More dance candidates were submitting DVD evidence of the dances that they were going to perform. This was very helpful as it provided undisputed evidence that the pieces were repertoire.

Unfortunately, for some candidates submissions were little more than basic descriptive logs, with limited internet research that was not applied and little evidence of the use of action planning and feedback to develop the final showcase. Those 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. Many candidates who produced impressive performance work were unable to achieve a mark that supported this due to poor quality submissions!

G387 Production Demonstration

Candidates in this unit struggled to understand that their work must reflect industry standards. Too many candidates failed to respond to a brief. It was noted by examiners that some candidates did not actually have a brief to work to. Centres must provide this to allow the response to have structure. Preparatory notes from many candidates were weak, as candidates did not sufficiently research the pieces they were working on. Without knowledge of where these pieces have come from and why they were written, as well as the intentions of the playwright/choreographer/composer the candidate could not respond in any depth. 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. Candidates need to be aware that a few rough sketches and pages off the internet and poorly presented presentations do not equate to the standards required from this A2 unit.

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, DVD, or video evidence of their product demonstration.

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