

GCE

Performing Arts

Advanced GCE A2 **H546**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H146**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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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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G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

General Comments

Most centres are beginning to understand the specification and are now teaching one organisation to their cohort of pupils and then encouraging each candidate to choose a different second organisation. There are still the same few centres continuing to teach the same two venues despite this issue being raised in the report each year.

In many cases candidates had selected appropriate organisations that could be explored in detail. Unfortunately some candidates still choose inappropriate organisations that were much too big such as ITV or LAMDA, or they were one-man businesses and therefore offered no opportunity for comparison or evaluation with the first organisation. It is important that both organisations can be looked at equally and that candidates are able to draw sensible comparisons and contrast conclusions. Greater teacher guidance would help in instances such as these.

Centres seemed to have a greater grasp of the specification this year compared to previous years, perhaps in response to prior end of session reports. However the marking was generally lenient from most centres as they continue to underestimate the depth of analysis required for access to top band marks.

AO1.1

The more able candidates had a deep understanding of both their chosen organisations and the operations underpinning each company. They used pie graphs to illustrate funding, audience profiles, and bar charts showing the success of different products.

Some candidates failed to identify what type of organisation they were exploring, whether it was a receiving or producing house. This is an essential piece of information for this unit. Understanding funding challenged many candidates and many budgets didn't add up, leading the moderators to believe numbers had just been grabbed out of the air. Top band candidates are able to discuss income – ticket sales, wages, energy, services, etc. as well as understanding subsidies and grants, and how any deficits are met.

AO1.2

Many centres considered the inclusion of a staffing structure diagram as fulfilling the specification and few candidates expanded and further explored implications of hierarchy and /or structure in relation to perceived and actual success of the venue or organisation.

It is during this section of the unit that it becomes apparent if a candidate has picked an inappropriate second organisation as candidates cannot show any depth of understanding of organisational structures. Likewise if a candidate has chosen two very different companies he/she may also find it very difficult to find suitable roles to compare. This in turn limits their marks.

AO1.3

Most centres had grasped the requirement of the job role section in this session. Some candidates still get carried away with the person and not the role and the importance of the role within the company.

Candidates must include a detailed paper copy of their presentation as well as the DVD. Candidates cannot pick the role of an actor to discuss unless the actor is in-residence with the company.

AO4.1

There was still a tendency to accept and reward implied comparison of the two venues rather than awarding marks for acknowledging and valuing explicit comparison. Some candidates didn't include this section at all and only made occasional comparisons throughout their portfolios, which stopped them from accessing the higher mark bands. Others wrote detailed comparisons after each section, which was excellent practice to see. Weaker candidates only managed to note the most obvious comparisons and hadn't explored the two organisations in enough depth.

AO4.2

Whilst this section of the job role was much better this year, this still seems to be the weakest aspect found in portfolios. Candidates do not explore the various contracts on offer in the organisation and the type of contract the chosen employee has; once the type of contract has been established what benefits does this offer them? Is there holiday pay? Is there sickness pay? Are there any additional benefits or perks?

Health and safety is an essential part of everyone's job yet candidates often do not explore the aspects for which the employee is responsible, or by which they might be affected. Many candidates had explored unions, but failed to discover whether, if the employee has not joined a union, was it because the company frowned upon union membership.

Finally candidates must investigate who the role holder answers to, who answers to them and how they fit into the job hierarchy. Only by everyone listening and communicating can an organisation run smoothly.

G381 Professional Practice: Skills Development

General Comments

This year's session ran smoothly with many more centres once again reviewing the specification as requested in last year's report and producing portfolios with the correct work. However some centres still did not follow the correct format with candidates preparing three group performances, devising their own dances or monologues. This unit is about repertoire only and students developing their skills through exploration of professional repertoire.

The best practice seen is where centres video the rehearsal process showing the development stages from lifting the text off the page, learning lines/songs/dance sequences, through to performance standard.

Dancers still have a tendency to re-choreograph dances that they find too challenging, doing so in the vague style of the chosen choreographer. Though slight change is acceptable for the occasional step, whole sections cannot be changed just because a candidate cannot manage that aspect of the dance.

Marking overall was slightly generous.

Administration

Clerical errors were few in this session with the correct paper work enclosed and signed. Centres must ensure that all DVDs can be played on both DVD players and laptops, occasionally some moderators had problems watching enclosed DVD's which slowed down the moderation process. Once again please ensure that internal moderation takes place before final marks are submitted. This enables external moderation to run much more smoothly.

Portfolios

Overall portfolios arrived on time for the moderation process, with only the odd centre still not filling in the URS form. Please complete this form as it helps the moderator locate the various signposts within the portfolios. A contents page at the beginning of a portfolio also helps with the moderation process.

AO2.2, developing skills, was varied with many candidates still telling the story behind the text rather than identifying what skills are being developed and how they have developed them. More able candidates were able to show how they would be able to apply these new skills to future work.

Musicians again tended to use technical language throughout their portfolios and appeared to have a more professional approach to their work.

Many candidates had attended lots of workshops, which were interesting to read about, but had not then applied the knowledge learnt to their chosen pieces of repertoire. This made the workshops irrelevant to their portfolios.

Occasionally candidates wrote detailed portfolios with excellent research, in particular looking at and applying social, historical and cultural elements but their practical work did not match the written element. Unfortunately candidates cannot gain high marks in A03.1 if the skill development is not of a consistently high standard. Portfolio logs need to look at the work covered, respond to feed back re-evaluating their skills development, plan where necessary, setting new targets if appropriate and evaluate their work so far, and assess what was achieved,

if anything. It is expected that candidate's should use technical language appropriately throughout their portfolios.

Research/Handout

In many portfolios candidates still include handouts that are of a generic nature. It is important that if candidates do include such handouts that they have been annotated and applied to their own work. All research must include the social, historical and cultural aspects of each piece found in their portfolio and how this information has influenced their own performance.

It is apparent from candidate submissions that those who have completed detailed research and applied it to their performance gain a far greater understanding of the work and in turn achieve marks in the higher bands.

Health and Safety

Many candidates are aware of health and safety and included detailed vocal and physical warm ups. However when watching DVDs and seeing candidates work in socks, have inappropriate clothing on and many piercings, it is obvious that they do not apply health and safety to their own practical work.

Choosing Repertoire

It is essential candidates select carefully when completing this unit, as the material selected may hinder the candidate's ability to develop their chosen skills. They must also select appropriate material that suits their talents. Candidates cannot write monologues based loosely on plays, films and dancers cannot choreograph a dance in the style of a choreographer. All work selected must be repertoire. Some candidates are still selecting GCSE dance pieces to learn. This is inappropriate as the standard is too low for an testing at this level. Please note that dances selected from TV shows such as "So You Think You Can Dance" though repertoire may be considered to be too short for candidates to be able to fully display their skills under development.

Candidate Identification

Despite repeated requests centres still do not always identify each candidate clearly on DVDs. It is important to be able to identify a candidate both through their portfolio and on the DVD. Candidates should state their name, candidate number, name of piece and skills they are focusing on. Please include a clear running order to accompany the DVD.

Location of Evidence

Please ensure that all portfolios have numbered pages with appropriate sub headings. It is important for the moderator to be able to find all evidence easily. Adding annotations throughout portfolios and filling in the URS in detail will also assist with this. Giving the correct timings for the work on DVDs also helps the moderator.

Skills Development Plan

Many centres organised their students to include a skills development plan. This was often detailed and thorough, with good candidates showing they clearly understood the planning process, identifying their strengths and weaknesses and skills they needed to develop. Successful plans are realistic and candidates refer back to them throughout their portfolios. Without a SDP candidates cannot successfully evidence the progress they have made.

Commentaries

The commentaries show each stage of the process undertaken by the candidate in developing their skills; evaluating work covered; responding to feedback; setting new targets; evaluating the SDP where necessary, showing candidate ownership; and using technical language where appropriate throughout their portfolios.

Observation Reports

It would help the moderation process if centres provided detailed observations rather than tick box sheets, as the latter do not really give the moderator an insight into the candidate's work ethic, ability to respond to feedback, skills developed or the journey made in achieving the end product.

Recording of Rehearsals and Performances on DVD

Many centres are now recording the rehearsal stage and showing the process of page to stage, with more successful centres showing three or four rehearsals. The candidate's journey and the progress made is then clearer to the moderator. Centres should note that final performances should be in front of an audience with lights, costume and set where appropriate.

It is essential for centres to provide identification of their candidates for the moderator to enable moderation to take place. This should include a recent photograph as well as each candidate identifying him/herself on the DVD.

Conclusion

In conclusion a higher standard of work was seen this session when compared with 2013, with more candidates using appropriate repertoire. Centres that follow the specification and applied the marking criteria provided solid opportunities for candidates to develop good skills and techniques. Centres should ensure that marking matches the skills developed by the candidate and that they are clearly evidenced on the DVD.

G382 Professional Practice: Performance

G383 Professional Practice: Production

General Comments

Examiners have reported the following.

- 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: students can respond to given structures to optimise their performance against the criteria.
- Portfolios and DVDs arrive on time.
- The full range of marks is generally awarded by examiners, although there remains a tendency to cluster around the lower threshold.
- 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. However the sample is so small that any meaningful conclusions are limited
- 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.

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. Centres where there was good understanding of 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 candidates 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 number of centres reproducing dance school, rock school or self-devised dance pieces remain a problem since they limit candidates' ability to access the higher bands in the assessment criteria. Taking a thematic approach such as '60s music' also presents issues as the repertoire for this is wide and ill-defined. It would be better to do 'The Beatles' or the songs of Carole King.

Centres were not as successful where they did not respond to professional production values as outlined above. 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, tending 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 who 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 variety 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 significant marks to be gained by engaging with, and understanding of 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 as well as more traditional forms. To access the criteria fully there must be careful thought put into providing 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 are not fulfilling the unit demands in a way that is likely to give them access to 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 continue to improve with candidates able to respond to some very useful and comprehensive structures from centres. Better candidates are able to augment these with committed and owned responses drawing on practitioners and observed 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 can help to elicit evidence from weaker candidates but can also inhibit independent and autonomous work from higher achieving candidates.

Health and Safety contents have improved with the use of risk assessments, annotated photographs and appropriate warm-up activities all contributing 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. Unfortunately, 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. The criteria is framed from this individual and not generic approach to Health and Safety so centres should encourage candidates to start 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 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 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 memoirs 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 candidates 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 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. For example, 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.

Whilst 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 the demands of the unit and the criteria that have been addressed more readily apparent and clear.

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 a

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

Candidates who 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 above, but additionally appendices can be used to show annotation on documents that need to be pristine for the self-promotion pack. 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. Such candidates 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; 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.

Promotional pack

There was a wide range of promotion packs. Some were very well-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 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 centre-based knowledge and not on interviews conducted with freelance professionals.

At this level it is essential that candidates talk to 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. Given more 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. 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 here with a variation in the number of years forming the basis of projections, some very ambitious earning 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 are still not paying 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.

Not many 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 know clearly 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 analysis; 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

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 that offer opportunities for candidates to research and perform in a clearly defined style or genre. Alarming, there are still some centres that do not appear to have understood the rubric and who continue to choose two contemporary pieces, or even in one or two cases, two historical pieces. The rubric requires the selected historical repertoire (ie original script) to have been *created* within a given historical period other than that which might be considered contemporary (see below).

There is encouraging evidence of a general ongoing improvement in terms of the expectations of centres. Examples were seen of outstanding work from some 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.

Exceptional work occurs when centres' candidates approach the research in a serious, focussed 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 are still in evidence, with a few 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. Consequently, centres are generally over marking this element and, apparently, from the evidence of assessor comments on the essays, not setting high enough expectations for candidates. Basic Wikipedia based responses cannot achieve marks higher than the lowest band.

Most essays were well written and the quality of language was generally very good. Essays were easy to read and most candidates' work was informed and accessible.

Teacher annotations were generally useful and guided the moderator to how and where marks had been awarded. This helped moderation. However, there were some occasions where the centre's assessor did not supply annotation leaving moderators to make their own connections.

Discussion of how the text had been adapted for a contemporary audience tended to be brief and didn't provide sufficient depth at this level; some candidates still did not refer to how historical repertoire had been adapted for contemporary audiences. Those who did scored more highly.

Practical Work

Standards of performance are generally high. Candidates often find that natural performing ability enables them to make a good job of performance. However there is still room for development in the context of the application of stylistic technique. This may be traced in part to essays, which though generally good are weakest in applying what is often excellent research to AO2.2 on which the production style depends. There was some very impressive AO2.1 work but

where this does not feed into the process of stylistic adaptation / interpretation it can result in low marks for AO2.2

Centres sometimes find 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 may 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 centres are requested to familiarise themselves with the definitions of criteria to be found in the relevant OCR *Guidance to Centres, 2008*.

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 for marking to be slightly generous, especially at the top end of the range.

As stated in previous reports, there are centres that 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 eg a modern rewriting (NB *not* translation) of an ancient Greek classic.

Where two contemporary or two historical texts are submitted this automatically penalises the candidates since they are unable to access half the marks for AO.3. Moderators have had to adjust marks quite severely in several cases where this has happened.

Academic standards

Centres are again reminded that all candidates must include citations and a full bibliography and word count for each essay. This was not always the case this session. Some essays have exceeded the specified length by more than the 5% allowable.

The standard overall continues to improve when compared with previous sessions however. Bibliographies were frequently linked to relevant citations included in the body of the work. The use of proper citation 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

Only a few candidates followed 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 Mangers 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 method 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 that do accompany the work seem to only show the candidates in costume. In other cases photographs have been entirely absent or 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.

DVD

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 (ie 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. Many camera positions dictate that the performance is almost totally obscured by the heads of the audience. Clearly this is most unhelpful to the moderator, who should be considered the primary audience. It is strongly urged that Centres obtain the services of a capable camera operator to ensure viewable results.

A number of DVDs arrived with the moderator in pieces; centres should ensure that DVD's are adequately protected in transit.

Conclusion

A significant majority of centres have engaged effectively with this unit. The above paragraphs may seem to focus on criticism but this is purely for pragmatic reasons and for guidance towards overall improvements in both practice and marks awarded. There was some excellent work seen again 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 Showcase

General Comments

This session saw a range of works and variable standards across the centres. It was good to see that the candidates had been encouraged by centres to approach the unit holistically embracing all of the skills and techniques acquired in other units. Candidates did appear to be better prepared understanding the value of planning and rehearsals and had considered not just the content of their Showcase, but also the performance techniques required to realise it.

Most centres gave the examination status and credibility by inviting audiences to support the candidates, which did help candidates to work on communication and audience awareness, giving them that sense of occasion in performance and a move towards the professional context of work. 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. Technical support was also more apparent which embraced the production values essential to providing candidates with a professional setting.

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. 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 were still issues with dance material despite advice given in the last session to avoid pieces from dance examinations and 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. Candidates should not be selecting group dance pieces and adapting them for solo performance. These pieces have been choreographed for larger dance groups and part of their design is centred around patterns and relationships with other dancers. The candidates' were effectively selecting the movements they liked or could perform and ignored the group repertoire, effectively devising their own solo dance routine.

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 an abundance of material available to candidates and they must select more appropriate pieces that allow them to access the material, both physically and emotionally.

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 few 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.

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. Centres now seem to understand that it is not necessary for candidates to choose pieces from different art forms to show contrast.

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 candidates 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 were still some centres that had 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.

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. This is extremely important where candidate work has to be checked and verified by the Principal Examiner.

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.

Preparatory Notes

There were further signs of improvement in the preparatory notes again this year, with several centres clearly using the specification and marking criteria to provide guidance on what should be included. This helps even weaker 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.

The weakest aspects of the preparatory notes are mainly around the lack of research and the application of the social, historical and cultural contexts of the chosen pieces. Many candidates did not consider the context of the piece and were simply commenting on events that were current at the time the pieces were written. These were unrelated to the pieces themselves with no connection made to the performance. 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.

Many dance candidates’ submitted DVD evidence and/or Internet links of the dances to support their research and to give the examiner a link to the particular version that they intended 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.

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.

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. A few candidates who produced impressive performance work were unable to achieve a grade that supported this due to poor quality submissions.

The Discussion

Examiners reported that candidates were generally well prepared for the discussion. The discussions gave the candidates the opportunity to discuss the selected pieces and inform the examiner of their intended interpretation. 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. Discussions allowed candidates to demonstrate and expand the progress they had commented on in their preparatory notes. No marks are awarded for the discussions.

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.

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.

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.

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; many of these candidates had adopted a professional approach showing the capacity to integrate a variety of appropriate

features into their performances. These 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.

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.

Good dance candidates were performing impressive dance routines from repertoire and were tackling a variety of different genres, in order to show a range of dance skills and techniques. Stylistic elements and technical ability were also evident. 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 and many do need to work on core strength and balance. Dance candidates also need to consider the Showcase element and work to create a performance. Too many dancers were content to dance through three pieces in a studio setting that resembled a rehearsal.

Music candidates were well represented with a range of singers and instrumentalists. Pop Bands, Rock Bands and Musical Theatre continue to be popular choices with candidates. 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. Again, candidates must consider that this is a performance and not a 'jamming session in the studio'. Many of the pieces were performed with backing tracks, but candidates must consider the volume and balance of backing tracks and ensure that their own instrument can be heard.

Stronger acting candidates displayed good levels of skills with emphasis on both physical and vocal techniques. However, a number of acting candidates still tended to rush monologues slightly or lack adequate variety of pace. Articulation also needed 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. All aspects of pace, pause, pitch and tone must be considered and developed accordingly.

There did seem to be an increase with candidates claiming to include Physical Theatre. There are several quite distinct traditions of performance that all describe themselves using the term "physical theatre", which has led to a lot of confusion as to what exactly is the definition of physical theatre. Physical theatre is a catch-all term used to describe any mode of performance that pursues storytelling through primarily physical means. The key distinguishing factor is a focus on narrative, character and storytelling. However, it is often difficult to draw a distinct boundary between what is and what is not physical theatre, and distinctions are often made quite arbitrarily with many candidates not really understanding what they mean by the term physical theatre.

Too many candidates performing Shakespeare pieces did not have a secure understanding about the structure of the language and its performance aspects, with many candidates struggling with the understanding of iambic pentameter, clear diction, clarity of voice, punctuation and pace. 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 invest the preparation time in understanding the words to avoid delivering the text without clarity or meaning. It is important to know the technical elements of speaking Shakespearean language including the different types of verse or prose and the use of the iambic pentameter alongside other poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, puns and sexual jokes and

antithesis. Candidates should be encouraged to research and use these devices in their preparation.

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.

Examiners did report that candidates were displaying a stronger audience awareness and communication at all levels. Candidates must also be aware that if they are using a silent partner in a monologue then that performer must not make any contribution to the piece.

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

Candidates in this unit continue to struggle to understand that their work must reflect industry standards. Too many candidates failed to respond to a brief. Some examiners reported that candidates did not actually have a brief to which they could work. Centres must provide this to allow the response to have structure. Preparatory notes for 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.

Where there was evidence of good practice in this session 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. These candidates had chosen to work on G386 Showcases or were working with G382 candidates and the production roles required for the group performance element.

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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