

# **Performance Studies**

Advanced GCE **A2 7873**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3873**

## **Report on the Units**

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**June 2007**

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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 syllabus 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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## Chief Examiner's Report

Examiners and Moderators reported some encouraging signs of improved standards this session and this was reflected in the percentage grades awarded at unit level and at Specification level for those aggregating, both at AS and at A2 level. Areas of good practice are highlighted in the body of this report, as are aspects of assessment practice that could benefit from further development. This introduction serves to highlight the most significant points from each unit; these are expanded at greater length in the subsequent sections.

### **Unit 2556     *The Language of Performing Arts***

There was a slight improvement in the quality of written work submitted in this session. The most noticeable evidence of this was the improved use by candidates of technical language. Whilst this was not always reflected in the overall quality of written language, moderators were pleased to report an increased engagement with the technical base of the subject.

There was also evidence of a better level of discussion of the links between the three art forms with candidates scoring impressively through allowing equal weighting in their Commentaries for all three art forms. To some extent this reflects improved selection of stimulus material by Centres so that the taught activities have more natural linkage and so that genuine synergies between the art forms may be encouraged.

### **Unit 2557     *Contextual Studies 1***

There were some improvements in the quality of scripts in this session although examiners reported some concerns about candidates obviously following a template. Examiners reported several instances of candidates appearing to answer a question set in a previous session. This suggests that teachers had used previous papers as the basis for practice questions. Centres are reminded that the question paper archive published needs to be used sensitively.

There were some very good essay plans, which at times were even better than the candidates' answers themselves! As with *The Language of Performing Arts*, there was a clear link between the ability to handle technical language effortlessly, and this was generally built on an effective experience of assimilating such language in Unit 2556. This was not always carried through into the structuring of argument to persuade, exemplify, and further practice at answering timed examination questions would be advisable for a significant number of candidates. Bizarrely, and for the first time this session, a few candidates linked their own practice to that of the practitioner and assumed they were synonymous!

### **Unit 2558     *Performance Realisation***

As in previous sessions, virtually all candidates approached the work with enthusiasm and confidence. There was a slight improvement in the quality of some devised work, particularly in Drama. There were more pieces in which candidates delivered lines that sounded like genuine dialogue and, since the majority of candidates offered a drama piece as one of their two performances, this had some impact on the overall grades awarded. There were occasional problems with performances of repertoire drama being overly-lengthy and some Centres appeared to have difficulty in identifying appropriate points to cut the chosen extract. As a result, some pieces were stopped and this inevitably led to huge disappointment for the candidates and their audience.

**Unit 2559      Community Performance Project**

The quality of work in this unit remained broadly similar to that of previous sessions. The majority of pieces were well anchored in their local community. Some Centres, however, took an unsuitable theme (ranging, for example, from Bullying to Spike Milligan's Bi-Polar disorder) and then attempted to apply it to their community rather than the other way round.

Whilst there were clearly many exciting and innovative performances, there was a sense of fatigue in some Centres with performing in the same space year-on-year. Perhaps as a result of trying to provide variety, some spaces chosen were not entirely suitable (e.g. a Leisure Centre chosen for no real reason, open air performances rehearsed at School and thrust into the open air with disastrous results). In one or two instances, candidates resorted to performing the piece in their own Centre.

There was a continuing need to identify the style of the devised piece at the opening of the written commentary. There was an identified need for teaching staff at the Centre to lead on teaching the identified style rather than allowing the candidates themselves to embark unaided on the high sea of stylistic adventure. Some supposedly eclectic pieces were merely an exercise in *post hoc* identification.

**Unit 2560      Contextual Studies 2**

This revised unit appears to have 'come of age' rather faster than could have been imagined and most examiners reported a markedly higher standard this session. Centres clearly felt more comfortable and informed on how to develop the teaching and learning, so that candidates knew what to expect in the questions and were able to give fuller answers with wider knowledge of the area under study.

The responses this session showed a continued improvement in the approach to answering questions on the topics. Responses seen demonstrated that a greater number of candidates had undertaken appropriate background reading and research to amplify their formal learning and be able to enhance their answers. A greater proportion of candidates addressed their answers to the question rather than offering up a pre-prepared general answer.

**Unit 2561      Student Devised Performance**

There was some evidence of improved usage of the Commission this session, with fewer groups scoring badly in this aspect. There were still some pieces that used the commission as a hook on which to hang ideas but most attempted to engage with it in an honest and structured manner. Research was generally thorough but a number of candidates struggled to translate this into performance and there were some pieces where the use of a second art form was tokenistic.

The structure of pieces was much improved this session but some candidates still relied heavily on blackouts for their transitions and these inevitably slowed down the whole piece. There was often a need for more rehearsal of the piece which often came across as being a test, rather than a polished piece for an audience to appreciate. Where there had been pre-performance to an audience there was a marked improvement in the quality of the pieces.

## **2556 - The Language of Performing Arts (Coursework)**

### **General comments**

Moderators reported that not all Centres met the deadlines published by OCR. Centres are reminded that if there is a problem about the submission date for coursework then they should contact OCR. With the submission of the work, one Authentication Form should be completed along with the appropriate copy of the MS1 form and a Unit Content. Centres are reminded that MS1 forms should be completed thoroughly with both the numerical mark and the appropriate lozenge shaded. Where there is more than one teaching group, this should be indicated in the column provided. This enables the Moderator to select easily a representative sample for the moderation exercise. It is also important to show clearly that internal moderation has taken place.

A number of other points on the administration were also made. All written commentaries should be annotated, as outlined in the Specification, pointing out under which criterion marks have been awarded. Since these commentaries are final submissions rather than formative assessments there should be no comments on them addressed to the candidate. Centres are also required to fill in a Coursework Cover Sheet (CCS) with comments that support the marks awarded. These should be detailed and refer to page numbers as appropriate and should never simply reproduce the marking criteria. Comments should support the marks awarded marks and identify where in the commentary there is evidence to support these marks.

Moderators also reported the following points, some of which have been made in previous sessions.

- This unit is concerned with the devising of four short performance pieces that develop basic skills in each art form and combine them in a final, integrated piece. The Specification makes it clear, however, that the pieces should not be based on the same theme.
- Moderators reported that adjustments had to be made to the marks awarded when candidates did not deal with three discrete art forms but, for example, discussed the movements added to a song rather than development of the music itself.
- The Specification clearly states the structure of the Commentary and candidates should abide by the requirement to identify the three separate phases of Improvising – Rehearsing - Performing
- Candidates should be advised that their commentaries should give equal balance to the three art forms and the three stages of the performance process.

### **Knowledge and Understanding**

Through their written commentaries, candidates needed to show their understanding of the technical terms as stipulated in the Specification. It is important that Centres choose material and projects that enable candidates to access fully each area. There were fewer examples of *Stomp* being used for the music aspect of the course. However Moderators reported that Centres that focused on narrative theatre often presented written commentaries that were more concerned with the story of the piece rather than the specific techniques of each art form. As stated earlier, equal weighting should be given to each art. Where one area received significantly less discussion than the other two, it followed that marks should not have been awarded in the top two mark bands.

To obtain high marks candidates should show knowledge of techniques across all three art forms. This understanding should be gained through practical experience in devising the four performance pieces.

### **Understanding of Links between the Art Forms**

Moderators reported that this aspect of the commentaries and marking was noticeably stronger. The required structure for the commentary is specifically designed to encourage and facilitate the discussion of links between the art forms. There were good examples of submissions where candidates discussed how the art forms work together as an integral part of the writing. Candidates made observations about how concepts and techniques were either similar across art forms or specific to one particular area. Work that was justly awarded high marks showed this understanding arising directly from the practical work undertaken and was in a framework of good lesson planning by the Centre. In planning lesson objectives Centres should consider how understanding of links between the art forms can be evidenced each lesson.

Where adjustments had to be made to submissions, it was often because Centres misinterpreted the statements in the marking criteria. Writing that inserts a superficial statement in a tokenistic way relating to only one art form is likely to be 'modest' and should not be awarded marks above the fourth band. Comments that exemplified this mark band concerned repeated references to how the choice of a piece of music affected movement selection in dance, or how you could 'tell a story in dance just like in drama'.

Candidates who elected to structure their work around the separate art forms often fell into the trap of treating the art forms in isolation and therefore a mark of 4 – 7 was appropriate. Knowledge of Links should arise directly from the practical work that the candidate has taken part in. Discussions between candidates that result in diagrams in the commentary are unlikely to gain high marks and candidates are advised to avoid this approach.



To obtain high marks the commentary should be structured as required by the Specification. Similarities between the art forms and their complimentary nature should be an integral part of the commentary and arise directly from the practical work undertaken.

### ***Understanding of Performance Process***

Moderators reported that more candidates wrote objectively about their work, clearly showing an understanding of the process and giving reasons why performance decisions were made. Equal weighting should be given to each stage of the devising process. High marks were not appropriate when candidates spent too much time on the improvisation stage and could not discuss the refining process that should have occurred during the rehearsal stage. It was good, however, to see candidates justly achieving high marks when they had discussed the actual performance objectively, stating how techniques had been controlled and the expressive effects that had been achieved. In awarding marks Centres have been appropriately more rigorous when the writing is descriptive, anecdotal and tends towards narrative.

Candidates should write objectively about their work stating the intended expressive effect in performance. Candidates should treat each stage of the process equally, showing understanding of rehearsal and performance.

### ***Quality of Written Communication***

Centres are reminded that it is the written commentary alone that carries the marks for the two coursework units and **not** the practical work. Good quality devising and performance are likely to more readily enable candidates to write a commentary that can obtain high marks. Reference should not be made to the quality of the practical work when marking the work since this does not form part of the assessment.

The criteria relating to Quality of Language apply to both units. Moderators reported that a greater number of Centres marked this area more rigorously and realistically. The majority of occasions where an adjustment had to be made were in relation to the top band. In cases where the style was simplistic, or avoided using technical terms then this mark band was inappropriate and an adjustment was made to the marks. The marking criteria refer to 'complex ideas' and this includes the understanding of technical language as exemplified in the course of the practical work.

In particular, candidates needed to be careful in their use of bullet points since these can limit communication rather than illuminate a point. The Quality of Language mark is easily improved where a candidate redrafts his or her work. Centres are reminded that they should not submit more than one commentary from each candidate. Early drafts should not be submitted, however as these can confuse rather than aid the moderation process.

For Quality of Written Communication, high marks can be obtained by clearly explaining points in a well organised paragraph. There should be a clear, well-reasoned argument that exemplifies how technical terms are understood through the practical work. The style will be clear and objective and not stray into unnecessary narrative or anecdotal evidence.

## **2557- Contextual Studies 1 (Written Examination)**

### ***General comments***

The majority of Centres continued to follow the established pattern of entering their candidates for this examination in June as this allowed concurrent work on the *Performance Realisation* unit. Examiners reported that the standard of work was comparable with previous sessions.

#### *a) examination technique and structure of answers*

There were fewer essay plans in evidence, however those presented tended to be of a very high standard and revealed much more knowledge that was always obvious from the response itself. In some cases the plan itself was longer or better than the response that followed. Some plans consisted of a list of key remembered words rather than seeking to sort out a coherent argument or line of attack regarding the question. There was once again evidence of candidates being prepared for this examination using past papers. This can be a powerful tool in demystifying the examination for candidates but became a straitjacket when candidates blindly answered a previous question and ignored the actual question set; this inevitably produced a formulaic response.

Some candidates wrote very sophisticated responses that followed a logical and progressive train of thought. Average candidates took the structure of the studied piece as the structure of their response, particularly in the case of dance. The weakest candidates offered no structure at all and jumped from point to point with no connecting argument or meaning and without the use of evidence from the studied pieces to support their line of argument. Good responses continually referred back to the question and offered insightful opinions and interesting standpoints. Such candidates showed an appreciation of the social, political and theatrical context in which the practitioners found themselves and were able to make those links clear. They were also able to draw on a range of references and apply the one most appropriate to the set question. Examiners commented that there were more instances than in previous sessions of candidates writing one very strong response followed by a much weaker one.

Introductions that contextualised the practitioner's work and gave an insight into his or her life were extremely useful and set the response in context. Although the introduction often consisted of irrelevant biographical detail. Best work ended with a strong summative statement that pulled all the lines of argument into one cohesive line of thought and referred directly back to the question, so ensuring that the question had been fully addressed.

A significant number of candidates left the reader to make the implicit links in their argument and many candidates chose to omit part of the question, for example writing about body language but not contact improvisation, structure but not movement, Brecht as a cabaret artist but not as a political activist. The strongest candidates were able to identify key features of a practitioner's work and to use appropriate key moments from the studied works and seen productions to illustrate ideas.

b) *use of examples from works studied*

Not all candidates supported their statements with relevant or clear examples from the studied practitioner's work. This seemed to be particularly prevalent amongst the music responses where candidates often wrote a list of techniques followed by the line "as seen in ... work". A number of candidates used their own work or a recently viewed production as an example of the practitioners work, often confusing directorial interpretation with practitioner's intentions. Some candidates used these examples appropriately but in a few cases the response consisted entirely of an analysis of the candidate's own devised work.

c) *previous learning*

Candidates did not always take full advantage of their previous learning in *The Language of Performing Arts* and it was surprising that terms such as 'physicality' (one of the 15 key terms with which candidates are expected to be familiar with in *The Language of Performing Arts*) was not fully understood when included in a question related to Brecht (Q.5) on this paper. This lack of absorbed knowledge meant that candidates were not able to fully exploit the potential of the questions. In some cases, basic terms such as 'Gestus', 'contact improvisation', 'physical theatre' and 'Verfremdungseffekt' were misinterpreted or ignored completely. Techniques and devices were sometimes not referred to by their technical term.

There was still evidence of a lack of understanding of compositional skills in each art form. Candidates needed to appreciate not only *what* a practitioner created but *how* it was created, what techniques and devices are used and to what effect and whether these are derivative or absolutely unique to that practitioner alone.

d) *quality of written communication and handwriting*

Some writing was illegible. Candidates need to be supported in learning to order their thoughts into a coherent argument. Weaker candidates struggled with the extended writing nature of the examination and sometimes wrote very little or misspelt key words, practitioner's names, characters names and play titles, sometimes using abbreviated forms throughout their responses. Punctuation and grammar continues to be a problem for some candidates.

There were some notable examples of candidates who were clearly personally engaged and totally enthused with their work. These candidates spoke with maturity and intelligence using evidence from a wide range of works that helped them identify how the focus work was characteristic of the practitioners work. They showed not only an excellent knowledge and understanding of the content of the work in terms of action and plotline but also understood the techniques and devices that were being employed and their impact on the audience.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **SECTION A**

#### **Christopher Bruce**

In this section responses often lacked movement detail. Weaker candidates were unable to describe what a dancer actually did. Terms such as 'ballet' 'folk' 'jazz' and 'tango' were used frequently but often without definition, explanation or exemplification.

Works studied included: *Swansong* and *Ghost Dances*'.

#### *Question 1*

Candidates were expected to not merely list Bruce's techniques but to show that they had a real understanding of how he structures his work in order to achieve the maximum impact. Strong candidates covered a range of points rather than just focusing on describing the lighting, music and costume. Such candidates were able to identify the techniques and devices being used and to what effect, using detailed examples from the studied work. Weaker candidates adopted a narrative approach, (often omitting a response to the second half of the question) and went through the work section by section. This approach worked for those who wrote with an authority and clarity that allowed them to give shape to their argument; candidates who simply chronicled the action of the work and used limited examples did not achieve higher marks.

There was some confusion over the context behind 'Swansong' but those who knew it and used it made much better points.

#### *Question 2*

Candidates should have been able to identify key moments in the studied work that highlighted how Bruce used movement and music together and also to identify what effect that moment is intended to have on an audience. There were many narrative responses to this question that showed an understanding of the storyline of the studied work and how Bruce created the piece but that were unable to connect this to movement content or stylistic traits. This approach led to responses full of generalised comments that did not push the argument forward. Few candidates were able to go beyond identifying the music and only the strongest candidates understood that Bruce's relationship with music evolved from his early works where he used electronic scores, often added after the dance was complete, to avoid an over reliance on another art form; through to his later works where he chose scores and responded to compositions or commissioned the appropriate music to fit his work.

## **Lloyd Newson**

Works studied included: *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*, *The Cost of and Enter Achilles*.

The questions allowed the candidates to explore the multi-faceted nature of Physical Theatre work, but few candidates were able to fully exploit the potential of these questions. Those who had only viewed works on video had some difficulty, often confusing cinematic techniques with live theatrical form action.

### *Question 3*

Candidates should have identified specific moments in the studied work that illustrate the statement and clearly exemplify how Newson uses athletic physicality, contact and improvisation skills and body language to provoke a response in the audience. Weaker candidates tended to struggle with the concept of 'contact improvisation' and concentrated instead on the 'body language'. Such candidates focused on shock value and the idea that Newson's sole intention was to upset the audience.

There was a surprising lack of discussion of Physical Theatre, aesthetic risk and pedestrian movement. Candidates who had clearly been given an opportunity to view a range of works were able to show how the studied work reflected the characteristic features and those candidates were well informed, confident and assured and were able to draw on that range of experiences, give a detailed explanation of the movement material and to stay connected to the question.

### *Question 4*

The response to this question should not have consisted merely of a 'shopping list' of the features of Newson's work. Each time a distinctive feature was identified, its function should also have been recognised and an example from the studied work should have been used to exemplify that feature. Some candidates struggled with what comprised a 'distinctive structural feature' and merely produced simplistic narrative responses that reflected no real insight into Newson's work. On the other hand examiners commented that some of the best responses on the whole paper were elicited by this question. Strongest candidates recognised Newson's working methods and gave examples of how he constructed a piece together from research and through working with his performers and designers.

## SECTION B

### Bertolt Brecht

It was noted that weaker candidates seemed to struggle with the Brecht questions, often choosing to only answer part of the question. As has been stated basic terms such as *Verfremdungseffekt* and *Gestus* were either totally omitted or misunderstood.

#### Question 5

Brecht's insistence on the importance of words in his productions, even at the expense of music, often encouraged candidates to think only of the words in the play, but movement was central to the action and as important to the audience's understanding as anything else. It was expected that candidates would be able to identify key moments in the studied work that represented Brecht's interest in movement. These might include the dance at the end of *Caucasian Chalk Circle*; Mother Courage's dragging of her wagon or the scene from *Arturo Ui* where the actor is training Ui in speech and deportment. Candidates who chose to answer this question struggled, often because of the text that they had studied. The strongest candidates recognised the importance of how the play looked on stage and started from the point of *gestus* and were able to identify various moments when gestic acting was used to reinforce meaning. Many candidates used the National Theatre's touring production of *Caucasian Chalk Circle* to inform their responses. The weakest candidates retold the story of the piece studied or listed Brecht's methods without focusing on the relationship between the story, the words, the action and the physicality. Some candidates responded to questions from previous sessions, choosing to ignore the specific question on the paper.

#### Question 6

Candidates did not need to provide detailed biographical notes but were expected to be able to identify how Brecht's life experiences had influenced his work. This was the more popular of the two questions and provoked a variety of responses. Strongest candidates were able to show how Brecht wrote poetry throughout his life, used verse in his plays and used a heightened language in the dialogue, in the song lyrics and in the scene descriptions. Some strong candidates were able to connect and suggest socio-political reasoning behind Brecht's decisions and to couple this with an understanding of the theatrical context. Examples were often detailed and sophisticated.

The role of music is fundamental in Brecht's work; in *Caucasian Chalk Circle* the narrator is actually called the Singer. Weaker candidates only addressed part of the question. Political analysis was mostly dealt with quite efficiently but responses to the 'poet' and 'cabaret' of the question tended to be a little thin. Some used their own devised work as examples of Brecht's methods, confusing interpretation with indisputable fact. Others used their own work effectively to illustrate performance possibilities.

Works studied included: *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Mother Courage*, *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* and *The Threepenny Opera*'

## John Godber

These questions were dealt with fairly evenly. Weaker candidates presented responses that lacked structure and were very formulaic. Most candidates missed the political/social comments that Godber makes. Some examiners commented on the lack of references to physicality or the dearth of detailed references from the studied texts.

Works studied included: *Teechers*, *September in the Rain*, *Perfect Pitch*

### Question 7

Godber's production style was minimalistic for the early plays but that does not reduce the impact for the audience. The weakest candidates produced pedestrian responses where they simply listed the ways that costume was used or just recorded everything they knew about Godber. Candidates often struggled to find a way to incorporate the practical and textual details needed. "Sounds" were often taken to mean just dialogue however some candidates were able to include some rather good analysis of direct address and the use of dialect. Once again some candidates focused on their own devised work, which was self-limiting. The comic impact of using a particular device was often ignored. Candidates were often unable to marry the idea of Godber's work not only needing to be minimalistic because of financial constraints but also how this meant that the work involved into an exciting physical 'in yer face' form of theatre.

### Question 8

Examiners noted that there were some lively observations of sexism and the exploitation of the unskilled and that more candidates commented on points of humour within the studied work. The weakest candidates appeared to be unaware of the 'social comment' being made in Godber's work and so ended up writing generic responses. Most candidates were able to list the features from Godber's past that made him write as he does i.e. miners background, teaching experience etc. but often left the reader to make implicit links to what the candidate might be discussing.

There were some very simplistic statements made and some candidates restricted themselves to the same quotations. The best responses were in response to *Teechers* where candidates discussed the changes and issues involved in the Education system. Strongest candidates discussed and illustrated how Godber's work shows a clear critical perspective and how despite the fact that the human condition is often awful it can also be entertaining and rewarding if we look in the right place.



## SECTION C

### George Gershwin

A number of candidates seemed to struggle with these questions. Weak candidates demonstrated no real understanding of musical form and avoided any technical terminology; the best candidates did not just retell the story of the lyrics but showed an appreciation of the devices being used and to what effect. Few candidates used notation and weak candidates were not able to support their statements with musical detail and evidence.

Works studied included: *Someone to Watch over Me*, *Summertime*, *It ain't Necessarily So*, *The Man I Love*, *They Can't Take That Away From Me*, *I got Rhythm*.

#### Question 9

In this question, candidates were expected to focus on a discussion of the significance of the choruses in Gershwin's songs. In many performances of Gershwin's songs, the verse is omitted but candidates should recognise the importance of the verse within the context of the narrative (lyrics) and the portrayal of character. It was expected that there should be a secondary discussion of other musical elements, particularly as the chorus is often a change of mood from the verse. Candidates did not seem to comprehend fully the question and too many compared between songs rather than exploring the relationship between verse and chorus within each individual song. Several candidates stated that it was Gershwin's intention to create forgettable verses and candidates sometimes adopted a very personal familiar tone with lots of explanation and question marks and simplistic statements such as "who could forget.....???" "the choruses are louder than the verse". Many candidates used technical terms such as blue notes, syncopation, and skyscraper chords, plagal cadences without explanation or reference.

#### Question 10

The question required the candidates to examine the main factors that contributed to the sense of drama in the songs and although the examples from the studied works may be described in narrative detail there should be evidence of an understanding of musical form. Some candidates used word examples that were not then developed and did not show technical knowledge and understanding. The strongest candidates showed firm evidence of strong musical knowledge, using technical terms in an appropriate way. *Let's Call the whole Thing Off* was often well used.

Those candidates who did not understand the term 'drama' in this musical context tended to ignore the question and write a long response consisting of often irrelevant information and considerable biographical detail. The strongest candidates stayed connected to the question and continuously referred back to it.

## **Steve Reich**

Fewer candidates had studied Steve Reich, but those who did often approached the work with a wonderful sense of liberation, having seen the language of music through fresh eyes. The biggest challenge for them was often in interpreting the question, which was often ignored in favour of writing a formulaic response including everything the candidate knew about Reich and his work without getting to grips with the thrust of the question.

There were few examples of musical annotation being used to support ideas. Those examples offered were often inaccurate and not fit for purpose.

Works studied included: *Different Trains*, *New York Counterpoint*

### *Question 11*

It was perfectly appropriate for candidates to disagree with the given statement because it would require an exploration of ideas and musical examples to disprove the statement. There should have been a clear discussion of the importance of repetition as this is the single most identifiable feature in his music. Weakest candidates were often able to identify how Reich's work was repetitive but were less successful in placing his work in context and therefore missed the radical part of the question. Some responses were very generic and some consisted almost entirely of biographical detail with little reference to the work studied. Often weaker candidates were able to use terms such as loops and augmentation but without explanation or illustration.

One or two candidates presented an argument that Reich's work was not repetitive but was radical – these were often interesting but not entirely supported. The strongest candidates were able to show an understanding and overview of a range of techniques, including repetition in Reich's work, in order to justify the extent of the radical nature of his work. There were some interesting responses that argued that Reich's early work might be considered radical for its time but that his later works can be placed within the context of technological developments in many music genres as well as the growing interest in the fusion of non-Western styles in music.

### *Question 12*

Candidates were expected to discuss rhythm as the principal thrust of the question although some candidates extended this into a discussion of other musical elements such as instrumentation, texture and melody. Weaker candidates padded out their answers with much biographical detail and struggled with the demands of the question. In a few extreme cases the candidates ignored the question altogether and responded to one from a previous session. Without musical notation to support the arguments put forward some candidates work consisted almost entirely of narrative detail.

The best responses were able to discuss these in relation to the primary consideration of rhythm. Strongest candidates recognised the significance of Reich's fascination with African drumming, which contains complex rhythmic patterns that rely on aural recollection rather than notated recollection, his experience as a percussionist and the influence of gamelan music.

*Report on the Units taken in June 2007*

Most candidates who responded to this question were more successful in terms of identifying terms and exploring them more fully showing a more solid musical understanding of Reich's work.

*Different Trains* was the most popular piece chosen and, although candidates sometimes listed others, they rarely expanded upon them.

*Report on the Units taken in June 2007*

## **2558 - Performance Realisation (Practical Examination)**

### ***General comments***

#### *Administration of the examination*

The overwhelming majority of visits ran very smoothly and the examining panel was once again grateful for the hospitality they received during their time in each Centre.

Problems were relatively few. A handful of Centres allowed candidates to do two devised pieces (or two repertoire pieces) with the inevitable result that only the better of the two was credited, the other receiving no marks at all.

#### *Advance documentation*

The quality of photographs improved slightly this session and in many Centres, helpful sheets of pictures grouped by performance were presented.

#### *Audience to watch the performances*

This has improved year on year and it was unusual for examiners to report that there was no audience apart from themselves. However, in the cases where no audience was provided, the event had a similar feel to a language oral examination or a graded musical examination. Without doubt, in Centres where there was an interested and supportive public audience the work was more polished and effective.

#### *Video and DVD recordings*

The quality of these was poorer than in previous sessions and this was a result of the various formats used for DVD recordings. It is anticipated that the number of these will increase in future sessions and Centres are reminded of the need to ensure that the DVD produced will play on a standard UK DVD player. Centres are also reminded to include chapters on the DVD for easy retrieval of the each performance.

### ***Mark Scheme***

The mark scheme was the same as that used in previous sessions, with one or two very minor modifications. As before in the case of devised pieces, the option was available to examiners to award a differential mark for the quality of the performance to that awarded for the devising of the piece itself if there was a radical difference between the two. This did not have to be frequently applied.

### **Group size and length of pieces**

Custom and practice in most Centres has now been established and it was rare for a piece to be stopped by the examiner for being too long. However, there were notable exceptions to this where the Centre had flagrantly disregarded the Specification requirements and where the performance would have been several times the maximum permitted length had the examiner not intervened. Examiners often reported their sadness in having to stop such pieces, especially when there was a public audience. However, in the interests of fairness to all candidates, excessively long pieces were stopped.

### **DANCE PIECES**

#### **Christopher Bruce**

The most popular pieces were *Swansong*, *Ghost Dances* and *Rooster*.

There were a small number of repertoire performances, mainly of extracts from *Swansong*. In repertoire pieces, one Centre had learnt and rehearsed the victim solo from *Swansong* with differentiated degrees of success.

The majority of performances were devised in the style of Christopher Bruce. There was evidence that the fingerprints provided in the Teachers' Guide had been useful in enabling candidates to identify and assimilate aspects of this style.

Most pieces were quite successful, but a lack of technique and the ability to travel made others fairly pedestrian and lacking dynamics. Very often the work in duos and trios was well practised and was danced well. When candidates were dancing in larger ensembles, however, it appeared that less time had been spent on ensuring the unison work was in unison, or canon motifs actually worked in canon. This was where the 'following' became most evident, but also the most able foregrounded themselves and sometimes it appeared as if others had been left to their own devices behind them, creating a marked contrast between individual candidates but also an overall weaker performance. There was some good choice and use of music and some good structuring of dance work with creative transitions.

One of the most creative of the pieces seen was based on those affected by the events of 9/11. A doorframe was the only piece of set used, and this became an entrance of various kinds as well as a window for those falling and jumping. The piece began with office workers arriving for work, drinking coffee etc; then the dawning horror; then a series of jumping/falling motifs; a most creative and unusual piece. One other piece especially worthy of note was an exploration of a mother/daughter relationship in which they not only caught the idea of exploring an issue/social situation, but also caught the black humour of *Swansong* in the vaudeville sections – a creative piece, which was impressive in its technique whilst avoiding too much angst.

## **Lloyd Newson and DV8**

The most popular pieces were *Strange Fish* and *Enter Achilles*.

Although Newson was less popular as a practitioner, those candidates performing pieces by him or in his style were often more aware of its requirements. That said, there were hardly any repertoire performances, most pieces being devised. There was ample evidence of well developed technical skills, high impact, energetic body contact and lift sequences and clever use of space, resulted in successful pieces. Pieces were most successful where candidates understood the contrasts inherent in the style: the work needed to be energetic, but dynamically phrased, in the same way that a piece of music has quick and slow, light and shade, loud and soft, and at the same time edgy and risky, witty and aggressive. The weakest pieces appeared to be little more than a set of moves undertaken like a gymnastic sequence.

Favourite topics for devised pieces included, chav culture, end of the world and the moors murderers. There were also some successful fusions of threat and comedy.

## **DRAMA PIECES**

### **Bertolt Brecht**

The most popular pieces were *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Mother Courage*, *Arturo Ui*, and *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*.

The majority of performances were by groups and consisted of extracts from plays by Brecht. Of the monologues undertaken, the majority were Azdak, Grusha or Simon although the decision of one candidate to multi-role Grusha and Simon did not result in a successful performance.

The approaches to *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Mother Courage* demonstrated similar strengths and weaknesses to performances in previous sessions. At best, there was a sensitive assimilation of Brecht's approach, at worst parts were rushed or gabbled with occasional forgotten lines. There was increasing use of *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* although the response was often mixed. Some candidates did not discern that one of Brecht's techniques is the accumulation of the short scenes making a whole picture, rather than a scene at a time as if they were separate plays in their own right. The most able candidates recognised that the combination of these scenes from very ordinary lives that provides much of the power of the whole piece.

There were some good attempts at devised work with strong use of v-effect in a range of guises, challenge/question work, and the dilemma. The best work used key elements of style which candidates filtered and made very much their own. There were some good examples of screen use, offering ironic facts or modern news parallels, but Centres should steer candidates away from becoming totally reliant on the medium to deliver the message at the expense of the performance/acting.

## **John Godber**

As in previous sessions, the most popular works were *Teechers*, *Bouncers* and *Shakers*.

Most performances were repertoire and were thoroughly prepared although few pushed the boundaries of characterisation and successfully created the humour and pathos required of Godber's work. The weaker pieces were often very slow, and relied on out-of-place Chekhovian naturalism, plodding through ideas clearly intended to be funny but lacking the pace for the jokes to work as too many could be seen coming.

There was generally good use of physicality and larger than life playing. In *Shakers*, for example, there was often a good sense of the underlying bitchiness and the bleakness of the lives of the girls, but little sense of the inner dynamic. In other words it was possible to see the joins as the candidates did not get the changing speeds of the piece.

Although very much in the minority, there was some very strong devised work, using a range of subject matter that could broadly be seen as 'social comment' and which captured the off-hand yet sharp criticism of the system within a fast-moving format.

## **MUSIC PIECES**

### **The songs of George Gershwin**

The majority of music performances were of repertoire. The songs themselves are naturally short and last barely three minutes in most cases. Some candidates had joined together two shorter songs to overcome this and in some cases a group had produced a medley of three or four songs. There were still a handful of cases where the whole group sang in unison, however, and this received very little credit since it was not possible to identify an independent part. Centres may wish to consider combining students in duets and trios so that harmony work can be developed to show more of the candidates' musical vocal skills. Too often there was an "X-factor audition" approach to some of this type of repertoire work that failed to inspire either the candidates or the examiners.

The ability to sing in tune remained the single most important differentiating factor. No matter how impressive the stage movement, costume or set were, if the song was mis-pitched or out of tune, it was awarded little credit. Rubato was used to telling effect by stronger candidates, conveying confidence and authority. The best performers also used economic movement and gesture to add to the drama of the performance. Weak singers sang out of tune and frequently failed to use the space in any meaningful way, often using meaningless or distracting mannerisms. This was off putting to both the visual and aural sensibilities of the audience.

Accompaniments were very variable, and on a number of occasions not as sympathetic to the performer's needs as might be expected in an examination. In one case, for example, the accompanist gave a bravura performance of improvised jazz piano in the middle of the song, which was not part of the assessment but was applauded by adoring fans in the audience. However, it completely upstaged the candidate/vocalist and created an unfavourable comparison. Centres should ensure that the accompanist for this work has had as much opportunity as possible to work with the candidates before the examination and encourage eye contact between the candidate and the



accompanist, at least at the beginning of the songs to give those candidates that need it confidence on entry. Occasionally, candidates sang a cappella where no accompaniment was available. Downloading accompaniment was a viable option that in extreme circumstances was still better than performing unaccompanied.

The best work was often where the candidates had thought through the character singing the song. In some Centres great care had been taken to costume the performers appropriately and create a small set. This did not need to be complicated: a park bench; a street lamp; a table for 2 etc., but it made all the difference, although sitting down to sing was a risky strategy that often got in the way of breath control. There was some good use of costume/dress for this work. As with the point about posture and breathing, candidates needed to ensure that they were comfortable with the costume before the performance rather than just pulling it out for the day. Too many performances were spoilt by nervous fiddling with ball gowns worn infrequently and with concern. When worn with confidence, some formal clothing can help the "characterisation" within the song considerably.

### **Steve Reich**

This was attempted by fewer candidates but often with highly successful results. There was a freshness and enthusiasm for Reich's techniques and this shone through most performances. There were rare examples of repertoire performances of *Clapping Music* or *Music for Pieces of Wood* but virtually all performances were devised by the candidates.

Candidates most commonly used two particular techniques: the use of speech samples as a means of creating melodic lines and the use of phasing as a structural device. These were variable in their success. The best speech samples made use of quirky or distinctive means of saying a particular phrase, the weakest had little shape or inflexion and had been selected because of their meaning rather than their sound.

In terms of phasing, some candidates made a sequenced loop using music technology and this formed a very helpful integral part for the live parts to work around. In the case of phase pieces, particularly, this meant that the static part was constant and not susceptible to moving out of time to put off the moving parts.



## **2559 - Community Performance Project (Coursework)**

### ***Knowledge and Understanding***

This area continued to cause problems for candidates. In planning the Unit Content, the Centre should select the performance project and the style that is to be used. Good planning will develop performance skills that the candidates already have.

Moderators reported several instances where candidates discussed possible performance projects and the appropriateness of different performance styles. This discussion was not appropriate for the submitted commentary and could not be awarded marks. It was also inappropriate in the first place to allow candidates to select a style since few of them were likely to have had a sufficient overview of the art forms to make this decision unaided. High marks were justly awarded when candidates stated clearly the performance project, the intended style, venue and audience at the start of the written commentary. This then meant that research, development of character, and theatrical intent could all be discussed and evaluated within a secure framework.

Some Centres additionally gave their candidates the task of locating venues, publicising the performance, and generating the audience. This was also not required for the unit and would be more appropriate to a vocational qualification. The focus of the candidates' work must be the devising of the actual performance.

Moderators reported an increased number of pieces in what appeared to be 'umbrella' style, often referred to by candidates as eclectic. There were instances of candidates discussing what they believed to be an 'eclectic' or 'post-modern' style but being very unclear about what this style actually was.

Centres should not use the adoption of an eclectic style as an excuse for candidates to mention any practitioner, piece of theatre or composition that they happen to have studied. The style must be clear and there must be a clear integrity to the use of practitioners and performance theory underpinning the devising work.

There were some examples of excellent projects based upon local myths and legends that were performed in a local church or village hall. Several Centres focused on fairies and/or fantasy but did not always identify a clear style of performance. Fantasy was problematic as a performance style as there were no recognised generic features or established theoretical elements that could easily be taught or researched. Similarly, those candidates who attempted to produce a piece of Street Theatre were expected to research the genre so that there was a secure theoretical knowledge underpinning.

There was a problem with a few Centres encouraging candidates to produce pieces that took universal themes rather than arising from the community and these were not appropriate as the piece must be specific to the community. Universal themes should not be used unless there is a direct relevance to the community and this link needed to be shown clearly in the written commentary. In instances where the content had become more important than the style, marks were restricted to the 8-9 marking band.

To access high marks candidates should clearly state the performance project, the style and the intended audience at the start of the commentary. This should then inform the subsequent research and devising discussion. The stimulus for the devising must arise from the community that the Centre is in.

### ***Evaluation of Performing Process***

As with *The Language of Performing Arts*, high marks were justly awarded for objective, analytical discussion. Some Centres included details of the piece with the Unit Content. As a result, candidates were more able to discuss the devising process rather than indulging in a narrative, scene-by-scene description of the piece. Candidates who were most successful in discussing the devising process were those able to concisely and clearly discuss the piece being devised without giving a narrative description of each scene. Candidates need to be clear about the framework in which they are working and discuss the development of their piece in relation to this.

High marks can be obtained by writing objectively about the devising process clearly showing why performance decisions were made within the given framework.

### ***Evaluation of the success of the performance***

There were good examples of candidates discussing the effectiveness of performance decisions and evaluating their success against their stated aims. These candidates were also able to discuss the control of techniques within the dynamic of the performance situation. High marks were not supported for candidates who simply noted that audience members laughed in the right place or to those who relied on talking to members of the audience afterwards.

Candidates were prone to falling back on subjective comments as to how they felt the performance went rather than showing they had the ability to reflect objectively on what had been achieved. There were examples of strong work where candidates were able to discuss how the performers controlled (for example) the rhythm and pace of a scene on order to produce a reaction from the audience. Strong candidates showed that they understood how to create a theatrical effect. Conversely weaker candidates gave the impression that what had happened was almost accidental and were simply relieved that they remembered their lines. One candidate said, 'I don't think the audience noticed how I laughed because he looked so funny dead.'

Candidates should be objective in their discussion and refer to their intended aims. They should discuss the success of the control of techniques in performance. The discussion should form a significant part of the commentary and not appear as an after-thought at the end.

**Quality of Written Communication**

The points made concerning *The Language of Performing Arts* were equally applicable to this unit. In addition, moderators reported that the nature of the activity lent itself to a narrative style and that, as in previous sessions, a number of candidates became fixated on telling the story of the piece rather than using analytical language to reflect on its creation and effectiveness.



## **2560 - Contextual Studies 2 (Written Examination)**

### **General comments**

There were still Centres where the majority of candidates were reliant on an abbreviated menu of techniques, a handful of quotable examples and an all-purpose structure. Whilst this approach may have given the very weakest a lifeline in the examination, it did limit severely the available marks for the majority.

If Centres must use this formula approach, which is not recommended, then they should at least ensure that there are a number (too many to be learned by rote) of possible exemplary references, so that the candidate has to choose, which they may use in the examination. In this way, there is some variety in the responses and examiners don't feel that they are reading the same answer over and over again.

There was also evidence of better connections, comparisons and contrasts being made between and across art forms, together with a better use of example, reference and illustration. The next stage is to further develop discussion points with context integrated so that it understanding is clear, discussion is informed and information interwoven within the answer.

Whilst more examples were better used by an increasing proportion of the candidates, Centres are reminded that this should build upon work and understanding in previous units and therefore being able to identify styles, devices and techniques should be an automatic expectation of candidates.

The strongest answers brought in frequent referencing from works, practitioners, topical events, historical matter relevant to the question and outside the strict count of the nine chosen extracts. With regard to the latter, as one examiner put it, 'referencing outside the nine extracts is always exciting and often puts the icing on the best responses'. Differentiation continued to be created by a strong overview with an analytical approach at the higher end, contrasted with a methodical plod through each extract, with little attention to the question and a minimal knowledge of anything wider than the extracts considered at the bottom end.

In some Centres there was a tendency to only look at one song from three different albums/shows as the extent of the music extracts. In one case this consisted of just three songs from one album, equivalent to about nine minutes' worth of work. This severely limited the ability of candidates to exemplify the points they made and also to make comparison across the forms.

Many examiners reported more appropriate responses to the American Musical. Questions with fewer openings of unrelated background. More candidates had attempted to integrate this knowledge into their answers to the questions thus showing understanding rather than just demonstrate remembered background information, which may or may not be relevant. However, within the American Musical area, there are still some centres where there are insufficient examples being considered. Obviously, most of the examples from this genre could be used to look at all three of the art forms, and candidates using that breadth of knowledge and understanding in comparison and contrast, across nine or more musicals is likely to be rewarded. If, however, they have only been introduced to a limited number of musicals, and investigated examples within the individual art forms from that small

number then the depth of understanding of the genre as a whole is likely to be very limited.

After the comments in previous reports, essay plans were more controlled, but there were still plans that were longer than answers.

Centres could encourage candidates to put aspects of the question at the centre of spider diagrams or mind maps, rather than practitioners. This then focuses ideas and thoughts from what has been learnt across all the works on the question, rather than reproducing all the learnt information about a person and his/her works that may not be relevant. This kind of practice planning can be done as a series of short exercises on several different questions prior to working up one of them as a full practice answer.

Few candidates appeared to have problems with the two hour answer and the opportunity clearly gave those who had studied the area and the works, a chance to develop responses with flair and integrity. There were fewer examples this session of 'thin' answers, with more candidates writing to the time.

This session, there were very few spoilt papers (dear examiner...etc.) or rubric infringements: one candidate answered using three works of Christopher Bruce, another answered all six questions and a couple from the same Centre answered both question 5 and question 6.

### ***Quality of Language***

Many examiners reported improvement in this area with wider vocabulary in use and grammar and the use of paragraphs improved. However, there were still too many examples where the quality of the language was not equal to the ideas communicated. Candidates must be made aware that they miss out on marks unnecessarily by spelling their key practitioners repeatedly incorrectly, whilst at the same time making correct reference to work and names outside their scope because they have read around the area. The latter is to be encouraged, the former addressed.

There was still a marked frequency of common spellings and grammar issues that should not be so prevalent at this level: their/there, practitioner, integrated, in front / as well / a lot, humorous, names of practitioners studied, initial capitals for proper nouns, poor use of quotation marks, misuse of apostrophes and the use of text speak.



## **Question Specific Comments**

### **Post Modern Approaches to the Performing Arts since 1960**

#### *Question 1*

6% of candidates answered this question.

This was not a popular question but differentiated between candidates very well. Few responses were in the middle of the range, but it clearly appealed to some very strong candidates and at the lower end, it was used as an 'everything I know' question.

There were some very strong answers to this question; perhaps the sardonic challenge encouraging spirited but reasoned defences. Some candidates agreed with the statement and argued that 'fashion statements' as we have come to know them, were actually a feature of a post modern world. The strongest work showed real engagement with the idea of postmodernism in the performing arts, with a good knowledge and understanding of the genre, its social and historical genesis and how it was still evolving.

For weaker candidates, often it was used as an excuse to write a very general response with lengthy but unconnected context. There was confusion over what "arts movement" and "fashion statement" meant and few were able to make any reference to the 'consumerism' aspect of postmodernism.

#### *Question 2*

32% of candidates answered this question.

This was the most popular question on the paper and produced a good range of responses. The best were able to offer an impressive range of references from works and clear examples of approaches; make links between practitioners sharing similar methods and show a clear understanding of the wider context in which the work was created. Many saw the opportunity offered in the question for reflection and cross-referencing.

Less able candidates tended to limit their view to the time-span of their extracts, without any reference to the 40-year span implicit in the question. Centres should be conscious of the whole scope of the topic, particularly if the chosen works are from a narrow period of years. Here candidates needed to show an awareness of the period, but may well have used examples all taken say from the 1980s to evidence the common approaches. The use of broader social, historical and cultural relevance to deepen the understanding often pays dividends for candidates. In one Centre the candidates were able to rationalise what was happening in the world, in theatre, dance and music, such as, lifting of censorship, Thatcher coming to power, the Cold War, more accessible travel to the East, and therefore contextualise what effect this might have had upon the work, techniques and topics chosen, balanced with detailed knowledge of the pieces studied.

In another Centre, many of the papers began, "There are 14 fingerprints of Post-modernism..." and proceeded to work through them, all in the same order, with exactly the same references. Some of these prints got blurred. Berkoff's re-working of Oedipus was referred to as "plagiarism" and pastiche and parody were very confused

There were a number of very good answers that used a platform of modernist methods throughout, challenging the idea of a postmodernist genre altogether. Conversely, there are some candidates who believe that a certain practitioner sets out to be post modernist by following certain practices. This immature thinking should be scotched from the start so that candidates have an appreciation of the retrospective labelling that has occurred.

For the first time, some examiners reported on an over-emphasis, in this area, on dance, with up to 70% of the answer given over to discussion of the dance works leaving the music and drama extracts as poor seconds. Similarly, “dance is discussed with enthusiasm, music in surprising and rewarding, if sometimes dull, detail with plays studied as a duty not a pleasure”. Centres should guard against candidates perceiving, even inadvertently, any of these areas as “subject specific”; this is not the case.

### **Politics and Performance since 1914**

#### *Question 3*

11% of candidates answered this question.

There was greater evidence of wider knowledge and understanding of politics and performance since 1914 in many of the responses, across the whole ability range in some centres. This is very encouraging, as centres have begun to embrace the requirement for depth of understanding in the genre, with the extracts being the support to that understanding rather than the study itself. There was some good use of understanding of the influence of Brecht from 2557, with most avoiding the trap of discussing him and his work.

The question produced some very intelligent argument in high level answers, but also pointed up the need for well-chosen extracts that are known in terms of their political content and context. Some candidates struggled with the same few centre-common examples that they were able to regurgitate, but not adapt to the question or thread of thought.

Thus, this question tended to expose those with only a very limited understanding of the context in which the works existed. Many of these became mere narrative accounts of the works studied, a basic knowledge without any real understanding. They could equally well have been answering Question 4. Some misunderstood the question and made reference to ‘moments’ in the works studied, where the ‘politics’ were most evident, rather than looking at the question from the point of view what the work was responding to or reflecting.

<p>One of the first questions to ask when choosing works in this area is: “Why might this have been written, devised, choreographed in 1932, 1980, 1956 etc?” A good example to use to get candidates thinking about this, whether it is one of the studied works or not, is “Oh What a Lovely War”, devised 50 years after its subject matter, but in a style only possible in the flowering of satire late 50s and early 60s, in a theatrical style only possible on this scale, after the influence and acceptance of the Berliner Ensemble’s approach across Europe and an increasing use of documentary theatre, pioneered by Littlewood and others after the WPA-FTP in USA and with a stark message about futility of war for a world living in the ‘Cold War’, CND, Cuban Missile crisis, where mass annihilation was possible, but at the same time, in this country, a society living in greater comfort and wealth.</p>
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Union Dance was described as 'non-political' by some, but this is to misunderstand the nature of politics: social, personal, historical, institutional. Centres need to investigate the communication of ideas with regard to structural, stylistic and representational devices used to create a particular effect and consequently a specific response from the audience.

The combination, mentioned in this report last year, of Union Dance, Bob Marley and Lorraine Hansberry, again produced some very positive responses. The candidates had been engaged by all three of the practitioners, which gave them much to discuss and show enthusiasm over. This is not to say that this particular combination is the 'advised' or 'recommended' one. However, what it does point to is that this Centre has a well-balanced approach and a clear shared understanding between those teaching on this unit and their candidates of why these particular practitioners are good examples of Politics and Performance.

#### *Question 4*

14% of candidates answered this question.

This question encouraged candidates to discuss how practitioners had striven to persist in putting over their beliefs in the face of critical opposition, and how far, or how little, the same issues had changed. Some candidates debated the "passivity" of the stance taken in the quote from John Arden, which, given the originator, is very positive. The line being that they had evidence to show that politics and performance involved more than just saying the same thing over again. This shows evidence of real A2 challenge and is very encouraging. Questions in this unit should always be seen as something to challenge, providing of course, the candidate has the wherewithal and evidence to make a coherent argument.

This question led to some Damascean understanding of the consistency of messages across the works studied, which would have gladdened the hearts of tutors in centres, especially if it had come some reassuring weeks before the examination. For some, this question helped it all fall into place, with examples used extremely well. The necessity of commitment, perseverance, the repetition of simple ideas and universality of message came over very strongly and allowed for a good focus on the question.

However, many of the responses to this question took the sentiment of the quote in general terms and dealt mainly with practitioners in isolation.

### **The Twentieth Century American Musical**

#### *Question 5*

20% of candidates answered this question.

Whilst there was a better approach to these questions with more getting to the heart of the question earlier (see comments above), many dealt mainly with the story of the action with little consideration of the question. Very few candidates really understood the 'book' and 'song' referred to in the question. Even though *Showboat* was a popular extract offered, few candidates even made connection between the Jerome Kern of the question and the composer of the piece.

Kern was probably more significant in the development of the American Musical of the twentieth century than all the potted background about 'minstrls' (sic) and 'Vordvil' (sic). His many works at the Princess Theatre with book writer Guy Bolton, which gave rise to the reference in the question, laid the foundations for what was to happen later, and he is very much the bridge between all those previous styles, especially operetta, and the more fully-formed Rodgers and Hammerstein works.

Poor use of examples let down these answers as they were often narrative or very vague. Better candidates attempted to show the connections between the art forms and concentrated upon analysis of closely detailed sections from individual musicals. High order candidates defined what was meant by 'the book' and followed this up with brief details about burlesque, vaudeville, revue and operetta that they later relied on in their argument. They were able to explain how song and book integrated with clear examples often supported by musical notation, movement material and dialogue quotes. They also offered some socio-political context suggesting why certain decisions were made. They also argued the case with examples of dance being perfectly integrated.

Average candidates struggled to offer a definition of 'the book'. Examples were often detailed but failed to entirely connect to the question just stopping short of tying ideas together. Weak candidates relied on the story of the musical or character analysis to provide their 'argument'.

#### Question 6

17% of candidates answered this question.

A significant number of candidates read this as a previous question from June 06 on the "American Dream" and limited their responses to this aspect rather than the wider context that is implied. Those that kept it fairly broad using the American Dream as a metaphor for the whole society, were more successful than those who repeated their mock exam/practice answer, keeping to last year's question throughout.

There was good use of comparative techniques, linking across examples and methods and surprisingly, at least two examiners reported on some good cross-reference to the work of Bob Dylan- *The times they are a-changin'* indeed.

This area is very specific in its national identification and centres should ensure that a basic outline of twentieth century American history is understood so that candidates can locate their examples within an appropriate social, historical and cultural context. A timeline with key dates and events to be researched in private study time is an excellent way to address this.

**Unit 2560 Contextual Studies 2 Updated June 2007**

A guide to practitioners and works offered for the examination of this unit

	Dance	Drama	Music
Post Modern Approaches since 1960	<p><b>Alston</b>-Soda Lake, Pulcinella, Overdrive, Light Flooding.., Rumours Visions, Brisk Singing</p> <p><b>Anderson</b>-Flesh &amp; Blood (both versions), Cross Channel, Car, Perfect Moment, Spectre de la Rose, Double Take, Lost Dances of Egon Schiele, Jesus Baby Heater, Yippee</p> <p><b>Bausch</b>—as below</p> <p><b>Bintley</b>-Still Life/Penguin Café, Hobson's Choice, Flowers of the Forest,</p> <p><b>Bourne</b>-Swan Lake, Edward Scissorhands, CarMan, Nutcracker, Drip</p> <p><b>Clark</b>-Because we must, Prospero's Books, Current/See, Swamp</p> <p><b>Davies</b>-Wyoming, 88, Bird Song, White Man Sleeps</p> <p><b>De Keersmaeker</b>-Achterland, Rosa, Rosas danst Rosas</p> <p><b>Grupo Corpo</b>-Bach, O Corpo, Lecuona</p>	<p><b>Beckett</b>-Eh Joe, Breath, Rockaby</p> <p><b>Berkoff</b>-The Actor, Metamorphosis, Greek, East, Decadence, Belgrano, Trial, Salome, Dog, Oedipus, Harry's Christmas, Messiah, West, Requiem for Ground Zero</p> <p><b>Brenton</b>-Churchill Play, Skinny Spew, Saliva Milkshake</p> <p><b>Churchill</b>-Vinegar Tom, Top Girls, Ice Cream, Cloud Nine, Skriker, Heart's Desire, Soft Cops, This is a Chair, Mad Forest, Fen, Serious Money, Light Shining in Bucks, Blue Heart, Mouthful of Birds, Owners, Drunk Enough, A Number</p> <p><b>Crimp</b>-Attempts on Her Life, Country, Misanthrope, No-one Sees the Video</p> <p><b>Forced Entertainment (Etchells)</b>- Club of no Regrets, Pleasure, First Night</p> <p><b>Kane</b>-Phaedra's Love, Crave, Blasted</p> <p><b>Kaos Theatre</b>-Titus Andronicus, Moll Flanders, Alice</p> <p><b>Pinter</b>-Homecoming, Birthday Party, Caretaker, Old Times</p> <p><b>Stoppard</b>-Arcadia, Rosencrantz &amp; Guildenstern are Dead, Real Inspector Hound</p> <p><b>Wertenbaker</b>-Our Country's Good, Love of the Nightingale, Three Birds</p>	<p><b>Adams</b>-Nixon in China, Ceiling/Sky, Chamber Symphony, Death of Klinghoffer, Transmigration of Souls</p> <p><b>Albarn</b>-Demon Days, Gorillaz</p> <p><b>Andreissson</b>-De Stijl, Man/Music/Mozart, Hoketus</p> <p><b>Beatles</b>-Please Please Me, Help, Revolver, Sgt. Pepper's, White, Magical Mystery Tour, Abbey Rd, Hard Day's Night</p> <p><b>Bonzo Dog</b>-Chronology Vols.1, 2 &amp; 3</p> <p><b>Bryars</b>-Squirrel and the Ricketty Rackety Bridge, Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet, Sinking of the Titanic</p> <p><b>Cage</b>-Voiceless Essay, Europera 5, Roaratorio, 4.33</p> <p><b>Cook</b>-Let them Eat Bingo, Gutter/Stars, Long Way Baby</p> <p><b>Eno</b>-Another Green World, Discreet music, My Life in the Bush of Ghosts</p> <p><b>Glass</b>-Music in Similar Motion, Strung Out, Company, Einstein on the Beach, Pawaqqatsi, Violin Concerto, Symphony II &amp; III, 'Heroes' Symphony No.4, Songs for Liquid Days, Koyaanisqatsi Music in 12 parts, Quartet 5, The Hours, The Orchard, Satyagraha, Truman Sleeps, 600 Lines, Akhnaten,</p>

			<p>Photographer <b>John</b>-Lion King, Billy Elliot, Madman Across the Water <b>Nyman</b>-Piano, Draughtsman's Contract, Decay Music, Libertine, Ogre <b>Radiohead</b>-Hail to the Thief, Pablo Honey, OK Computer <b>Riley</b>-In C, Rainbow in Curved Air, Persian Surgery Dervishes <b>Sex Pistols</b>- My Way, Anarchy in the UK, C'mon Everybody <b>Shostakovich</b>-Lady Macbeth, 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony, 8<sup>th</sup> Quartet <b>Stockhausen</b>-Gruppen, Klavier Stucke, Kontakte</p>
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<p>Politics and Performance since 1914</p>	<p><b>Ailey-</b> Revelations, Cry, For Bird with Love, Blues Suite, Witness  <b>Bausch-</b> Bluebeard, 1980, Nelken, Viktor, Café Müller, Windowcleaner, Palermo Palermo, Rite of Spring, Nur Du  <b>Candoco-</b> Sunbyrne, Phasing, Sour Milk, Outside In, Shadow,  <b>Jeyasingh-</b> Romance with Footnotes, Surface Tension, Exit No Exit  <b>Jones-</b> Fever Swamp, Last Supper, Still/Here  <b>Ludus Dance-</b> Zygote, Clash, Sold, Perfecting Eugene  <b>Motionhouse-</b> Volatile, Faking It, Arcadio/Déjà Vu, Driven, Perfect  <b>Union Dance-</b> Permanent Revolution V2R, Dance in House, Dance Tek Warriors, Sensing Change  <b>Vardimon-</b> Therapist, Tete, Park  <b>VTOL/Murphy-</b> Where Angels, Without Trace, Snowball Effect  <b>Wigman-</b> Witch Dance, Farewell</p>	<p><b>Banner Theatre-</b>Burning Issues, Migrant Voices, Free for All  <b>Berkoff-</b>as above  <b>Boal-</b>Image, Forum, Invisible Th.  <b>Bond-</b>Saved, Lear, 11 vests, Inland Sea, War Plays  <b>Brenton-</b>Greenland, Iranian Nights, Ugly Rumours  <b>Cartwright-</b>Little Voice, Road, Two, Bed, Hard Fruit  <b>Churchill-</b> as above  <b>Daniels-</b>Masterpieces, Gut Girls, Esme &amp; Shaz  <b>Edgar-</b>Destiny, Maydays, Pentecost  <b>Fo-</b>Can't Pay, Won't Pay, Accidental Death, Boniface VIII, Pope &amp; Witch, Trumpets &amp; Raspberries, Mistero Buffo, Virtuous Burglar, Open Couple, Hunger of Zanni, It Happened Tomorrow, Elizabeth, One Was Nude &amp; One Wore Tails, Same Old Story, Birth of the Jongleur  <b>Fugard-</b>Coat, Sizwe Bansi, Island, Master Harold, Valley Song  <b>Hansberry-</b>A Raisin in the Sun, Les Blancs, Drinking Gourd  <b>Hare-</b>Plenty, Murmuring Judges, Permanent Way  <b>Littlewood/Th.Workshop-</b> Hostage, Taste of Honey, OWALW  <b>Pinter-</b>One for the Road, Party Time, Mountain Language  <b>Russell-</b>Our Day Out, Educating Rita, Blood Bros</p>	<p><b>Bragg-</b> England half English, Back to Basics, Talking with the Taxman, Workers' Playtime, Must I Paint you A Picture?, William Bloke  <b>Clash-</b>London Calling, Give 'em Enough Rope, The Essential Clash  <b>Dylan-</b>Freewheelin, The Times they are a'changin', Bringing it All Back Home, Another Side of, Slow Train Coming, Desire  <b>Guthrie-</b>Dustbowl Ballads, Asch recordings Vols. I,II,III,IV  <b>Johnson (The The)-</b> Infected, Mind Bomb, Naked Self  <b>Marley-</b>Exodus, Burnin', Rastaman Vibration, Songs of Freedom, Natty Dread, Catch A Fire, Uprising, Survival  <b>Masekela-</b>Promise of a Future, Tomorrow, Black To The Future, Uptownship, Time, Revival, Sixty, Ooga Booga  <b>Shostakovich-</b> Symphonies 5, 7, 8, 10 &amp; 11  <b>U2-</b>Joshua Tree, War, How to...Atomic Bomb  <b>Weill-</b>Seven Deadly Sins, Mahagonny, Threepenny Opera</p>
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Report on the Units taken in June 2007

	& Thanksgiving, Shifting Landscape		
The C20th American Musical	<p><b>Fosse</b>-Sweet Charity, Cabaret, Pajama Game, Chicago (often the wrong version), All That Jazz, Pippin</p> <p><b>Robbins</b>-West Side Story, Fiddler, King &amp; I</p>	<p><b>Hammerstein</b>-Showboat, Oklahoma, Sound of Music, King &amp; I, South Pacific,</p> <p><b>Lerner</b>- My Fair Lady, Paint Your Wagon, Camelot, Brigadoon, <b>Gigi</b></p> <p><b>Sondheim</b>-Sunday in the Park, Sweeney Todd, Into the Woods, Assassins, Company, Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Gypsy</p>	<p><b>Bernstein</b>-West Side Story, Candide, On the Town, (Wonderful Town), Trouble in Tahiti</p> <p><b>Loesser</b>-Most Happy Fella, How to Succeed in Business, Guys &amp; Dolls</p> <p><b>Lowe</b>-Brigadoon, <b>My Fair Lady</b>, <b>Paint Your Wagon</b>, <b>Camelot</b>, <b>Gigi</b></p> <p><b>Porter</b>-Kiss Me Kate, Can-Can, Anything Goes, <b>High Society</b>, <b>Silk Stockings</b></p> <p><b>Rodgers</b>-Carousel, Sound of Music, South Pacific, Pal Joey, Babes in Arms, Connecticut Yankee, On Your Toes, No No Nanette</p> <p><b>Sondheim</b>-A Little Night Music, Into the Woods, Company, Sweeney Todd, Follies, Passion</p>



## 2561 - Student Devised Performance (Practical Examination)

### General comments

The four most popular commissions were: Judie Garland, Curl up and diet, General Pinochet and the disappeared of Chile and Little Red Riding Hood. There was some evidence that candidates were more engaged with the commission they had chosen and there were fewer erroneously references to 'starting points' in the discussions before the performances. The following is a short summary of general points for improvement made by visiting examiners in this session:

- There were still some pieces that used the commission as a hook on which to hang ideas.
- Research was generally thorough but a number of candidates struggled to translate this into performance.
- Use of a second art form was often tokenistic.
- Structure was much improved this session but some candidates still relied heavily on blackouts for their transitions and these inevitably slowed down the whole piece.
- There was a need for more rehearsal in the case of some pieces. There was too much sense of the piece being a test, rather than a polished piece for an audience to appreciate. To repeat, where there had been pre-performance to an audience there was a marked difference in the quality of the pieces.
- The predominance of theatre blacks as costume for the whole group is becoming a Performance Studies cliché – there is no requirement for candidates to dress in this way!
- There was an increased – and unhelpful - reliance on projected images with some pieces more resembling a PowerPoint presentation than a performance.

### COMMISSIONS

#### 1. Pieter Bruegel – *The Hunters in the Snow*

This scene of a snowy hunting scene of late medieval Flanders was translated into a variety of settings, some of them informative, others comic. The majority saw it as an opportunity to imagine an issue arising from the piece and these ranged from the abolition of hunting with hounds through to the monetary and aesthetic values of art. Some groups looked carefully at the different levels in the painting and worked on innovative dance work that reflected this.

#### 2. Peter Magubane – *Ndebele Home*

This produced a few interesting pieces, most of which explored clashes of culture, making full use of the varieties of colour in the picture.

#### 3. Archibald Motley – *Street Scene in Chicago*

This was a popular choice with many street scenes being inspired by it. Some of these were translated too far from the original and the weakest pieces tended to have the notion of a 'street' as being the only with the commission. In extreme cases, this meant that the commission was more akin to Coronation Street than Motley's picture.

4. Elie Nadelman – *Dancer*

This was chosen by a number of groups who saw dance as being the main focus for their piece. These, however, often revolved around well-worn stories of a dancer's career as she was propelled to stardom/injured/bullied/robbed/became disillusioned.

5. *Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth period*

There were several powerful political interpretations of this commission, several of which had clearly used techniques studied for Contextual Studies 2. A particular theme that came through several pieces was Cromwell's putting down of the Irish. In the best cases, this engendered terror through an obvious passion and commitment to the message of the piece. Other, often weaker, pieces focused on the banning of drinking and dancing during the period of the Commonwealth.

6. *General Pinochet and the 'disappeared' of Chile*

A very popular commission, possibly because of the link with Christopher Bruce's Ghost Dances (studied by a number of candidates for Contextual Studies 1). This did not give them any advantage over other candidates, however, since the task was not to recreate Bruce's piece: those that did disadvantaged themselves. There was a noticeably more thorough element of research undertaken for this commission, although this did not always translate effectively into performance.

The approach taken varied quite considerably, with the vast majority of pieces attempting to weave a historical commentary into their pieces. One Centre, avoiding political polemic, attempted to be objective by showing the perpetrators as trapped as the victims in the "industry of torture". Another Centre had a disturbing broad comic commentary on brutal torture techniques coupled to a damning exposure of American intervention in Chile and elsewhere. The banality of evil was conveyed powerfully through the portrayal of the ordinariness of Pinochet himself. The weakest element of the performance seen was frequently the Latin American contexts – accents slipping, bland music with an absence of rhythm; in the worst cases a plethora of hats and ponchos!

7. *August 1907 – Baden-Powell leads the first Scout Camp on Brownsea Island, England*

The anticipated flurry of camp songs, gang shows and recreations of the expedition to Brownsea Island never quite materialised and relatively few candidates chose this commission. Those that did represented the very strong and the very weak, both being fairly literalistic in their interpretation.

8. *Malaysia gains independence from Britain in 1957*

A rarely chosen commission. Examiners reported their disappointment in the obvious lack of enthusiasm for topics reflecting key historical milestones. There were a few pieces that went beyond the package holiday to Penang with its attendant Club 18-30 atmosphere. One or two pieces engaged with notions of Empire and the situation of the post-colonial world. This was genuinely inspiring on the rare occasions it was offered.

9. Wendy Cope – *The Stickleback Song*

Examiners were surprised that this commission was chosen by so few candidates, given the previous popularity of Wendy Cope's poems in previous sessions.

10. Ogden Nash – *Curl up and diet*

This was probably the most frequently chosen of the commissions. It produced a very wide range of work from the trite “does my bum look big in this thong”, through Big Brother /Little Britain derivatives operating at sub-GCSE level to more sophisticated pieces where candidates had connected their work on body-contact physical theatre to the theme of the poem.

One or two pieces worthy of mention include one physical interpretation where ‘Curl’ was used as a central motif in an Ailey inspired section. Another group took the obsession with dieting among teen girls, but managed to avoid the trite clichés by using research linking back to the 1930s and considering what was considered beautiful then. Most significantly, the rhythms of the poem had been linked to the speech sampling used by Steve Reich.

Where the humorous could be handled well, this commission offered some considerable scope. This meant that when the comedy was good it was very entertaining, but conversely, when it was weak, it was excruciating.

11. Sylvia Plath – *Suicide off Egg Rock*

Plath’s bleak poetry inspired a clutch of pieces, not all of them as austere as the original poem, but all of them with an attempt at capturing its mood. Most groups had undertaken enthusiastic and apparently unbounded research into the poet’s life; a few were able to translate this into an understanding of the poem.

12. W B Yeats – *Down by the Salley Gardens*

The Irish theme of the poem won through in some of the (small number) of pieces inspired by this commission. Others considered Yeats’ life and focused, sometimes profitably, on aspects of it for the piece.

13. *Little Red Riding Hood*

This was a highly popular commission and many groups used the structure of the story to generate the structure for their own piece. This was a mixed blessing as it meant that a number of pieces appeared to be a simple animation of the story rather than a performance inspired by it.

Despite its popularity, there were few that demonstrated real originality. A large number of groups claimed in the discussion with the examiner that they had tried to explore the dark side of the story. This inevitably led to a lot of stories about little girls losing their innocence, and a number of very predictable abuse, rapes and abductions. In rare cases, examiners reported of groups who demonstrated well developed (rather than basic stereotype) characterisation, mature reflection on what they knew and had learnt on the course and an original take on the story that remained true to it.

14. *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*

This was chosen by a number of groups and generally produced a retelling of the parable for our times. This produced a number of drug dealers, prostitutes and pimps not passing by on the other side, whilst MPs, Lawyers, Doctors, Teachers were most likely to be shown scuttling quickly away from the scene. The theme of ‘love thy neighbour’ came across well in most pieces and there were some quite inventive ideas involving dance and song.

15. *Talaga Warna – an Indonesian folk tale*

Whilst few candidates chose this commission, it produced some excellent creative work. Because it was new to them, candidates often had an awareness that it would be 'new' to the audience, so their clarity was often precise as a result. Music, Dance and Drama often blended without any division and thus captured the exact reason why the commission had been set for Performance Studies. Three pieces are worthy of special mention, all of which had stretched the candidates through extended "performance" research. One group attended local Gamelan classes for a term to be able to play "in the style of"; a second group had explored dance of the region and styles had been investigated and adapted to be incorporated into the work previously studied. A third group focused on story telling, mask work, puppet work all featured and the sense of novelty imbued the performances with a genuine freshness.

This was quite easily the commission that inspired the most creative and inspirational work this session.

16. *The tale of Ruslan and Ludmila*

There were a number of pieces inspired by this story, the weakest of which attempted simply to animate the story, the strongest demonstrating a sophisticated and exciting approach. One group took a 'rough theatre approach with prop box and clothes rail' and interspersed lines from Pushkin with their own script. This was well rehearsed with an air of improvisation, a deliberate stumbling start, audience learning the story with the actors and tightly presented; comedy was used to make the dense and complex narrative accessible.

17. *Toru Takemitsu*

The life of the Japanese composer most well known in Europe was not a widespread choice although those who looked at his life and music were inspired to produce something original. One highly polished and professional presentation placed his life and work in a broader east-west, nature-art context. The script was philosophical and reflective. The performers moved fluidly between character and function, demonstrating advanced skills in stagecraft and integrating the three art forms very effectively.

18. *Judy Garland*

A highly popular commission that produced work ranging from the outstanding to the dire. The outstanding were often biographical but constructed intelligently in such a way that the audience was taken on a journey, back and forth with music and dance well integrated, rather than being a 'section' in a performance.

The weaker pieces offered a well-shaken cocktail of "abuse, divorce and death" that would have fitted a number of Hollywood stars. Examiners reported a sinking feeling as group after group sold this story in the pre-performance discussions. This was often the result of candidates not rising to the challenge of developing technique, focus and style to pull off what were otherwise thin ideas.

There were also several pieces that provided evidence of effective, creative research that managed to avoid the obvious or made the obvious work creatively for them. These often included ideas based on the film industry, the characters from *The Wizard of Oz* or in one example, the creation on stage of the Yellow Brick Road giving the piece its structure.

Other ideas involved having all 5 husbands meet in a bar and perform a routine; manipulating the opening bars of 'Good Morning' to show the gradual disintegration of Judy Garland.

19. *Ethel Smythe*

This was rarely attempted, although those groups that chose this commission were often well researched although it was generally Smythe's involvement with the suffragette movement and her larger-than-life personality that inspired the pieces. There was relatively little reference to her musical accomplishments.

20. *Oscar Wilde*

This was chosen by a number of groups with some pieces inspired by *Comedy of Manners* and tending towards *The Importance of being Earnest* and others more directed towards aspects of his life, most frequently his imprisonment for his homosexual activity. One group used Wilde's trial very effectively as a convention for interrogating moments in his life both before and after the scandal. Another piece made most of the obvious errors: muddled use of limited research, weak structure and no real integration of the art forms. The greatest problem however lay in the fact that the candidates often had little real sense of the style or language used by Wilde or in his plays. Candidates attempting this required considerably more help with the style and language. Oscar's wife saying things like..."What about the kids?" seemed a long way removed from the world of Lady Bracknell.

**Advanced GCE Performance Studies (7873)**  
**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Performance Studies (3873)**  
**June 2007 Assessment Session**

**Unit Threshold Marks**

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2556	Raw	100	81	72	63	54	46	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2557	Raw	100	78	68	58	49	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2558	Raw	100	80	72	64	57	50	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2559	Raw	100	81	72	64	56	48	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2560	Raw	45	39	34	29	34	19	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2561	Raw	100	81	73	65	58	51	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

**Specification Aggregation Results**

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
<b>3873</b>	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
<b>7873</b>	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
<b>3873</b>	9.1	34.2	63.2	85.9	96.5	100.0	2394
<b>7873</b>	9.0	35.5	70.3	93.2	99.3	100.0	2060

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;  
[http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam\\_system/understand\\_ums.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html)

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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