

Performance Studies

Advanced GCE 2561

Student Devised Performance

Mark Scheme for June 2010

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All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and the Report on the Examination.

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GUIDANCE FOR EXAMINERS

Introduction and Overview

The Student Devised Performance is the final module of A level Performance Studies and is synoptic. The assessment is based on a group presentation which lasts no longer than 30 minutes. The examiner has the right to stop performances which last significantly longer but this authority should be used sparingly.

There will be a preliminary discussion with the candidates. They will be interviewed in the groups in which they have produced their group piece. The examiner will ask each candidate about his or her contribution to the group piece and as many general questions as necessary. There will be a writing-up period at the end of each piece before the process starts over again.

Procedures for arranging visits

This is outlined in full detail in the separate document *Guidance for Examiners*.

Content of the discussion with candidates

The discussions are not assessed but it is vital that the links with the commission are explored thoroughly.

You will be issued with a set of commissions and you should use the commission itself to focus the discussion. It is a good idea to pass a copy of the commission around to stimulate discussion. By the end of this discussion you must be confident that you are able to see how the piece has developed from the commission.

You must also be completely clear that each candidate can be identified once the piece begins. If a piece involves costume, the discussion should be conducted with the candidates dressed as they will appear in the performance.

The group discussion must cover the following points:

- a detailed discussion of the commission and how it relates to the final piece
- the performance process and how research undertaken has influence the performance style of the piece
- the nature of the roles undertaken and the coherence of the piece
- the use of skills acquired earlier in the course - the 'synoptic' nature of the piece.

It is possible that the discussion may reveal the piece has little or nothing to do with the commission. In such cases you can only mark what you see and, whilst you should mention it on the report to Centres, you must nevertheless award a mark for the piece that reflects an inappropriate response to the task. However, it is vital that candidates feel at their ease during the discussion. Whilst you may wish to ask a variety of questions and to explore points in some depth, it is vital that you do not imply what you are about to watch is in some way unsuitable!

Step 1 Devising – link with the commission

Award the same mark to all members of the group for their *corporate* ability to produce a piece of performance work from the chosen commission.

As a general point, the criteria are written so that candidates balance two things – sticking to the commission whilst being original. Originality on its own, however, is likely to produce very low marks. The task is to be original within a clearly defined framework. The criteria for assessment of the commission may be summarised as follows:

Top	Skilful use of the commission that never loses sight of what has been asked but offers an original interpretation
Middle	Prosaic use of the commission which simply brings it to life
Bottom	Ignores the commission – may have very creative ideas but loses sight of what the task was

It may be useful to consider the sorts of approaches that could be taken to the different types of commission. These are **not** prescriptive, however, and should not be used as a simple checklist. You may feel, though, that you wish to pursue some of these areas in discussions with candidates prior to the performance.

1 Pictures

- What is the 'structure' of the picture – what is the eye drawn to most? Is that the centre of the picture? What is the context?
- Are there recurring themes in the picture? If so, could these be used as a structural device in the piece? What is the balance between things that appear only once and things that are duplicated in the picture?
- How are light and shadow, black and white, variety of colours used in the picture? Do these give any clue as to how the piece could be structured? For example, darkness could be equated with intensity and light with relaxation.
- What levels are used in the picture – could these be translated into 'scenes' or 'episodes'?
- Is there any physical movement implied in the piece that could become a motivic device to structure the piece?
- Is there an implied story to the picture? There is no need to invent one if one there isn't but candidates might use the context of the picture if it has a naturalistic dimension to it.
- What possibilities are there to work across the art forms?

2 Historical events

- What period of time is covered by the 'event'?
- Is it possible to cover this effectively in a naturalistic manner or would it be better to avoid simply telling the story to ensure that the art forms are fully integrated?
- Is it possible to take episodes in the order they occurred or is there scope for adapting the historical time line – start at the end, jump to the beginning and work back?
- How many characters are involved in the event? This may have to be adapted to the group size (minimum three, maximum seven). Does this mean that some characters need to be omitted – or introduced – is there multi-role playing to cover the event effectively?

- Is there anything controversial about the event? This could be embedded in the structure of the piece as a good structure takes the audience where the performers want them to go. Candidates may create some intrigue or mystery by the way they structure the piece. In the commission *Did They Really Land on the Moon?* it would be possible for the piece to convince the audience either that the whole thing was a hoax or that there was no room for doubt, simply on the way in which the episodes were organised.
- What possibilities are there to work within all three art forms?

3 Poems

- How is the poem organised overall? Are there individual sections that could be turned into performance episodes?
- Are there repeated lines that could be used as a structural or thematic device in the piece?
- Is there a rhythmic structure to any of the lines that could be used to create some music?
- Could any of the words be set to music? Candidates are not allowed to use large chunks of the poem but it might be effective to take a line and repeat it as a choral motif, or a short musical motif that could be passed around the ensemble. Or they might use a repeated single line to indicate a change of episode.
- Is the poem telling a story? If so, candidates need to decide whether the piece will also have narrative elements. They shouldn't just '**animate**' the poem, though – the best ones will be creative in how they handle aspects of story.
- What possibilities are there to work within all three art forms?

4 Stories

- What is the structure of the story?
- Where are the key moments in the story?
- Can these be turned into transition points in the performance?
- How many episodes do there need to be?
- How much potential is there for dance and music in this story?
- What characters are there – how could these be covered in the piece?
- Is it possible to use a 'parallel story' approach where a contemporary version is interspersed with the original?
- Is it possible to change the setting of the story to a different period or time? Could this be done through dance or music?
- What possibilities are there to work within all three art forms?

5 People

- What is this person's most well-known contribution to the world of performing arts?
- Has the group incorporated these skills into the piece?
- What aspects of the person's career or life does the piece focus on?
- What is the time span of the chosen aspects within that person's life?
- Are there key moments that can be used as separate episodes?
- Is the piece essentially a documentary about the person's life?
- Is it possible to take an angle that gives some originality – perhaps by juxtaposing scenes from contemporary events or episodes?
- What possibilities are there to work within all three art forms?

Do not be afraid to use the full range of marks for the commission since this is a vital means of producing differentiation between pieces in the final results.

Marking criteria for the commission:

21 – 25	A piece that clearly derives from the commission and is the product of a rigorous process of performance research . The process has absolute integrity and there is a rigorous attempt to interpret the commission with originality whilst clearly working within its confines. This band is reserved for a sophisticated approach to the commission which has been clearly shaped so that there is linkage through exploration of the commission.
18 – 20	A piece that is well related to the commission and demonstrates the research that has been undertaken. The ideas have a level of sophistication that takes the piece beyond the well worn or predictable. The piece develops a new perspective that allows some shaping and working of the material within the confines of the commission. Do not award marks in this band simply for ‘animating the story’!
15 – 17	The piece is generally consistent in its usage of the commission but presents existing perspectives rather than new approaches. In many cases this will consist of an ‘animation’ of elements of the commission or an approach that relies on tried and tested methods . There are occasional aspects that do not fully support the commission but despite slight variation of approach or a little unevenness, the connection between commission and final piece is clear from the performance (including programme notes). Understanding of the link does not depend on having been present at the discussion beforehand.
12 – 14	There are some discernable links with the commission although these are located unevenly within the piece . The commission and the content of the performance may be separate things. There are points where the audience is clear what is happening and points where they would lose confidence as to the direction of the piece. The general impression is one of wrestling to make ideas and styles fit the commission rather than growing organically from it. Use this band for pieces that are clearly derived from the commission but superficial.
9 – 11	An idea has been taken from the commission , probably early in the group’s working process, and this has become a straightjacket . The piece contains ideas that could be shown to link with the commission but an audience would need to have these explained.
5 – 8	The piece makes an attempt to deal with ideas that grow from the commission but it would take a leap of the imagination for an audience to be able to see them . The programme notes may help but there may be an imbalance between these notes and the performance. There are jumps that would confuse or mystify an audience watching the piece without explanation.
0 – 4	There is no particular clear link with the commission but the group is able to point to some general links . The commission has been used as a hook on which to hang a piece, and it appears to have been disregarded after an initial consideration. It is difficult to see from performance, discussion or programme notes that the commission has been given serious consideration.

Step 2 Devising – individual contribution

Award each candidate a mark for his/her individual role in the piece.

21 – 25	The role is sophisticated and demonstrates an outstanding level of coherence. There is clear evidence of the use of contrasting dynamics and the ability to sustain a mood or dynamic. A mature, reflective approach shines through which is sensitive to the needs of the ensemble whilst demonstrating a high order of individual ability.
18 – 20	The role is well developed and emerges fully within the ensemble. There is no hint of well-worn or hackneyed approaches but there is evidence of mature and rigorous shaping and refining of material. The role has a pleasing balance between ensemble and individual work. The sophistication of the role may be seen, for example, in the way it 'enables' transitions in the piece or takes a lead in establishing contrast or pacing at key moments. The individual is not content with easy solutions to creating performance.
15 – 17	A well crafted role with a clear intention which has been carefully developed. This role is workable and demonstrates ability to shape material effectively and, for the most part, is able to take the piece forward. There is a general ability to go beyond a clichéd approach.
12 – 14	A role that has some shape and structure but also some unevenness. It is essentially pedestrian with a tendency to spell out detail and this may at times detract from the energy of the piece. This role is likely to work in some ensemble sections but unlikely to take the piece in a new direction on its own. Some aspects of the role appear clichéd. This band could be used for uneven contributions that make an impact at some points but are not developed at other points.
9 – 11	The role has some sense of purpose and structure but the interpretation does not take ideas beyond the formulaic or hackneyed. The shaping of the work inhibits effective contrast, pacing or fluidity. There may be a glimpse of how the candidate could work but this role is likely to reduce the energy of the piece rather than enhance it. This band could also be used for peripheral contributions that make an impact for a few seconds but then disappoint as their impact quickly dissipates.
5 – 8	The extent of the candidate's contribution is of little importance to the piece as a whole and its removal would make little difference to the overall effect. This may be for a number of reasons but includes formulaic work where the candidate believes his/her work to be original but everything is treated in a completely predictable or superficial manner.
0 – 4	The role is generally superficial in its treatment of ideas. There is more evidence of cliché than anything else. There is hardly any consistency to the role and the candidate has produced only lacklustre material. Award this band also for instances where the candidate's role is either peripheral to the piece or adds virtually nothing to it.

Step 3 Performance Skills

Award a mark for application of skills for the quality of the performance. Take account of the candidate's level of skills and also their range. These may include the following (and others, as appropriate):

- fluency
- use of space
- use of body: eye, voice, demeanour, posture and movement
- intensity of the commitment/involvement, contrast, pacing
- balance of skills across two or more art forms
- interaction with the group and contribution to the group dynamics.

40 – 50	An excellent performance that demonstrates extensive breadth of technique in two or more art forms. These skills have been honed and refined and the performance rehearsed rigorously. The pacing of the piece demonstrates energy and the performance has a life of its own; there is no hint of faltering. The performer is in control of the direction of the piece at all times but is able to support other performers generously. A captivating performance.
35 – 39	A highly assured performance that demonstrates considerable breadth of technique in two art forms with no hint of tokenism. Technique is highly polished and the performance is clearly shaped with differing levels of emotional intensity. The performer is always aware of the status of his/her role and is able to demonstrate, as required, strong leadership of the ensemble and sensitivity to the other performers.
30 – 34	An assured performance with an appropriate range of contrast and variety. Whilst one art form may appear to be more in evidence than another, the imbalance is only slight. The differing levels of emotional intensity are generally well handled but there is some variation of energy levels and in some moments more impact is necessary. There is sensitivity to the other members of the ensemble.
25 – 29	A competent performance with a good range of appropriate techniques. There is some variation in this, however. For example, the beginnings and endings of scenes may appear slightly awkward, the energy level of the performance may vary, there are occasional awkward moments where the candidate is not completely clear about changing dynamics within the group situation. Some aspects of individual technique may need further practice. Use this band as a ceiling if one art form dominates the second art form.
20 – 24	A proficient but pedestrian performance. The performer is a passenger in the ensemble situation and displays little ability to take the performance forward. In some pieces there may be energy which is misplaced or unfocused. Technique may require further, detailed practice in spite of overall fluency. Use this band as a ceiling if attempts at working in a second art form are clearly restricted or tokenistic or if the overall contribution is confined to a very small proportion of the piece.
15 – 19	A performance that is generally fluent but which demonstrates a noticeable lack of refinement or rehearsal, or which is simply mundane. The dynamic of the performance may be of a low level and the candidate brings little energy to the performance. Award marks in this band for reluctant performers or work which is limited in its impact on the performance.

10 – 14	A performance on the fringes of fluency with a possibility that the piece may break down. There is some mastery of skills but little to suggest that they have been rehearsed or refined systematically in preparation for the examination.
0 – 9	A rough and ready performance which may be typified in a number of different ways. It may be lacking in contrast, faltering in nature, demonstrate poor use of technique or general unpreparedness for the demands of performance.

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