

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE

GCE Performing Arts (8781/ 9781)



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General Comments

In this third year of the specification the number of centres has once again increased and the majority from last year's AS cohort progressed to take the A2 components. Enthusiasm for the specification continues to grow as centres realise that its content free format allows them to teach to their strengths and interests. This approach has resulted in a very wide range of course programmes being offered and this can only be beneficial for candidates. Given that there are a number of new centres together with the fact that some centres still do not fully appreciate the focus of each unit I have decided to begin this report with a brief summary of the key elements of each.

Unit 1: Exploring Skills for Performance

Assessment Evidence: [page 9 of the Specification]

Your evidence should include:

- **Initial audit** of your skills so that you can see how much you have improved.
- A record of the skills that you have explored including details of how they may be incorporated into working practices. You will need to show that you can work safely.
- A record that will **detail** the progress of your skill development over a period of time.
- An **evaluation** of the development and improvement of your skills including examples of their relevance to working practices.

I have highlighted key words that indicate the focus of the evidence.

Clearly most centres would require their students to maintain a 'course file' that records the learning that takes place within lessons and workshops however this is not the evidence for this unit. The unit is not about candidates recognising learning or even knowledge and understanding it is about working on **developing specific skills** and **providing evidence** of the **development process**.

Initial audits, carried out in consultation with teaching staff, should reveal clearly the skills deficits that the candidates intend to develop. The portfolio should then consist of the candidates setting out clearly the methods by which they intend to develop the stated skills and the projected timescales. This should be followed by very clear evidence of **how they worked** on the skills, how they **monitored any progress** and determined **subsequent stages**.

Whilst lesson content might address aspects of an individual candidate's skills development the portfolio must not be a series of lesson descriptions with a limited focus on skills or how any of the content was applied. For example a candidate working on vocal qualities of articulation and breath control would be unlikely to include the content of a workshop on stage movement. Simply identifying learning outcomes from a series of lessons does not allow the candidate to show self management of the process. If candidates intend to use a **diary/log** to record their

work then this must provide **specific detail**. Similarly if they wish to **record** themselves working independently the evidence must be of the **process [repeated at various stages]** not 'snapshots' of them in performance as this only shows the finished product rather than the process. Finally the candidate must evaluate the process and gauge if they could apply it to other skills in future.

Unit 2: Planning for an Event

Assessment Evidence [page 21 of the Specification]

Your work must include evidence of:

- A **report** on the **planning process**.
- An **individual action plan** that recognises the areas of production, performance and administration.
- An **evaluation** that documents the effectiveness of your **planning**.

In order to fulfil the requirement to address the three specified areas it is essential that whatever event is planned it must contain an element of performance. It is advised that the project should be manageable in scale and that the candidates are given autonomy of decision making in order for the task to be realistic.

The report by definition should be retrospective and detail what was done rather than what was anticipated; i.e. rather than: - 'We will need to consider...' it should read 'We considered...' Action plans should show clearly **roles and responsibilities** within the **group** and for the **individual** and these should be set against **realistic timescales** and **monitoring methods**.

Research into the content of the event does not form part of the report and should only be included as an appendix. Most minutes of meetings will be in the appendix although a few key sessions might be used to demonstrate particular decisions or stages in the process. Individual tasks such as ticket design, front of house management, budget and so forth do not need to be detailed with sketches, working drawings, material lists or spreadsheets though again these may be included in any appendix.

What should be provided is how the candidate **planned their input**, reported to the group and **monitored** their own and others progress.

The **evaluation** should not concern itself with the final product but how **effective** the **individual** had been throughout the **planning process**.

Unit 3: Performing to a Commission

Assessment Evidence [page 34 of the specification]

Your work must include evidence that:

- You have **selected** and can use the **relevant skills** for your particular specialism in a way that is **appropriate** to the demands of the Commission Brief.
- You can **apply** these skills to a **performance that reflects the demands** of the Commission Brief.
- You have the ability to **communicate** with the **target audience** determined by the group as you developed your response to the Commission Brief.

Groups must be between **three and twelve performers** with the possibility of a **further six design, technical or production management** candidates.

Performances must be between 30 and 60 minutes depending on the group size with smaller groups at the lower end of the scale and larger towards the top.

The performances **MUST** be recorded on a standard format [preferably DVD Windows media Player] and the candidates **MUST** be identified at the start of the recording. They should state their name, candidate number and role/s within the piece. The recordings **MUST** be sent to the Chief Examiner **within one week** of the practical examination. Failure to comply with this instruction will be deemed an infringement of the examination rubric.

The unit is essentially a devising unit in response to one of the Commission Briefs set each year.

There is no anticipated style of performance or expectation that candidates will employ all the performance disciplines. The style of work will depend upon the experience and expertise available to the candidates. Similarly there is no expectation of venue and any performance space appropriate to the work is acceptable.

The key factors that candidates must ensure are:

- ❖ That they select the most **appropriate skills**.
- ❖ That the work **reflects the brief**.
- ❖ That it is appropriate and **communicates** with the target audience.
- ❖ That the performance is **engaging and polished**.

Success in this unit depends on the candidates ensuring that the work is 'fit for purpose' and as professional as possible at this level. At AS level candidates' principal resource will be the teachers in the centre and it is acknowledged that there will be a high level of teacher intervention in the form of targeted questions and advice regarding alternative methodologies. Candidates will make the final decisions about the work and must ensure that they frequently view the developing piece as objectively as possible to ensure that it is sufficiently polished.

Unit 4: Employment Opportunities in the Performing Arts

Assessment Evidence: [page 43 of the specification]

Your work must include evidence of the following:

- A **report** outlining employment opportunities in the performing arts industry. It should include a brief description of a range of jobs in the performing arts industry representing **two jobs** from each of the following categories:
 - **performer**
 - **technical support**
 - **administration**
- A **portfolio** as evidence of the **application** of your skills in **one job role**. This should be presented in a **vocationally relevant** way and should demonstrate an underpinning knowledge of the skills involved.
- An **evaluation** that allows reflection of your **skills** and analysis of how they **relate** to the **employment opportunities** offered by the industry.

The report on the six job roles [two from each area of the industry] can only achieve six marks [from 60] and therefore candidates must understand that this is not the main focus of the unit. The bulk of the unit [and indeed marks] should contain evidence of the candidate's application within **one job role** linked very closely to **potential career routes**. For example an actor might work on audition material which is then presented under audition conditions and evaluated in terms of its effectiveness. Involvement in workshop sessions or training can also show application but it must be evaluated and the value in terms of career preparation demonstrated.

Lots of downloaded details about training courses can not be credited unless candidates filter the information and show how it would relate to their preparation. Similarly including programmes that show the candidate involved in productions are of no value unless the skills employed are discussed in relation to potential career progression. A CV is desirable in this unit but it must reflect the format that is accepted within the industry for a performer or technician.

The following range of activities might be valid for candidates who wanted to explore the role of an actor:

- Interview of a performer to ascertain their career route.
- Exploration of audition requirements at universities and drama schools.
- Preparation of audition material and attendance at auditions.
- Attendance at drama school and university open days.
- Involvement in a range of acting workshops.
- Visits to performances and post show discussions.
- Performances in a range of roles to determine their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Investigation of support for actors through Equity.
- Investigate how performers CV's are structured.
- Research into the numerous trade papers and on-line resources for advertising acting jobs.

The same type of list can be created for all the potential roles within the industry that promote active engagement and reflection on the essential elements and preparation activities.

Unit 5: Advanced Performance Practice

Assessment Evidence: [page 53 of the specification]

Evidence for this unit will be a suitable performance designed to show how you have applied your skills. In addition to the performance for this unit you will need to provide:

- Evidence of **research** into the **background** of the chosen **production** in a working notebook that also shows the **development of your skills**.
- Details of your **rehearsal programme** and **preparation** for your performance showing how this reflects **professional practice**.
- Appropriate **recording** of your performance in a **suitable format** for your chosen specialism.
- An **evaluation** of your own and your group's work **before, during and after** the performance, including **recommendations** for improvement.

This unit is synoptic and is intended for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding gained throughout the course. It is not intended as an extension of any previous units and must be seen by candidates as a stand-alone unit providing summative assessment. The requirements of this unit demand of candidates a combination of documentation, performance and evaluation with half the marks awarded for performance and half awarded for the documentation that reflects research, skills development, preparation for performance and evaluation. The specification is an applied course and although this unit does not specifically require candidates to relate their work to identifiable work-related outcomes, it is imperative that they see continuously see how their work relates to the business of performing arts through describing and discussing the development of their skills in the notebooks using informed and industry relevant evaluation and use of appropriate language.

The selection of the material to be performed is critical in this unit. It should be sufficiently challenging for A2 level candidates and allow for the exploration and application of skills at an advanced level and there should be a demonstrable rise in standards from AS. The working notebook should document in a very organic manner how the production was developed in the creative and rehearsal stage and what advanced skills were employed. Candidates might include the exploration and application of specific methods proposed by practitioners but they should not submit masses of background material on practitioners or their theories in isolation. The unit is about demonstrating that candidates can work creatively and in a professional manner on material that demands the application of new and/or advanced techniques.

Unit 6: Advanced production Practice

Assessment Evidence: [page 65 of the specification]

Your work must include evidence of:

- **Research** into the background and **style** of the chosen production and, where relevant, the type of resources and/or equipment that are available and appropriate.
- **Planning** of your design and/or management ideas for the chosen production
- The **realisation** of your design and/or management ideas including appropriate documentation
- An **evaluation** of your own and the team's performance before, during and after the performance, including recommendations for improvement.

As with the corresponding performance unit the focus is about the application of design, technical or administrative support to the selected production in a professional manner. Candidates need to demonstrate that they have a secure understanding of the creative demands of the material and the resources that are available. The best format to demonstrate their abilities is to work in conjunction with candidates on unit five whenever possible. The collaborative nature of an enhanced team usually benefits both groups. Again research should be focused; lighting designers should not provide the history of lighting but what the production requires should be clearly identified. The support materials that need to be provided are indicated on page 64 of the specification and expanded in more detail on pages 70 to 72.

Unit 7: Production Delivery

Assessment Evidence: [page 79 of the specification]

The learner's work must include evidence of:

- A **performance**, in response to the Production Brief, planned for a live audience.
- **Application** of the required skills.
- **Communication** of skills.

This is the most misunderstood unit in the specification. It is **NOT** a devising unit but should focus on a plausible interpretation of the existing repertoire in the performance arts. Candidates are assessed on:

- ❖ Understanding of the style of the material and the conventions that they employ in performance.
- ❖ Commitment and concentration in performance.
- ❖ Communication with other performers.
- ❖ Appropriate and effective application of performance techniques.
- ❖ Effective communication and engagement with the audience.

If the candidates spend a large proportion of their available time on devising strategies and the creation of new work they may fail to polish the work to the required standard. Teachers will provide constructive criticism and advice but the development of the production should be the responsibility of the candidates.

The production must be recorded in an appropriate format and the candidates must be identified at the start of the recording giving their name, candidate number and role/s within the piece.

REPORT ON THE 2008 SERIES

MODERATION ARRANGEMENTS

The moderation process has straightforward this year and many teachers appreciated the opportunity to discuss their candidates' work with their moderator.

The expansion of the moderating window to include April was appreciated by some centres and an earlier standardisation ensured that moderators could contact centres earlier. However there were still a few centres that had made performance arrangement prior to contact with their moderator. Whilst the pressures on availability of spaces in venues is recognised together with the need to organise centre calendars it must be stressed that the practical components comprise a third of the qualification at each level and **must** be moderated to ensure the safety of the qualification. The following statements from last year's report must therefore once again be repeated:

*It is very important for centres to note that the moderation date is to be agreed with their moderator through **negotiation** and that they should **not** decide on dates and assume that the moderator will be available. Similarly when dates and times have been agreed they **must not** be altered unless the moderator agrees.*

*It should also be noted that whilst it is very beneficial to have an audience for the practical work units three and seven are examinations and the requirements of the specification **MUST** take precedence over audience considerations.*

OPTEM FORMS

Despite clear information this year there was still some confusion in a few centres regarding the OPTEM forms and in particular the failure by many to include the yellow copies for units 3 and 7 with the recording of the practical work.

The procedure remains as follows: Centres must complete OPTEM forms for units 1, 2, 4 and 5/6 **prior** to the moderation visit and **send the top copy to Edexcel at least a week** before the agreed visit date. The **yellow copies** of the OPTEM forms should be **with the candidates' portfolios** to enable the moderator to select an appropriate sample. **Yellow copies** of the completed OPTEM forms for units **three and seven** must be sent **with the recording of the practical work to the Chief Examiner** within seven days of the candidates' final performance.

MARKING CRITERIA

The statement below from last year's report was followed by many centre assessors and ensured a much more focused application of the criteria and fewer large moderator adjustments.

Centres are advised that when assessing candidate evidence they should not apply only the grading criteria within the grid but also refer to the assessment guidance following each grid. For example for unit one the grid is on page 10 in the specification and the expanded interpretation of the criteria follows on pages 11 to 14. Centre assessors should also refer to the Assessment Objectives descriptors in

Appendix D. Ensuring familiarity with the full implications of the criteria will enable centre assessors to apply them effectively and minimize moderation adjustments.

RECORDING OF PRACTICAL UNITS

After the practical examination centres **MUST** send within seven working days a copy of the recording for units 3 and 7 to the Chief Examiner together with their marked yellow copy of the OPTEM for each unit.

This year all centres were required to send **recordings** of the candidates' practical work for units 3 and 7 to the Chief Examiner within **one week** of the practical moderation visit. This requirement was not met by many centres and those who failed to do so will be contacted by Edexcel.

With regard to this requirement there are a few key factors that must be adhered to. Firstly the recording must be on an **appropriate format**. The most suitable is on **DVD** in a **Windows Media Player** format. If centres only have access to video recorders then **standard VHS** format is essential. There were several centres that submitted the work on digital tape format that cannot be easily accessed. A few also submitted disks that were not compatible.

Far too many centres still failed to clearly identify the candidates at the beginning of the recording. It is important that candidates are wearing the same costume that they use in the performance and that they state their name and candidate number and preferably the role/roles that they are playing.

Since candidate's concentration and performance preparation could be disrupted it is advisable that the identification process is carried out prior to the actual performance but obviously at the beginning of the tape that will be used to record the work.

Despite this being in bold last year and all centres receiving the information again this year in letter form, on the bottom of the OPTEMS and via their moderator too many still failed to comply. It is likely that in future failure to comply with this very clear instruction will be considered an infringement of the examination rubric and treated accordingly.

PORTFOLIOS

All portfolios must be available for the visiting moderator and these must be marked by the centres assessor[s] and internally validated where necessary. The centre marking should indicate where candidate's work has been credited against the criteria through **suitable annotation**. Moderators reported that many centres had managed this very effectively using the appropriate front sheet [available on-line] and noted that the moderation process was much more efficient as a result. In most centres a **private area** had been arranged for the portfolio moderation and it should be stressed that this is an **essential** requirement. For units five and six it is important to remind centres that the recorded evidence of the advanced performance/production product must be available with the portfolios and suitable technology available to view the work. This is becoming increasingly necessary for unit one where strong candidates have been recording their application to skill development.

Candidates should be discouraged from submitting work in any other format than A4 and **must not use plastic envelopes or A4 ring binders**. The content is the only material that moderators will consider and candidate decoration of folders and unfiltered internet down-loads add nothing to the final mark.

The only candidates who need to work outside this framework are those offering design skills where plans and/or design sketches might be larger than A4 format.

PRACTICAL UNITS THREE AND SEVEN

Moderators reported that they had viewed a vast range and diversity of performance work both in the application of performance styles and techniques and the creative responses to the commission briefs.

No style of performance was dominant and every conceivable skill appeared to be demonstrated. Similarly the choice of Commission Brief for unit three appeared very even with perhaps a slight preference for commissions one and three [Short Story/Poem and 'Alien Spaces'].

For unit seven most centres managed to interpret the brief effectively but it is worth stating once again that this is **not a devising unit** and candidates should focus on re-working an existing piece from the performance repertoire.

UNIT DETAILS FOR THE 2008 SERIES

UNIT ONE: - EXPLORING SKILLS FOR PERFORMANCE

This is the third year that this unit has been delivered and a large proportion of centres had a secure understanding of the requirements. The majority of centres had marked accurately with many of the adjustments that were made within tolerance. In centres where there had been more than one teacher delivering the unit it was obvious that standardisation and cross marking had taken place. Centres where the marking was out of tolerance had often not attended standardisation or training. This might also relate to new teachers or teachers who had attended courses three years ago when the specification was launched and had become a little complacent in applying the assessment criteria.

In this unit moderators were looking for portfolios which raised the learner's awareness of the skills relevant to specific area(s) in the world of performing arts. Centres needed to demonstrate that they had established positive and beneficial programmes to support the candidates through this section of the specification. Candidates needed to be approaching the unit as latent professionals with appropriate behaviour and attitudes; these should then be related to their own working practice and that of professionals in the industry. Throughout this unit candidates needed to assess the improvement of their skills and enhance their awareness of how to develop skills.

This unit continued to be problematic for some centres as they had not appreciated the need for the individual candidate to take ownership of the development of skills and moderators still reported that they are being presented with very detailed accounts of lessons that candidates have experienced. It is useful to repeat the section from last year's report that stated:-

This type of approach often failed to take account of the exploratory nature of the unit and resulted in portfolios that contained accounts of the lessons, often in diary form, with statements to the effect that they had enabled candidates to develop. Some centres produced full portfolios of a high standard that frequently replicated taught material across the whole group, ignoring the vital need for the learner's voice and for the clear ownership of the material by the learner/artist. This approach often missed some aspects of the criteria as well as the vocational focus of the specification.

Many candidates/centres ensured that initial skills audits were carried out but candidates needed to demonstrate how the content of their lessons or training schedule was assisting progress. Similarly evaluations of progress needed to be regular and linked to practical work undertaken either in class, workshops or privately.

Moderator reports confirmed a wide range of approaches to the delivery of this unit and also the diversity of skills that candidates chose to explore. Many teachers claimed that too often candidates embraced the practical aspects of this unit but were reluctant to record their development through the written word. It should be noted that centres could offer candidates opportunities to report some of their exploration and development through recordings in a variety of formats supported by written evidence. It is however important to remember that any recording must be of

the candidate working on the skills rather than a series of 'snapshots' of ability as these merely confirmed progress not the process.

A common issue raised by visiting moderators was the fact there should be more evidence of individual and personal focus from each learner along with a sense of ownership. The strongest centres had encouraged candidates to prepare detailed insights into the skills they had explored through various techniques and workshops linking their own work to professional practice. .

In centres where candidates had focused on one specific skill there was sometimes a detailed exploration of the chosen art form with rigorous training and the necessary research and understanding of relevant practitioners' methods. The strongest candidates demonstrated how research had been applied to their practical development programme but weaker candidates often provided masses of unfiltered, and often inappropriate, theoretical facts.

With regard to the key assessment evidence it was noted that some centres failed to produce an initial skills audit which made assessing the development of skills very difficult for moderators. The audit should reveal the skills deficit for the candidate in order that they can confirm the skills they intend to explore. Some audits were in the form of CVs or simple statements but a lot of centres produced pro-formas to focus the candidate's initial skills. These varied considerable from very simplistic tick boxes that were of very limited value to those that required candidates to examine in detail how good they were in specific areas. Some moderators reported audits appearing in the middle of the portfolio with no sense of logical order. Many good audits were created showing examples of a diagnostic phase implemented by the centre, leading to the initial skills audit. This then informed the way candidates explored skills for performance and allowed them to set personal targets. The stronger candidates clearly understood how a full range of skills related to working practice and revisited their initial skills audit regularly.

In recording skills there was often a tendency to produce a log book of evidence that focused on knowledge of the industry or practitioners, accompanied by academic research, rather than the documentation of individual candidate's acquisition and application of skills. Many candidates included reference to personal health and safety as well as risk assessment in the work place that demonstrated the relevant professional approach.

Candidates with marks in the top band showed excellent working practices and rigorous self management often including witness statements as supportive evidence. Weaker candidates tended to describe lesson content revealing very simple and less rigorous working practice and self management. Targets were often inappropriate and did not always show professionalism or a desire to improve skills in a constructive or realistic fashion.

Within the evaluations weaker candidates focused on performances, lessons or workshops they had been involved in and not how skills had been developed. Stronger candidates developed highly personal evaluations showing independent thought and application of skills acquired. Some centres encouraged candidates to evaluate throughout the portfolio as well as presenting a conclusive evaluation at the end of the unit which referred back to the initial audit.

Once again it is valuable to repeat the recommendation from the previous two year's reports:

There needed to be a stronger focus on specific skills, the methods by which individuals intended to develop them and a series of audit points through which they tracked their progress and defined the next stages. The process must be:

- *this is where I am at the beginning [clearly evidenced]*
- *these are the skills I hope to develop*
- *these are the methods/techniques/people and resources I will use [in detail]*
- *this is evidence of my application*
- *this is how I know I am progressing [or not]*
- *these are the proposed next stages.*

The methodology for tracking and ensuring clear evidence to support this programme can be as varied as the number of centres delivering the specification. Similarly the approaches adopted can include normal teaching sessions or entirely individualised processes but whatever format is adopted the individual candidate must ensure that the above content is securely evidenced.

UNIT TWO: - PLANNING FOR AN EVENT

There were once again some very imaginative internal and external events planned which made the project a real and relevant learning experience for candidates whilst creating opportunities to map the delivery against the demands of the specification. When candidates had decided, or were given, a clearly defined event that required planning they were able to focus on the demands of the process and subsequently report effectively on their work. It seemed the choice of event was crucial in terms of engaging candidates, providing clear and relevant roles and responsibilities and providing the opportunity in turn to access the full range of marks available.

Again when candidates had organized the document into the three sections of report, action plan and evaluation of process the portfolios were most successful. It is worth repeating the comments from the last two years concerning the format for the report and action plan as there were still too many candidates who did not understand how these should have been structured.

Essentially the format for the report should be reflective and provide a coherent, detailed account of what was done by the group throughout the process in an objective and business-like manner.

Action plans are central to the process and should indicate clearly the roles and responsibilities within the team, realistic timelines and intervals when progress would be assessed. Interim monitoring of the action plan throughout the project should also be an essential part of the process.

Various methods of action planning made evidence difficult to follow in some cases. Some portfolios provided little recognition of the link between forward planning and ultimate success; others were extremely detailed and often represented the work of the obvious leader of the group. Sometimes this work had been reproduced in less secure portfolios but this had usually been acknowledged.

References were made to the areas of performance, production and administration in many centres and most encouraged candidates to make effective links. Where links were then made to an individual candidate's role this facilitated action planning, review and evaluation.

Successful candidates had clearly undertaken the planning for a series of exciting events in a range of situations; including charity fundraising events, site specific performances in shopping centres and joint local schools dance festivals. Candidates involved in a production or administration role often presented more effective evidence, than those involved in the performance roles, as they were able to better focus on and evaluate the planning process, rather than the creative realisation of a performance piece. Similarly this remained the case with the evaluation element of the unit where candidates often focused on the success of the event rather than the effectiveness of the teams' organization.

Well-formatted reports included contents pages, with any additional internet research credited and in an appendix. Information had been selected and ordered. Action planning was often embedded in production meeting minutes and the most effective responses included initial individual and team action planning documents that had been created at the outset of the project. Roles, responsibilities and deadlines were clearly defined, set against realistic timescales and reviewed throughout the planning process.

Stronger centre responses to the unit placed the work in a fully realised vocational context, with excellent individual reference to implementing health and safety legislation and sound professional practice.

Most centres fully understood the demands of the moderation visit and presented a complete sample together with all the relevant paperwork. Teacher assessors seemed to be more accurate in applying the assessment criteria to the planning report, rather than rewarding the input to the event in general. This suggested greater awareness of the focus of the unit and the weightings of the assessment objectives. Moderators reported that samples were provided from across the mark range, and it appeared that most assessment criteria were able to be applied and differentiated effectively.

A minority of centres presented candidates' work in a harder to moderate format often without annotation and one had individual log book entries folded up and tucked away in small envelopes. Effective internal verification had not always taken place. For instance In larger centres, where the course has grown, separate cohorts of students following separate pathways linked to different disciplines were being taught independently, with little contact between the course team.

It is still the advice that centres should define the scope of the event very clearly for candidates to avoid a protracted decision making process that uses valuable time to little effect. An example might be as direct as 'You must organise a lower school dance competition' or 'organise a visiting company to perform at our venue'. The parameters are established in such briefs but do not prevent candidates from making many creative and logistical decisions.

UNIT THREE: - PERFORMING TO A COMMISSION

There was a wide range of performance work presented this year revealing a strong mix of drama, dance and music skills being integrated into coherent and, sometimes

imaginative and truly engaging performances that often succeeded in moving their audience; moderators reported a few performances that were 'truly compelling'. Where ensembles had truly crystallized there was a general improvement in quality with lower band candidates often matching their input to the standards set by their ambitious and able peers.

Responses to the commission briefs were very comparable to the previous series but centres had again benefited from previous moderation discussions and centre feedback. Consequently the approach adopted by centres, with a similar cohort of candidates, was more focused and effective this year. The two most popular choices were commission one [Poem or Short Story] and commission three [Alien Spaces] and candidates were very imaginative and inventive in their selection of source material and the manner in which they responded to it. Fewer centres opted for the TIE style brief but those that did were very often very effective and understood the principles involved. One moderator reported an exceptional group that decided to take one of the 'Horrible History' series and create a highly amusing, tongue-in-cheek production. Musical theatre and dance productions were again as popular as drama work and moderators were clearly excited by much of the work on display. Moderators reported seeing both very strong and very weak candidate productions. At the top end the work was often at A2 standard and at the lower end weaker than GCSE presentations. There was again evidence of centres adopting a 'house style' but this was perfectly acceptable and enabled them to work to their strengths. The 'content free' nature of the specification and the breadth of interpretation possible in unit three is the real asset of the specification.

There was little evidence of candidates being left to their own devices but in some cases they attempted to create effective performance work based on the assimilation of a very limited range of skills and techniques. It is anticipated that candidates at this stage will require considerable support and timely interventions by teaching staff that are the principal resource. As in the previous series weaker work was often naturalistic in nature and depended on the abilities of the candidates as script writers rather than performers.

One of the key messages last year was for centres to ensure that the work was presented with 'a sense of occasion' and it was apparent that this had been assimilated. Most centres ensured that the realisation of the brief was considered in terms of the overall performance quality and focused on the desired impact for the audience. Fewer centres presented the work without appropriate audiences and this often helped candidates to raise the level of their individual performances. Some centres did not pay sufficient attention to production values and one moderator reported set collapsing half way through a performance.

As in previous years the work was presented in a very wide range of spaces and venues depending upon the style or purpose of the performance. Venues ranged from centres' own studios to site specific performances; the use of local theatres, performances in primary schools and outdoor spaces were also seen. Similarly every conceivable performance layout from 'promenade' to 'space staging' was again experienced by moderators and candidates' creative use of resources was very impressive.

Most centres used the pro-forma designed to provide the moderator with the origin of the piece, identify candidates and roles and confirm the performance style and target

audience. Moderators were clear that this document was very helpful when determining the success of the work against the candidates' stated intentions for the piece and it should be stressed that this procedure should be followed by all centres. With very few exceptions moderators were impressed with the commitment of candidates and the work they produced. They were equally pleased with the professionalism of centre assessors and the accuracy of the marking that was achieved through a clear focus on the expanded criteria.

Identification of candidates remained an issue in some centres; identifying individuals particularly when candidates were part of a large group, dressed in similar costumes was difficult! Whilst it is recognised that the integrity of the performance is important centres must also remember that it is an examination and the moderator must be able to distinguish individuals within the group. Similarly though it is very valuable to have an audience for candidates any arrangements must not hinder the examination process.

Most centres responded effectively to the requirement to send a recording of the performances to the Chief Examiner but too often this was not done within the specified time frame. Many recordings this year were once again of poor quality and centres should note that it is in the interests of candidates to ensure the clearest vision and sound possible. Many centres also failed to identify candidates clearly at the beginning of the recordings and are reminded that this is essential. This identification should state the centre name and number then allow each candidate to introduce themselves in costume, if appropriate, and state their candidate number and role within the piece; centres are advised to do this prior to the performance but ensure that candidates are dressed as they are in the performance. The recording **must** be in an appropriate format, preferably DVD for Windows Media Player or standard VHS tape.

Candidates who offered technical support as their role within the group often demonstrated great creativity and expertise in their technical accomplishments but still failed to use the ten minute presentation to the examiner and moderator effectively to contextualise their work. When candidates did make good use of this time it enabled moderators to assess the outcomes against the stated aims.

There were very few candidates who elected to work in administrative roles but when this did occur they used the presentation time to demonstrate to the moderator the range and quality of their input to marketing and promotion or front of house activities. Moderators again relied more heavily on the centre assessor's knowledge of the candidates input into these areas and despite the potential difficulties moderators were happy with the reliability of the marks awarded.

There were very few instances of rubric infringements and with the advent of 'Ask the Expert' centres can no longer claim to have been given advice or approval from 'anonymous' individuals at Edexcel.

Again it must be stressed that it is important for centre assessors to attend standardisation meetings prior to the assessment window. It is also important to confirm again that unit **three must not be used to deliver unit two** 'Planning for an Event'.

UNIT FOUR: - EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

The general response from centres and teachers has been secure and like other units in the specification the unit is seen by many to be innovative and exciting covering vocational areas not previously addressed; in particular the dynamic relationships between the range of jobs and roles in the arts and the learner's own practice, artistic choices and progression routes. The evidence from moderators confirms this to be a demanding unit but one that tests appropriate skills and understanding at this level.

However the following statement from last year's report is still valid and therefore is repeated.

The main issue related to the imbalance in the weighting of the assessment criteria. The report section of the unit often resulted in very detailed and impressive documents from candidates in which they carried out exhaustive investigations into the required six job roles. They often included interviews with practicing professionals and linked their findings to potential career pathways within the industry. However the report section of the unit could only earn six marks and candidates' efforts were too often focused on the report to the detriment of the portfolio.

This unit placed candidates' work within the context of the Performing Arts Industries and asked them to research into employment contexts, jobs and roles, industry standards and conditions and progression routes and opportunities and then make connections between what they had analysed and their own artistic practice. This combination should have informed their acquisition of skills, understanding and knowledge.

The unit requires rigour on the part of candidates to carefully edit, select and then present the evidence in an appropriate form. Some centres this year continued to produce portfolio sections that were a straightforward collation of general researched results into the creative industries without shaping this material into an owned and individual presentation of practical as well as theoretical experience into their own chosen progression route and context.

There remains a wide range of responses from centres, although this range is narrowing. Generally centres are beginning to understand and address the assessment protocols of the unit. Last year moderators focused on making sure the standard of the evidence was commensurate with national standards for this level allowing some leeway where the structure and format of the work did not fully address the demands of the specification. This year moderators have been more robust in ensuring that there was a dynamic connection between form and content. However it was still apparent that in some cases very good candidates had produced a great deal of evidence for the report where marks were not available to be awarded. For the report many candidates provided evidence of research into arts organisations and the six specified roles. Although this was a useful context, given the actual marks awarded for this section, it would have been better for candidates to give a very general context introducing their work on the six roles. Conversely, marks that were available for evidencing the application of the selected role were not always fully or appropriately applied. There was continuing evidence that some centres had found some difficulty in

structuring practical evidence to meet the differing demands and assessment criteria for the unit.

For the portfolio candidates should apply skills in **one** job role. This should be underpinned by knowledge of professional practice, strong use of vocational language and clear references to how the role is contributing to skills development and a chosen progression route. The assessment criteria includes presentation indicating that the portfolio or parts of it should address a specific market or audience. Some candidates expanded or repeated the report's contents and some centres appeared to be teaching the unit as a delivered, fully theoretical model, producing very formal accounts of industry conditions and contexts. This is quite a feasible approach but the resulting portfolio of evidence needs to respond to the vocational, practical and professional demands of the unit contextualised by the individual's potential progression route. Conversely some candidates produced very slim portfolios consisting of CVs and photos only.

The range of portfolio evidence was very wide, including copies of the work that had been produced for unit five. Centres should note that whilst it appears possible for there to be one body of practical work for units four and five the evidence that has to be presented and structured within the context of each unit is completely different. The strongest candidates provided highly organised and marketable material profiling and 'selling' candidates' practical work in a very focused way. These portfolios not only included accounts and diaries of workshops but pamphlets, CVs, show-reels and other creative material that sought to highlight the vocational skills of a potential employee and artist. Most centres were a mixture of the two and gave the impression of trying to cover all bases rather than following the latter route. Centres that did encourage a rigorous editing and shaping of material included full appendices, the use of which is becoming increasingly common. Appendices of this kind help to structure portfolios appropriately while allaying fears of not including some good researched and/or taught material.

For the evaluation candidates should analyse how their skills, knowledge and understanding have been developed and informed by both their own work and the vocational context of that work.

Centres were generally efficient with all material available on the day and they clearly understood their obligations and part in the process. A few centres failed to understand that all portfolios should have been available for the moderator to select their sample. Similarly a few moderators indicated that they were sometimes obliged to mark work because of the lack of annotation and assessment direction from teachers.

Within the context of previous comments on the balance of the moderation process the majority of centres were accurate in their assessment of candidates against the national standards.

UNIT FIVE: - ADVANCED PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Reports indicated that teachers in centres with higher-achieving candidates had approached this unit with suitable rigour and depth and had appreciated the step up from AS level to A2 level. In centres where candidates had been less successful, teachers had been less proactive in ensuring candidates fully met the assessment objectives for this unit.

Moderators reported that the workbooks ranged from the organic versions that are perfectly acceptable to the more formalised, edited and sanitised versions that are not necessary but are acceptable. Portfolios which were kept throughout the process were often stronger in meeting the assessment criteria as they were more personal and gave a sense of the candidate's voice.

Some candidates had included extraneous material that did not contribute to the evidence base; this frequently consisted of material downloaded from the Internet, which had been included without annotation or reference to any of the candidates' own work and failed to evidence the creative process of the performer and the appropriate selection and application of performance techniques. In some centres the notebooks sometimes focused on general planning for the performance or copious theoretical notes on practitioners without any explanation of which elements of their ideas were used; this approach detracted from the creative journey of the performer and failed to address assessment criteria AO2. This practice will not earn marks for this unit unless the theories are analysed and subsequently explored in practice during the creative process. The working notebook should have included a diary/log that explained in detail the rehearsal programme, the individual candidate's research and preparation for the role[s] and a record of the ongoing process of rehearsal from inception to final performance. Some candidates submitted working notebooks which included well thumbed annotated scripts, which indicated a real experience of performance preparation.

Candidates awarded marks in the higher ranges had produced excellent visual evidence supported by detailed and interesting portfolios. The work was presented in clear sections and contained valuable teacher comments providing detailed observations, statements and records of the students' work and progression. There was some critical analysis which was clearly the candidates' own work - identifying weaknesses, progression, improvements and evaluation.

Candidates awarded marks in the lower ranges did not demonstrate a great deal of research in developing their piece for performance. These candidates were less focused on their own contribution than on the generalities of the performance.

Visiting moderators reported that the process of moderation in centres was positive with most centres complying with the requirements detailed in the Instructions for Assessment issued by Edexcel. Most centres recognised the value of witness statements and observation records in providing detailed observations, statements and records of the students' work and progression. All of which justified the marks awarded. Nearly all centres had included the essential highlighted assessment grids and some centres had used clear annotation in the candidate workbooks which also enhanced the moderation process. The majority of centres presented materials in an accessible manner, in an appropriate space and without disturbance. Centres are reminded about the need to ensure clear identification of candidates on the video

recording of performances. Some centres had provided recordings which were of poor technical quality, or recorded from too great a distance and since this element constitutes half the available marks centres should try to achieve the highest quality possible. In a minority of centres the equipment provided for playback of recordings was inadequate or unsuitable.

A few centres still allowed candidates to devise material for this unit and clearly since the focus should be on the application of skills at an advanced level in response to an understanding of the source material this approach hinders the candidates' ability to address some of the essential criteria such as research [criteria AO1]. Devising new material also expends time that should be devoted to the exploration and application of skills and the essential polishing of the work.

The evaluation of the work should have focused on the effectiveness of the selection, application and refining of the skills used to create the performance together with an overview of the individual and group success. In most centres the performances took place in front of the intended target audience, and the performance skills used were appropriate. When candidates had explored character work, techniques and skills in depth and linked the processes to specific performance demands the work clearly demonstrated how skills had been applied. When evaluation was strong candidates had demonstrated how they had taken account of feedback from peers, tutors and others and had indicated their ability to evaluate their own practice together with that of the group.

UNIT SIX: - ADVANCED PRODUCTION PRACTICE

As an optional unit the demands of unit six were commensurate with unit five and the criteria were very similar. The only distinction was that the candidates who selected this option were required to demonstrate an advanced application of technical skills rather than performance skills.

Visiting moderators reported that the process of moderation in centres was positive in most cases with the majority of centres complying with the requirements detailed in the Instructions for Assessment issued by Edexcel. Candidates entered work for sound, lighting, costume and set design.

Moderators reported that a wide variety of approaches were seen and indicated that teachers had approached this unit with suitable rigour and depth appreciating the step up from AS to A2 level. Moderators reported that many centres had ensured that there were high production values with productions in front of a suitable audience and this ensured appropriateness and quality of performance.

As was the case last year, this unit was taken by a very small number of candidates and consequently some moderators did not see any work offered for this unit and some moderators only saw work offered by one or two candidates; in all cases moderators were monitored by their team leader and/or Principal moderator. Impressions of standards are consequently more sporadic and unreliable. However comments from moderators stated that candidates in the higher mark band presented detailed written documentation which was well presented and easy to follow. There was evidence of a detailed understanding of the material, the technical aesthetic and production demands of the performance and their practical application within their chosen specialism. One notable example was a beautifully crafted detailed three dimensional set model which clearly showed the candidates' intention for the set design, photographs for the lighting candidates and CDs for the sound candidate. There was

evidence that a great deal of thought and 'hands on' experimentation had gone into the preparation stage of the project. Candidates awarded marks in the lower ranges did not always have ownership of the role. For example, a candidate offering costume design appeared to be doing so because the performers requested it and not because the student doing costume design had understood the concept and wanted to develop ideas.

Nearly all centres had included the essential highlighted assessment grids and clear annotation in the candidate workbooks which facilitated the moderation process. The majority of centres presented materials in an accessible manner, in an appropriate space and without disturbance. A few centres needed to be reminded about ensuring identification of candidates on the video recording of performances. Some centres had provided recordings which were of poor technical quality, or recorded from too great a distance; however, overall centres were very good at providing appropriate recordings. In a minority of centres the equipment provided for playback of recordings was inadequate or unsuitable. In some centres the marks awarded were overly generous and this was more often the case where centres were entering candidates for this unit for the first time.

As in previous years many candidates selecting unit six were very experienced in the selected role and often carried out technical work across several specifications and productions within the centre. Similarly many were involved in theatre production outside the curriculum and often brought considerable expertise to the work. It is important to stress however that the other evidence demanded by the unit must also be submitted and practical ability alone cannot earn the highest marks. It is also important to stress that centres must ensure that candidates opting for unit six have suitable resources in order to demonstrate their skills at A2 level. For example in one centre a candidate had chosen lighting but had very limited lanterns and channels to create the desired effects; conversely another candidate had a large budget and was able to 'hire in' intelligent lighting to achieve his aims.

In a few centres candidates choosing this unit were very unclear about the demands of the selected role and presented work that was incomplete and/or unfit for purpose. The research section of the unit is as important as it is for performers and candidates needed to investigate the essential processes involved in their skill area; talk to practitioners and ensure that their planning and application was detailed and professional. For example stage management candidates often failed to include their rehearsal notebook, correctly annotated prompt copy and rarely completed post show reports.

UNIT SEVEN: - PRODUCTION DELIVERY

Because of the manner in which the specification is constructed the phrasing of the brief for unit seven may change but the basic demands will require the same response from candidates. In this second series for this unit most centres managed to respond to the demands of the brief with a varied range of inventive and creative productions. The main concern from last year was evident again this year and the comment from the 2007 report is worth repeating.

Unit seven is not primarily a devising unit and though the line between devising and textual interpretation is often very indistinct the response should aim to

present an existing work in an alternative manner in terms of focus, treatment, style or genre.

The most successful centres presented their own interpretation of an existing play or dance work but with a clearly defined intention for a modern audience. For example a production of 'Sweeney Todd' had used a variety of sources as the starting point and candidates had used the range of texts to focus on the manipulative nature of women within the story; another centre created a very engaging and highly polished version of 'Animal Farm'. One centre specialising in dance created their own interpretation of 'Wyoming' by Siobhan Davies.

Unit seven allowed candidates to engage with the subject in a totally practical manner but demanded a very sophisticated and polished level of performance. To score highly candidates needed to be completely secure in the skills they were employing and the vehicle used to demonstrate those skills needed to be fully developed and polished to performance standards.

Most centres presented well rehearsed, imaginative and coherent responses to the production brief. There was considerable evidence of a professional approach and full commitment to the performances and attempts to reflect industry demands and standards. There was clear evidence of understanding and appreciation of the creative decisions made with appropriate A2 focus. Much of the work displayed the professional panache and sophistication that the specification required with excellent levels of concentration, imagination and accuracy that revealed a thorough understanding of the required techniques and an excellent sense of pace and delivery.

In most cases the work was performed in front of the intended target audience and the work proved to be a suitable platform for a range of skills to be demonstrated. Most centres provided suitable front of house and technical support and moderators reported work that encompassed the full range of performing arts including acting, singing, dancing and playing instruments. Similarly all styles of performance were reported from an ensemble performance work of 'Tristan and Isolde', to 'Rent' and many other musical theatre and dance works. Candidates performed their work in a wide range of venues and there were some strong examples of promenade theatre, site-specific dance pieces as well as studio and theatre based productions. The following is a quote from one moderator and encapsulates the experiences of the team:

Most memorable pieces for me were a production of 'Bad Girls - the Musical' that condensed the story and presented the piece movingly through dance and some dialogue; a reworking of the 'Vagina Monologues' that was brave and sophisticated in its rounded, moving characterisations and ensemble invention; and a re-working of 'Two' by an all female cast incorporating dance, song and drama to powerful effect.

Moderators noted a real development in candidates' work and secure progression from AS to A2 standard as a result many candidates scored highly in this part of the specification but centre assessors were also very realistic about the application of marks against the criteria. Again it was usually only the centre assessors' rank order of candidates that were different to the moderator and this normally reflected the candidate's contributions to the rehearsal process. Centre assessors must make judgements ONLY on the individual performances during the production.

There were very few rubric infringements and in some cases very imaginative and resourceful responses to the problem of single candidates where centres had used other students within the production.

It is also worth repeating that whilst an audience is essential for this unit they must be made aware that the performance is primarily an examination and that the normal audience considerations might not apply.

Also it is essential that all performances are recorded clearly with good sound quality [a digital DVD format is the ideal] and that candidates are identified on the recording.

Grade Boundaries

Unit 1 (6980/01) EXPLORING SKILLS FOR PERFORMING

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	55	48	41	35	29	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 2 (6981/01) PLANNING FOR AN EVENT

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	55	48	41	34	28	22
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 3 (6982/01) PERFORMING TO COMMISSION

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	55	48	42	36	30	24
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 4 (6983/01) EMPLOYMENT OPPS IN PERFORMING ARTS

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	55	48	41	34	27	20
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 5 (6984/01) ADVANCED PERF.PRACTICE

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	56	49	42	35	29	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 6 (6985/01) ADVANCED PROD.PRACTICE

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	56	49	42	35	29	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Unit 7 (6986/01) PRODUCTION DELIVERY

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	56	49	42	35	29	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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