



Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

June 2016

NQF BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in
Performing Arts

Unit 1: 20512E

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Unit 1 Individual Showcase

Introduction

This examination requires learners to respond to one of four progression opportunities. The paper is set every year and published in the autumn term (in September) prior to examination (submission deadline in May). This Level 2 externally assessed unit is intended to be summative, in that it allows learners to showcase the skills they have developed on their BTEC Performing Arts course.

The progression opportunities are written in the form of advertisements for employment or education openings and learners are required to submit a letter of application, as well as a recording of the relevant practical activity.

There is full guidance published with every progression opportunity and this must be read, along with the advertisement itself.

Centres must ensure that learners have read and understand the whole of the progression opportunity, and the relevant guidance.

The response to the selected progression opportunity should be approached in line with a vocational setting. Learners should be fully prepared for their individual response, the work should be well rehearsed and learners' preparations should include relevant considerations, such as warming up, learning lines and preparing presentations.

Published texts, scores and other people's choreography can all be used by learners as sources for their performances or presentations, as appropriate.

The letter gives an opportunity for creative intentions to be outlined and to provide a context for the performance work to be viewed. In the letter, learners are assessed on their understanding of the chosen opportunity and their ability to communicate using appropriate structure, language and tone. The letter should also be seen as an introduction to the learner's practical work providing the opportunity for learners to explain their choice of material and how it relates to the requirements of the chosen opportunity.

Practical work is marked according to its technical merit and how well it meets the requirements of the chosen progression opportunity and communicates the learner's creative intentions, as identified in the letter.

Progression opportunity one:

This opportunity is for learners interested in technical aspects of theatre and production arts. Learners were invited to apply to be lighting or sound technicians. They were asked to state in their letter, and show in their practical presentation, how they would respond to the challenges of the opportunity as a whole. The presentation had to include a short (five minute) demonstration of technical skills.

Progression opportunity two:

Learners were invited to apply and audition for a role in a cultural partnership programme, global citizenship awards event. They were required to demonstrate contrasting skills in two areas of performance, such as dance, specialty acts, comedy or singing or playing a musical instrument.

Progression opportunity three:

This opportunity invited learners to become part of a Company that would be touring residential care homes with an interactive reminiscence performance. Learners could choose whether to offer their skills in acting, dance, music or production. All learners were expected to demonstrate their performance skills and present workshop ideas relevant to the theme, target audience and pathway.

Progression opportunity four:

Learners were invited to apply for a course at a school of performance and production. They could specialise in one of the following disciplines: dance, acting, musical theatre (the audition for which had to include a dance sequence), music performance or production design. Performers were required to present two contrasting audition pieces in their chosen discipline. Those specialising in production were asked to present design ideas for a specific production of their own choosing. The theme for the auditions or presentations was 'Destiny'.

Letters of Application

The content of the letters submitted this series ranged from brief, general letters of application to very detailed, specific and articulate applications. The structure, tone and language of the letters also covered a range of responses, from limited and unclear, to well-defined and effective responses.

Some learners wrote clearly and accurately and used punctuation and spelling to communicate ideas successfully. Some learners used bullet points and lists and this was not appropriate for a formal letter of application.

In some cases, learners did not demonstrate their understanding of the essentials of the selected progression opportunity, or acknowledge the key requirements. Better responses made specific reference to the selected progression opportunity and took into account the opportunities and requirements, both as given in the advert section and in the instructions.

Once the letter had demonstrated an appreciation of the requirements of the selected progression opportunity, strong responses went on to make clear links to these and to the skills, techniques and experience a learner has, as well as to the material selected for the audition or presentation. Weaker responses did not make these connections. Where learners explained and justified their choices of audition pieces and/or the content of their presentation, the response was more in line with the expectations of the letter; this also provided a clearer context for the practical work and led to a more coherent response overall.

The letter is an opportunity to demonstrate a full understanding of the progression opportunity which may include theme, target audience and the creative intentions of an event or production and the skills and techniques that are being asked for in order to make a successful application.

This series saw an increase in letters that were the result of a writing frame or centre set structure. The set framework often appeared to support a weaker learner, but also possibly prevented a more able learner from accessing the full range of marks available. In a few cases, the letters were very similar and did not give learners the opportunity to express individual understanding or ideas.

Overall, this series saw more letters that were a suitable and fitting response to the demands of this aspect of the exam.

Practical Work

Progression opportunity 1

The responses to this progression opportunity were relevant and appropriate overall. The strongest responses showed the learners' technical expertise off to good effect, applying skills, knowledge and experience in a well-prepared and appropriate technical setting.

The best responses corresponded closely to the focus of the opportunity and responded, in particular, to the technical needs of a musical performance.

Most presentations this series were of the correct length, which allowed learners sufficient time to demonstrate all the required skills and techniques. Most centres were able to provide a sense of occasion, and a supportive and professional environment for the presentation and demonstration to be recorded.

Progression opportunity 2

This series saw more fit-for-purpose responses overall to this progression opportunity. However, there were some that did not take into account the requirement to perform work from two different disciplines.

We, again, saw some very imaginative work presented for this progression opportunity and where the work was genuinely chosen in reaction to the progression opportunity (rather than selected and then made to fit the requirements) it provided a better response. Some learners performed monologues that were not suitable for this progression opportunity.

Progression opportunity 3

Learners who engaged with the theme, target audience and setting for the work overall gave better and more coherent responses to this progression opportunity. In a small number of centres, there appeared to be some confusion over the theme and learners produced presentations on the memory and how it works, rather than workshop ideas for a reminiscence project.

Performances and presentations that overtly and consistently linked to the theme tended to achieve higher marks because the work corresponded more closely with the demands of the progression opportunity.

Presentation skills ranged from being well prepared, confident and clear to unprepared readings from notes or the screen.

The practical work that was presented was mostly suitable for the stated target audience and linked in some way to the workshop ideas.

In a very small number of centres, we saw responses where no recording of the presentation was included, (we were presented with only a copy of PowerPoint slides). This was limiting for learners in terms of them accessing the full range of marks available.

Progression opportunity 4

Learners who had clearly explored and investigated the theme of 'Destiny' in practical workshops and classes before selecting or creating material mostly produced successful responses.

We, unfortunately, again saw a number of learners that did not respond appropriately to the demands of the musical theatre pathway, as they did not include a dance sequence as part of one of their audition pieces.

For the music performance pathway, we saw a number of learners being accompanied by other musicians which was not always necessary, or appropriate.

Dance responses included some very proficient and impressive technical work. Where teacher choreography was performed it was often fit-for-purpose and

supported learners. Where learners had then had the opportunity to add individual motifs or sequences, it gave them more possibility to develop the work and make it their own.

The stronger acting responses had taken extracts or monologues from established and appropriate texts and were able to demonstrate their understanding of the work in its wider context, making stronger and more imaginative links to the theme.

It was, however, also the case that several learners had not learnt their lines and were reliant on prompts or gave up before the end of the performance. Some learners simply read their monologues from a screen behind the camera.

Administration

Most centres presented the work as required. However, issues again this series included the poor organisation of the work on the recordings by a small number of centres. Centres should fully adhere to the demands of both the progression opportunity, and the requirements as detailed in the Administrative Support Guide. Centres are reminded that work must be submitted by the deadline to the examiner in the correct format in terms of recordings and pdf files. Each learner's work must be presented in its own folder, along with others in the cohort, on a new, undamaged, DVD or memory stick that will play on any commonly used laptop. Where DVDs were sent without a protective case, it caused delays, as replacements were often needed as they had been broken or damaged in the post. Centres are reminded that learner work, including auditions, presentations and letters are assessed as a whole, so must be submitted together as such, in a single folder for each learner.

Centres are also reminded that they must complete the essential documents relating to each learner, and the centre itself, as these are required by the examiner for marking and centre/learner identification.

Recordings were generally of a good quality; however, in some cases, the quality of sound was poor and/or the level of lighting, (especially in black box spaces) made it difficult to see the learners.

Where centres provided a quiet and appropriate space for the auditions/presentations to be recorded, this better supported the learners. It should be noted that learners as individuals must present work submitted for this unit and it is not acceptable to submit pair work/duologues or group work.

Summary

Based on the performance seen during this series the following lessons should be learned:

- Centres should ensure that learners read and respond to the whole of the chosen progression opportunity, including the relevant guidance written below each advertisement.
- Learners should produce a clear and informative letter of application, telling the reader about their skills, knowledge and understanding, that is appropriate to the specific requirements and demands of the chosen progression opportunity.
- Learners should use their letter of application to explain their choice of audition pieces and/or to introduce the content of their presentations and give clear creative intentions, so work can be viewed in context.
- Learners should not include actual personal contact details, such as personal email addresses and telephone numbers. If they wish to use this in their letters, then general centre details can be given.
- Centres should ensure learners have an appropriate, quiet space available for their auditions/presentations.

- Learners should fully prepare their audition pieces, learning choreography, lines, lyrics etc. in order to perform with confidence and to the best of their ability.
- Learners offering presentations should practise their presentation skills to ensure that material is presented effectively and with clarity and confidence.
- Where a progression opportunity asks learners to perform extracts from published texts, it should be noted that if they simply perform monologues that are not extracts from existing work, they are not fully meeting the requirements of the progression opportunity. Repertoire that is understood as a whole and has clear and rigorous creative content will better support a learner to access the marks available.
- It is not acceptable to place a 'prompt' outside of the view of the camera, such as words on a whiteboard or someone marking through dance moves. The recording should capture the work, as it would be seen in an audition setting.
- The centre must ensure the progression opportunities for the correct year are being responded to, and learners are not responding to previous papers or sample assessment materials.

1606 grade boundaries:

Distinction	Merit	Pass	Level 1 pass
35	26	18	10

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