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Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in
Performing Arts

Unit 1: Individual Showcase
(20512E)

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June 2017

Publications Code 20512E_1706_ER

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Grade Boundaries

What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we set the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade, Distinction, Merit and Pass.

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries – this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark should be for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in external assessments

Each external assessment we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries for each test, because then it would not take into account that a test might be slightly easier or more difficult than any other.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

Individual Showcase (20512E)

Grade	Unclassified	L1	P	M	D
Boundary Mark	0	10	18	26	35

Introduction

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.

This assessment requires learners to respond to one of four progression opportunities; Production, Performance, Community or Education. The paper is set every year and published at the start of the academic year in September, prior to the submission deadline in May.

The four progression opportunities are written in the form of adverts for employment or further study in the performing arts. Learners are required to submit a letter of application as well as a recording of the relevant practical performance work and/or presentation.

Centres must ensure that learners read and understand the whole of the progression opportunity and the relevant guidance and requirements. There is full guidance published with every progression opportunity and this must be read, along with the advert itself.

The response to the selected progression opportunity should be approached with an appreciation of the vocational role and as much as possible within a performing arts industry context.

Learners should be fully prepared for their individual response; the work should be fully rehearsed. In preparation, learners should consider aspects such as warming up, learning lines or moves and preparing equipment and 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 the opportunity for learners to explain their creative intentions and provides a context for the performance work to be watched. The letter should also introduce the learner's practical work, providing the opportunity to clarify their choice of material and how it meets the demands and requirements of the selected progression opportunity.

In the letter, learners are assessed on their understanding of their chosen progression opportunity and their ability to communicate using appropriate structure, language and tone.

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

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

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

The letters this series showed an overall improvement on previous years. Most letters contained relevant information and most learners demonstrated a level of appreciation of the progression opportunity they were applying for.

Learner responses to all progression opportunities were wide-ranging, from very limited responses to ones that were thoughtful, fully considered and presented fully developed skills and creativity.

Timings and other requirements were mostly observed. The most successful responses tended to be when the full requirements of the progression opportunity were being considered.

Individual Questions

Set Task

Letters of Application

Most learners included relevant information about their knowledge, skills and experience and some went on to relate the skills they had developed to the chosen progression opportunity. Some learners simply listed previous experience or gave a course overview without specific reference to the particular requirements of the progression opportunity. Responses that gained fewer marks included information about skills and experience that was irrelevant to the progression opportunity.

Most learners made some reference to the work they were going to perform and/or present and outlined how the work responded to the progression opportunity. However, this series saw many letters where the details related to the plot or narrative of the work being performed, rather than how the work related to their skills and the requirements of the selected progression opportunity. For example, in responses to progression opportunity 4 some letters included limited information about applicants' enthusiasm for the performing arts, their relevant skillset and potential, or how their pieces were going to communicate the theme or how they showed contrast.

The most successful letters responded to all aspects of the progression opportunity and made clear links between learners' own skills with what they were going to bring, to both the audition/presentation, and the progression opportunity they were applying for.

This series saw many letters where there was a rigid centre-led approach, with learners seeming to write to a pre-coached writing frame. This approach tended to limit the access to the full range of marks available, as learners' personal understanding was often less clear and the letters less focused on the specifics of the progression opportunity and their individual choices in relation to audition/presentation content. The set framework often appeared to support a weaker learner but also possibly prevented a more able learner and in some cases the letters were very similar and did not give learners the opportunity to express individual understanding or ideas.

The use of grammar and language again this series varied greatly across the cohort. Many students wrote clearly and accurately whilst others struggled with punctuation, spelling and wording.

Overall the structure, tone and language used was appropriate, ranging from limited and unclear, to well-defined and effective responses. In responses that achieved high marks learners confidently and accurately used vocational terms,

whereas the tone and language used was sometimes inappropriate in responses that gained fewer marks. Where learners used bullet points and lists this was not appropriate for the letter format.

In some cases, we saw letters that were more like extended pieces of coursework and centres are reminded that although there is not a word limit as such, we are looking for work that represents a letter of application.

Practical work

Progression opportunity 1 - Production

The responses to this progression opportunity ranged from relevant and appropriate to limited and general. The more successful responses demonstrated good technical expertise where learners were applying skills, knowledge and experience in a well-prepared and appropriate technical setting.

The strongest responses also corresponded closely to the focus of the progression opportunity. Presentations were mostly of the correct length (8–10 minutes). Less successful responses included very basic demonstrations of using lighting or sound equipment but made no or limited links to the progression opportunity.

Most centres were able to provide a sense of occasion, and a supportive and professional environment for the presentation and demonstration to be recorded. However, in some cases learners were filmed where the content of their presentations on a screen could not be seen.

Progression opportunity 2 - Performance

Most learners made some connections to the particular aspects of the progression opportunity and performed two appropriate pieces. Most learners demonstrated an understanding of the type of performance that might be appropriate for the progression opportunity and had considered the choice of their material carefully.

For some, there was a real attempt to perform a speciality act e.g., baton twirling, magic tricks, playing a ukulele and a routine to Let It Go on roller-skates.

Less successful responses were where the link to holiday entertainment was limited, for example not meeting the requirement for the monologue to be a comedy act. Some learners who performed a monologue chose rather heavy and unsuitable material for the holiday setting as required by the progression opportunity.

In some cases, centres misinterpreted the scenario and created work around the theme of holidays as opposed to applying to be a holiday entertainer.

In the more successful responses, we saw work of a very high standard of technical ability that was an imaginative and carefully considered, fully appropriate response

to the progression opportunity.

Progression opportunity 3 - Community

Learners generally followed performance pathways for both sections and understood the requirement to offer ideas for practical workshop activities in the presentation.

Responses that engaged with the theme, target audience and setting for the work, overall gave better and more coherent responses to this progression opportunity. 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. The requirement for the connection between literacy and primary schools appeared to inspire learners to develop suitable material for the workshop and audition and there were some good presentations which had thoughtful ideas about the production of workshops for children.

Again this series, presentation skills ranged from being well-prepared, confident and clear to unprepared readings from notes or the screen. The performance work was mostly suitable for the primary school or nursery setting and linked in some way to the workshop ideas.

Unfortunately, in a very small number of centres, we saw responses where no recording of the presentation was included, just a copy of PowerPoint slides. This was limiting for learners in terms of them accessing the full range of marks available.

In a very small number of centres, some of the pieces for 'Write On' were wholly unsuitable for the target age range as they included adult themes, which demonstrated a lack of understanding of the progression opportunity.

Progression opportunity 4 - Education

Again this series, this was the most popular progression opportunity and dance followed by acting was the most popular pathway.

There were some very engaging performance auditions seen this series with the theme inspiring some imaginative choices of performance material. There were less very weak pieces seen than in previous years and learners demonstrated a significant amount of skill. In some less successful responses the theme was not considered and only a very tenuous link was made. Learners who had clearly explored and investigated the theme of 'Portent' in practical workshops and classes before selecting or creating material mostly produced successful responses.

There was not always sufficient contrast in the performance pieces for PO4, particularly where the same playwright or style of work had been used for both

pieces, and it should be noted that this is a key requirement for this progression opportunity.

In a couple of centres the camera was set up to capture just the head and shoulders of learners in acting auditions. The 'whole' audition should be seen and filmed from a fixed point.

We saw fewer learners that did not respond appropriately to the demands of the musical theatre pathway, with the majority offering a dance sequence as part of one of their audition pieces. For the music performance pathway, however, we again saw some 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. However, where learners had the opportunity to add individual motifs or sequences it gave them more possibility to develop the work and make it their own.

Again we saw some auditions where learners had not learnt their lines and were reliant on prompts or gave up before the end of the performance. In some cases, learners appeared to be reading their lines from a screen or page situated behind the camera, which is unacceptable.

Administration

It is pleasing to say that most centres again 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 DVD or memory stick that will play on any commonly used laptop.

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.

This series, recordings were generally of a good quality, however, in some cases the quality of sound was poor and in some cases 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.

Centre Registers did not always explicitly include learners who had been withdrawn or were absent. It would be helpful if they did. In some centres candidate numbers rather than BTEC registration numbers were used on the paperwork.

Summary

Based on the responses seen this series, the following should be noted:

- The centre must ensure the progression opportunities for the correct year are being responded to, and learners are not responding to past papers.
- 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 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 space available for their auditions/presentations.
- Learners offering presentations should practice their presentation skills to ensure that material is presented effectively and with clarity and confidence.
- 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.
- It is not acceptable to place a 'prompt' outside of the view of the camera. The recording should capture the work, as it would be seen in an audition setting.

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