



June 2018

**Level 1/2 BTEC Firsts in Performing
Arts**

Unit 1: Individual Showcase (20512E)

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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, at 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 is 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 assessment, because then it would not take accessibility into account.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:
<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

Grade	Unclassified	Level 1 Pass	Level 2		
			Pass	Merit	Distinction
Boundary Mark	0	9	18	27	36

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 examination requires learners to respond to one of four progression opportunities. The paper is set every year and published at the start of the academic year in September, prior to examination 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 have read and understand the whole of the selected progression opportunity, and the relevant guidance and requirements. There is full guidance published with every progression opportunity and this must be read and understood, 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/moves and preparing equipment/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 a chance 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 explain 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 as well as 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 1

This opportunity best served learners wishing to follow a technical progression route. Learners were invited to apply to be lighting or sound technicians for the All Our Lives Festival. 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 (5 minute) demonstration of technical skills.

Progression opportunity 2

Learners were invited to apply and audition to be represented by Star Turn Management Company, for touring work in Europe. They were required to demonstrate performance skills in two contrasting areas, such as dance, speciality acts, comedy or singing or playing a musical instrument.

Progression opportunity 3

This opportunity invited learners to apply to be part of Our Company and their Just Listen for Once performance project. Learners could offer their skills in acting, dance, singing or playing a musical instrument or in a design or technical role. All learners were expected to demonstrate their performance skills and present their ideas for a workshop, relevant to the theme, target audience and pathway.

Progression opportunity 4

Learners were invited to apply for a course at the East and West College. 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 arts 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 '*Contradiction*'.

Letters of Application

The letter of application is a chance to demonstrate a full understanding of the selected 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.

Most letters contained relevant information and most learners demonstrated an adequate level of understanding of the progression opportunity they were applying for.

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. Less successful responses included general information about skills and experience that was

mostly 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, we again saw 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.

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/role they were applying for.

This series again saw letters where there was a centre-led approach, with learners seeming to respond to a 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.

A writing frame often appeared to support a weaker learner but also possibly prevented a more able learner. In some cases, the letters across a cohort were very similar and did not give learners sufficient opportunity to express individual understanding or imaginative 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. At the top end learners confidently and accurately used vocational terms. At the lower end the tone and language were sometimes inappropriate. Where learners used bullet points and lists this was not appropriate.

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.

Examples of learner work, where the letter of application accessed higher mark bands can be seen below. These are extracts from a selection of letters. They are to indicate how learners can include relevant information, with the intended tone, to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in response to a selected progression opportunity.

Example 1

"My second monologue is a piece from the film 'some like it hot' by the character Sugar Kane. This monologue is about a singer (Sugar) who is stuck in a loop of falling for saxophone players. In the monologue she is relaying all of her emotions and feelings on the subject to a band member in the toilets. The contradiction within this piece is that

she keeps saying she won't fall for a saxophone player, but continues to do so every time."

Example 2

"For my application, I have looked at the brief and understand both monologues should deal with the theme of contradiction. Having done research, I understand that contradiction means two opposing ideas or statements. The monologues I will perform are 'The First Man' by Eugene O'Neil and Mark Antony's Speech (Act 3 Scene 2) from Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare; both suitably using contradiction within the speeches."

Example 3

"This play shows contradiction because she keeps going back on her word. She calls a tribe's woman 'horribly ugly' but then a few lines later calls the woman 'beautiful'. Mark Antony's speech is all about Brutus and Caesar. His speech takes place in Caesar's funeral. This speech shows contradiction because all throughout the speech he is trying to lay the blame on Brutus and turn everyone against him. He does this with them knowing. He starts off by saying 'Brutus is an honourable man' and that he doesn't come to 'praise' Caesar. However, later on he says Caesar 'was my friend' and that 'Brutus says he was ambitious'. So we can see that he leads them into the trap of manipulation."

Example 4

"Firstly, in 'The First Man', I am going to kneel down on the line 'Oh Curt'. This will show sympathy and that I feel sorry for him, but also shows that I want him to understand and listen to me. Secondly, I will quicken up the pace when saying 'I love you'. This will show that I am scared so I am rushing through all my words so I can stop him from shouting at me. Finally, I will use a calm tone when asking the question 'Do you remember two years ago?' This will clearly show the difference in the subject change because I will change the way my character acts."

Example 5

"We train twice a week to ensure that we are prepared for competitions. Being in a team has improved my: communication skills, leadership, commitment and sportsmanship as you have to consider others around you and come to agreements. Furthermore you could also say that working within a team has made me more aware of my space that I use as a dancer. These factors will be significant at East and West college as I will be able to work within a group of people if given the opportunity e.g. for a showcase."

Example 6

"I am now going to talk of my two imaginative pieces that I have prepared, both linked to the theme of contradiction. My first solo is 'Run Boy Run' which is a hard-hitting, strong contemporary piece. It is linked to the theme of contradiction as I have based it off of a poem titled: 'A walking contradiction' by Caleb Azumah Nelson. One line that inspired me was 'my steps are surer than lions'- this line relates to the beginning of my piece where I run diagonally from one side to another with a fast pace and high projection to look confident, vicious and quick, like a lion."

Example 7

"I have always had ambitions to be on the stage and perform to an audience as a career. I am interested in your job advert as your advertisement caught my eye and I feel I would suit your job description perfectly. To be employed with your agency Star Turn, I feel that you could offer me a chance to develop my performance skills further whilst working in the industry. I am excited at the prospect of working with professionals from the industry and the opportunity to entertain audiences around Europe."

Example 8

"I feel my strongest aspect of dance would be hip-hop contemporary and jazz as I feel I have the most experience of these styles. I also believe that these two styles of dance are the most entertaining and the most engaging for an audience to watch, this would fit well into your job opportunity as I know that the main aim of your performances is to entertain audiences around the world."

Example 9

"For my audition I have decided to present you with a song and a dance to show my versatility as a performer. For my dance I have decided to do a jazz song to link with the idea of musical theatre performances. I have chosen the song "The Greatest Show". As it means that within the dance I can add jazz moves and also some hip-hop moves, showing how I can create a hybrid of styles. At the start of the song I have used the lyrics and mirrored a dance to go with it. One of the lines of the song I have used to show the theme of the song (The circus) and presented myself as the ringleader. I pull my arms forward to show I am the conductor of the performance. I felt that this dance communicates my passion for performing and the fire I have inside when I take to the stage."

Practical work

Learner responses to all progression opportunities were wide-ranging, from technically limited responses to ones that were engaging, fully considered and presented fully developed responses.

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.

Progression opportunity 1

The responses to this progression opportunity ranged from relevant and detailed to generic technical demonstrations. 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. Less successful responses

included very basic demonstrations of using lighting or sound equipment but made no or limited links to the progression opportunity or setting implied in the task.

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

Most learners made some connections to the particular aspects of the progression opportunity and performed two suitable 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.

Less successful responses were where the link to the Star Turn management company was limited and the response was a generic 'party piece'.

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

Progression opportunity 3

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 youth issues and a local community appeared to inspire learners to develop suitable material for the workshop and audition and there were some interesting presentations which had imaginative and practical ideas for the workshop.

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 community setting and linked in some way to the workshop ideas.

In a very small number of centres, we saw responses where the presentation slides were the only evidence provided for the workshop ideas. This does not meet the requirements of the progression opportunity.

Progression opportunity 4

This was again a popular choice from the four progression opportunities.

There were some very engaging performance auditions seen again this series with the theme inspiring some imaginative choices of performance material.

In some less successful responses the theme was not fully considered and in some cases the theme of 'contradiction' was confused with the requirement for the two pieces to show contrast. Some learners selected 'sub-themes' that contradicted, for example 'Love and Hate'. This was not what was asked of the learners, as the progression opportunity asks for two contrasting pieces, both based on the theme of contradiction.

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

Again, we saw some cases where there was not sufficient contrast in the performance pieces, particularly where the same playwright or style of work had been used for both pieces, and it should be noted that contrast 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.

Most learners responded 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 a very small number of learners being accompanied by other musicians which was not always necessary or appropriate.

Dance responses included some very skilled 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.

Acting responses were mostly engaging, supported by appropriate repertoire. 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 very 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 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. Where encryption software has been used, passwords must be provided.

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.

Full names and learner numbers, matching the details of the learner registration must be used. In some centres candidate numbers rather than BTEC registration numbers were used on the paperwork and abbreviated names or alternative names used.

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. No autocue or equivalent should be used to mask learners not having learnt their lines.
- 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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