

Level 2 Lead Examiner Report 1906

Summer 2019

**BTEC Level 1 / 2 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>

Individual Showcase (20512E)

Grade	Unclassified	Level 2			
		L1P	P	M	D
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 understood 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 again best served learners wishing to follow a technical progression route. Learners were invited to apply to be lighting or sound technicians at City Space Arts Centre, where the new resident performance company is Take a Note Opera. Learners 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 for the role of performer, for the summer season at Screamers Kingdom theme park. They were required to demonstrate performance skills in two contrasting areas, such as comedy, dance, speciality acts, singing or playing a musical instrument.

Progression opportunity 3

This opportunity invited learners to apply to be part of a new interactive performance project, Copy That. The project explores ways to stay safe online. 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 Stand By Academy. 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 '*Otherworldly*'.

Letters of Application

The letter of application gives learners the opportunity to demonstrate a full understanding of the selected progression opportunity. This may include the given theme, target audience and the creative intentions of a company, event or production as well as the skills and techniques that are being asked for in order to make a successful application.

This series saw a range of responses, from very brief covering letters, that contained very little information, to letters that fully demonstrated a learner's knowledge and understanding. In some cases, letters were very long and read like a 'log' not a letter of application, sometimes including lots of unnecessary detail about song lyrics/plays/monologues.

The majority of letters adequately covered the skills and techniques a learner was going to demonstrate and gave an outline of relevant experience, and some letters went on to relate the skills they had developed on their course directly to the requirements of the chosen progression opportunity.

Some letters also included appropriate, more transferable employability skills, such as team work, communication and organisational skills. This was effective when a learner stated the value these skills would have in the employment / education context they were applying to be a part of.

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.

We again saw some letters which were used to tell the plot or narrative of the repertoire, rather than explain how the work being performed related to their skills and the requirements of the selected progression opportunity, for example how the theme would be communicated (PO4).

Where letters responded to all parts of the progression opportunity and made clear links between performance skills with what they were going to bring, to both the audition/presentation, and the progression opportunity/role they were applying for, the response was more able to access the full range of marks available.

We saw fewer letters this series where there was a centre-led approach, and fewer learners seemed to respond to a writing frame. Where we did see this, it appeared that a writing frame often appeared to support a weaker learner but also possibly prevented a more able learner.

Generally, the structure, tone and language used was appropriate, ranging from limited and unclear, to well-defined and effective responses. The use of grammar and language again this series varied greatly across the cohort.

Many learners wrote clearly whilst others were less able to accurately use punctuation and spelling. At the top end learners confidently and accurately used vocational terms. At the lower end the tone and language were sometimes unsuitable, with learners using bullet points and lists.

We saw fewer cases of letters that were more like extended pieces of coursework, and although there is not a word limit as such, we are looking for work that represents a letter of application, therefore this was encouraging. Although in some centres it appears that learners are still writing too much.

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 first dance will demonstrate the theme of *Otherworldly*, as my dance will show my feelings during an imaginary dream or nightmare where I get taken by a spirit to be shown my future if I fail to be kinder in this world. I was inspired to create this choreography by the well-known Charles Dickens story. In one section I will extend my arms, turn my face away and use facial expressions to show that I am afraid of the dream. In another section I will use heavy and light movements in quick contrast, to show I feel differently about seeing the good and bad in the situation. To connect my sections of the dance I have choreographed a movement that resembles me dragging the chains that are holding me back.”

Example 2

“I have looked at the advert for Stand By Academy and understand both monologues should respond to the theme of otherworldly. The first monologue I will perform is ‘Macbeth’ by William Shakespeare, where he meets the Witches and I will use physical and vocal skills to show the feelings behind the words. I will create an atmosphere of a place that is out of this world.”

Example 3

“For my audition pieces I will perform a song and a dance, showing my ability to entertain the guests at Screamers Kingdom. The skills I will demonstrate will let you see how family audiences will be screaming with delight when I am performing. My dance is to Michael Jackson’s Thriller, a real family favourite, and I will add choreography that has a slightly scary feel about it, slowing

down the tempo and then make people scream when I leap towards the audience at the end of the routine. My song is an upbeat feel good song from Wicked, so the audience will be able to sing along. These pieces both suit my physical skills and vocal range.”

Example 4

“As I work part time teaching at a local stage school, I have developed excellent communication skills that will be an asset when working with others and when running workshops. I have included a brief outline later in my letter, of my experience of working with people from all sorts of backgrounds, as part of my voluntary work. I hope this experience will be of interest as it demonstrates my willingness to get along and be part of a team.”

Practical work

We saw a wide range of responses across all four progression opportunities, from responses that demonstrated limited technical ability to those that were technically assured and fully engaging. Timings and other requirements were again mostly observed. The most successful responses tended to be when the full requirements of the progression opportunity were being considered and learners’ skills were applicable.

Progression opportunity 1

We saw some very accomplished technicians present their skills for both lighting and sound.

The more successful responses demonstrated good technical expertise where learners were applying skills, knowledge and experience in a well-prepared and appropriate technical setting. We saw learners use equipment in a confident and assured manner.

The strongest responses were able to make clear links to the focus of the progression opportunity. Less successful responses included very basic demonstrations of using lighting or sound equipment but made no or limited links to the progression opportunity.

Again, we saw centres provide a sense of occasion, and a supportive and professional environment for the presentation and demonstration to be recorded which clearly supported learners.

Progression opportunity 2

We saw some entertaining and engaging work. Most learners made clear connections to the progression opportunity and performed two appropriate pieces. The target audience was fully considered by most learners when selecting the repertoire to perform.

We mostly saw this progression opportunity facilitate some excellent audition pieces.

In some cases however, the technical ability in the two disciplines suggested the learner may have been more suited to a progression opportunity that let them perform two pieces from the same discipline.

Progression opportunity 3

Learners again mostly followed performance pathways for both sections and understood the requirement to offer ideas for practical workshop activities in the presentation. Better responses presented a coherent response, where the audition piece and the workshop ideas worked well together. Responses that engaged with the theme, target audience and setting for the work, overall gave better and more coherent responses to this progression opportunity.

The focus of a performance that explores online safety and the context of a free event run by the local council, were both fully considered in the stronger responses. Some ideas for the workshops were inspired and clearly relevant, whilst others were generic, and it was not always clear how the ideas would be appropriate.

Presentation skills varied, from confident well-prepared presentations that clearly communicated relevant ideas, to those where some basic ideas for a generic workshop were read to the camera.

One issue we saw this series was where learners focused too much on statistics for 'online safety' and not on the ideas for using performing arts to explore such issues, with some offering only superficial ideas for practical activities.

Progression opportunity 4

We again saw some very engaging auditions this series with the theme inspiring some imaginative choices of performance material. Learners often

gave clear justification in their letter for how their audition pieces (from across all disciplines) communicated the theme of 'Otherworldly'. Where learners had explored the theme in practical workshops and classes before selecting or creating material, they mostly produced successful responses.

Better responses made specific reference to how the audition piece would demonstrate the use of their skills and made reference to the 'contrasting' elements. However, some candidates, for both Acting and Dance, may benefit from demonstrating greater contrast, as it is a requirement for this progression opportunity.

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 or a backing track that includes the instrument being performed.

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. The higher scoring responses (both with regard to the letter and performance) were from learners who had evidently choreographed and created their own responses to the theme Otherworldly.

Acting responses were mostly engaging, supported by appropriate repertoire. In a very small number of cases, we saw auditions where learners had not learnt their lines and were reliant on prompts or gave up before the end of the performance. We saw several auditions from film scripts in response to the theme Otherworldly, for example, Harry Potter and The Witches. Overall, the stronger responses performed monologues taken from established texts and learners were able to demonstrate their understanding of the work, both in regards to the letter and audition, and made stronger and more imaginative links to the theme and to the character.

Musical Theatre responses this year were mostly successful in fulfilling the requirement to include a dance routine, which were mostly developed and appropriately and confidently performed. We saw some very assured singing, and some engaging auditions.

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 each learner's 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.

Centres should consider how they can support the work with an appropriate space and create a suitable sense of occasion for the auditions/presentations to be recorded.

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:

- Centres must ensure the progression opportunities for the correct year are being responded to, and learners are not responding to past papers or setting their own themes.
- Centres must ensure that learners read and respond to the whole of the chosen progression opportunity including the relevant guidance, written below each advertisement.
- Centres must ensure learners have an appropriate space available for their auditions/presentations.
- 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 used.
- 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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