Examiners' Report/
Lead Examiner Feedback
Summer 2018

BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Performing Arts
Unit 3: Group Performance Workshop (31557H)

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31557H – Unit 3: Group Performance Workshop

Grade	Unclassified	N	Level 3		
			P	M	D
Boundary Mark	0	12	23	34	45

Introduction

Unit 3: Group Performance Workshop is a mandatory externally assessed unit on the following qualification sizes of the 2016 BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts, the Extended Certificate, Foundation Diploma, Diploma and Extended Diploma. June 2018 was the second opportunity for assessment in this unit.

The Unit 3 task paper is set once every year. It is published in January prior to external assessment in the summer series. The submission deadline for learner work is in May.

This unit requires learners to respond to a set task in the form of a given stimulus. This stimulus changes each series and it is essential that learners respond to the specific stimulus set in the year of their assessment.

In order to respond to the stimulus provided in the set task, learners work as part of a small performance company in groups of between 3 and 7 performers. They need to use research and practical exploration to interpret the stimulus and devise an original piece of performance work to present to an invited audience.

The performance needs to be between 10 and 20 minutes long, depending upon the nature of the piece, the performance discipline and/or the number of performers in the group.

As part of the set task learners must complete a digital process log at four key milestone stages. The digital process log should evidence how learners have used relevant research and practical exploration to interpret the set stimulus. It should capture the learner's contribution to the devising and rehearsal process and both reflect upon and evaluate the process and the final group performance.

The set task is marked out of 60. The digital process log is marked out of 42 and the performance out of 18. The weighting of this externally assessed unit is intended to assess learner's ability to work collaboratively in order to devise a performance in response to a stimulus. Each learner's account of the creation and devising processes is worth 70% of the final marks and centres should be aware of the importance of the creation and devising process within this externally assessed unit.

Some learners discussed in one or more of their milestone log entries, how the external assessment was the first time they had gone through this type of creative process. It is strongly advised that learners experience collaborative work and are taught to both devise original work and to record the creative and devising process effectively as part of the teaching and learning process, prior to completing this externally assessed tas

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

Overall, examiners experienced a very wide range of performing arts works covering the full range of marks available.

The best work seen was created as a result of a robust and rigorous devising process in which learners successfully collaborated in order to develop and shape material with a clear artistic vision and impressive creativity.

In the most successful work, this process was analytically documented in the digital process logs. The process could also be observed in recorded clips of the developing process included with Milestone 2 and 3 of the digital process log and was evident in the final group workshop performance.

Stimulus

The stimulus for this examination series was a painting by Salvador Dali, *The Persistence of Memory*.

This stimulus provided learners with the opportunity to respond in a wide variety of ways and a wealth of different responses in all performance disciplines were seen. Having said that, there were a large number of pieces on various types of memory loss, such as Alzheimer's and dementia, and on aspects of 'time' such as the passing of time or distortion of time. Mental health, in response to Dali's own mental health was also a common theme in a number of performances.

Task

Milestone 1: Interpreting and Planning

AO1: Understand how to interpret and respond to a stimulus for a group performance

In this first digital process log entry the marking grid for Milestone 1 assesses the learner's ability to demonstrate their understanding of how they have interpreted and responded to the stimulus in the set task.

Learners must discuss how they have interpreted the stimulus through practical exploration and through relevant primary and/or secondary research. They must justify their initial creative ideas for the group performance, making it clear how these creative ideas relate to the stimulus. Whilst doing this they must also demonstrate their contribution and engagement with the group's interpretation of the stimulus and the generation of ideas.

It is also useful if learners outline their artistic aims and intentions in this milestone and if relevant, the target audience, the form and style of the performance and the practical performance skills they and their group intend to apply to the process and the final performance.

As explained in last year's Lead Examiners Report the best responses seen for this milestone entry were written after learners had been given the chance to:
o   Undertake relevant and useful primary and/or secondary research.
o   Consider and discuss the results of this research and their ideas for the group performance with the rest of their performance group.
o   Apply their research as they practically explored some of their initial ideas.
o   Begin to practically develop their creative ideas for the final piece.

In the responses gaining high marks, the individual learner's 'voice' was clear. There was evidence of a rigorous investigation process and relevant research which learners were applying as they began their practical exploration. All work in the best milestone entries was relevant to the creative and development process, with learners providing focused and perceptive ideas for their performance work, all of which were consistently linked back to a sophisticated interpretation of the stimulus. These milestone entries were engaging and interesting to read and provided a genuine sense of the start of an exciting devising and creative process.

> *"I began to practically explore the stimulus by exploring the cliff. I decided to focus on the idea of someone near the edge of the cliff however trying their hardest to ensure they didn't fall. I thought about texture when exploring this and looked at the idea of the cliff being wet and slippery from the water crashing against it and it still being sharp and rough on the dry areas. I played with the idea of falling to begin with, which then generated into the idea of a person on a cliff in a state of hallucination but still presenting scared and frantic emotions. I used fluid transitions of movements to emphasize the texture of the cliff."*

Very pleasingly there were fewer instances this year of learners writing their Milestone 1

log entries before completing their research and practical exploration of the stimulus. This meant that more learners were able to respond to all the requirements of Assessment Objective 1 and could, when demonstrating an accomplished ability to interpret the stimulus material, access the top band of the marking grid.

Unfortunately, a few learners still appeared to have completed this milestone entry too early in the process. In these cases, learners only outlined their own personal response to the stimulus, sometimes with reference to research into the painting, although there tended to be no evidence of this research being relevant to the practical work they were developing. In these responses there a tendency to provide little or no evidence of the practical exploration of the stimulus; and/or reference to the practical exploration was very simplistic and along the lines of, *"We did an improvised task via hot seating"*. Therefore this did not provide learners with the opportunity to access the range of marks available for this milestone log entry and often resulted in a '*limited*' or only just '*competent*' interpretation of the stimulus.

Other learners outlined all of their research in this milestone entry, whether the research was relevant or useful to the developing performance work or not. This often meant that learners described the imagery evident in *The Persistence of Memory* and/or described Dali's life and working processes. This research was often very generic and only very tenuously relevant to the learner's work. This therefore limited the amount of marks that could be awarded for this milestone entry as the 'paper based' research into the painter and painting often took priority over research that was relevant and priority over '*engaged and sustained practical exploration*'.

> *"We spoke to an art teacher at our school who provided a helpful overview of the painting's context of production, history, significance and multiple interpretations. I have also conducted a questionnaire into what elements of performance people enjoyed the most. These are both types of primary research and for secondary research I have used the internet to find and read many articles about the piece and Dali – something I found particularly interesting and funny was that many art historians speculated that the piece was referencing Albert Einstein's theory of relativity due to the allusions of space and time made by the melting clock. In response to this, Dali – being the satirical man he was stated that the true inspiration was actually a circle of camembert chest melting in the heat of a summer's day."*

In some of these cases the log entries for Milestone 2 often then contained evidence of a more confident ability to interpret the stimulus, with the application of relevant research to the development of their practical ideas. Unfortunately this meant that this work could not be credited in Milestone 1.

In future series it would be worth guiding learners to only include research that has informed their creative ideas and is relevant to the process.

There were often a lot of generalised statements evident in learners' work, for example relation to the performance styles they were going to work in.

> *"The method of our piece is to be minimalistic as well as naturalistic with styles of epic theatre as we want to be able to make the performance serious and informative……….."*

Learners would also often reference the practitioners whose approaches and/or techniques they were going to use, with sometimes as many as eight different

practitioners being mentioned in this milestone entry.

> *"We intend to apply Brecht and his techniques to our work such as minimalistic set and stock characters with accurate postures to a given stereotype. As well as Stanislavski with his 'Emotion memory', given circumstances and subtext. These practitioners have inspired us to use a mixture of naturalism and total theatre as we believe it will link well to the painting."*

Learners who wrote in this way did not explain 'what' such a vast range of performance styles and/or practitioners' approaches/techniques was going to bring to their work or 'why' they were being used. This often tended to reveal the learner's lack of understanding of the performance styles and practitioners they referenced. There were also instances of generalised statements made in relation to dance styles and music elements being used, with minimal or no justification.

Other learners very successfully linked the Surrealist approach of Dali to the theatrical style of Artaud, and stronger responses were seen where learners were able to explain the link between Artaud and Dali and go on to describe how they had used some of Artaud's techniques in their practical exploration of the stimulus.

Some learners very successfully integrated a variety of practitioners' approaches and/or techniques into the exploration and development process.

> *"Another initial idea was using projections of ants to help represent the decay of memory. These Ants are shown within Dali's painting. As a way of generating initial material we improvised scenes. We looked into Gecko's ideas of using physical theatre coming up with a shadow gesture which resembled attempting to grasp and hold on to memory's with our hands."*

Another other common approach seen in less successful milestone entries was to list all the ideas the learners had discussed as a group. This approach was rarely helpful.

> *"The first idea was an old person looking back on their life either with happy or regretful memories. Our second idea was a couple looking back on their lives and how they remember their pasts. The third idea was being worried about not having enough time and the fear of dying; the fourth idea was someone being in a situation of shell shock, PTSD or death. The fifth idea was a character wanting to relive their life because they have realised that they haven't done much with life. Our sixth idea was a situation of memory loss and how people cope with it, themselves, family, friends and emotions towards this situation. The seventh idea was a character being in prison also looking back on life, being isolated, feeling trapped. And our final idea that I gave was the performance being based on a scrapbook of memories."*

The best Milestone 1 responses were when learners had practically explored the stimulus and had begun to work on the ideas they had researched. In many cases the research they had completed was embedded and in some areas implicit. In all cases these types of entries took examiners on the devising 'journey' the learner was undergoing.

> *"We used an existing performance monologue from William Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. We explored this text to find ways of directly exploring dementia and dreams. After researching prophetic dreams, that tell the future, we looked at Prospero's short extract from Act 4, Scene 1, which explored the idea of time. This allowed me to portray my creative idea of the mind and body being disconnected through Frantic Assemblies non-naturalistic technique, 'hymn hands'. The technique explores the relationships between individuals on stage through symbolic movement. We experimented with this technique in order to show the lack of*

communication through the lack of contact by having a gap in between the performer's hands to represent the attempts of people to make contact with the dementia patient although this is never successful because the disease puts up mental boundaries and makes the individual forget all past experiences and memories."

In all cases of higher achievement, practical exploration was focused and there was a sense that it was moving the learners forward in the devising and creative process.

In summary, examiners recommend that centres delay the writing of Milestone 1 until learners have completed a significant amount of *relevant* research, decided upon their initial creative ideas and have begun to practically explore and develop these ideas. This will ensure that learners have access to the full range of marks for this milestone log entry.

Milestone 2 and 3: Development and realisation of creative ideas (early and mid-stage review)

AO2: Develop and realise creative ideas for a group performance in response to a stimulus
AO3: Apply personal management and collaborative skills to a group performance workshop process

In their second and third milestone log entries, learners are assessed on their ability to describe the exploratory process they have used to generate and develop their practical material in response to the stimulus; including any specific devising and/or performance techniques with which they have experimented.

They must discuss their ideas for the form and content of the developing practical work in relation to the stimulus and their creative intentions for the performance.

Learners must also discuss how they have used their performance skills to develop and refine their ideas and their practical work.

Whilst discussing this process, learners must analyse the application of their personal management, group-work and collaborative skills and demonstrate their engagement and contribution to the process of developing their group performance workshop.

Examiners were again very pleased to report that on the whole, the development and realisation of creative ideas was discussed securely in Milestones 2 and 3. There was often a strong sense of a collaborative approach in place in the work. Learners across all disciplines were able to discuss the devising and/or choreographic process including the creation, rejection and refining of material.

In the strongest Milestone 2 and 3 log entries, learners justified the developing ideas for the form and content of their practical work in relation to the stimulus and the creative intentions of the group's performance. They also continually analysed how they and their group were applying their performance skills to develop and refine ideas for their practical performance work. In these log entries learners evidenced an '*effective'* and '*accomplished* ability' to select and devise the practical content of their performance work. Their ideas for the developing work ranged from '*cohesive'* to '*sophisticated'* and were often

fully justified in relation to the creative intentions of the piece.

These log entries tended to provide a coherent narrative of the exploratory process with the set task stimulus remaining at the heart of the developing work. The artistic intentions behind the choices being made were always clear.

> *"I generated movement material through improvisation to create potential motifs which correlate to the given stimulus. For example, I focused on the arms of one of the clocks present in The Persistence of Memory and used improvisation to create a motif, which reflected the straight structure of the clock hands. As well as this, I experimented with the idea of using dynamics such as melting to portray the melting body of the clock. This allowed me to create a contrast between the straight arms of the clock and the clocks' melting structure."*

These learners used technical terminology to describe a creative and inspiring development process. In these log entries; there was also evidence of a deeper understanding of professional practice in relation to creating work for performance. Appropriate practitioner references sometimes underpinned the techniques chosen, were clearly understood by the learner and usefully applied in the creation of the work. In these instances, learners usually outlined how the collaborative process was at the heart of the creative choices being made, rather than making separate statements on how they had worked as an individual/group.

> *"We used a rehearsal technique from Gecko in which we used a prop to experiment with different actions in order to conjure ideas and inspiration. We decided to use a large white sheet, which was also a prop in Gecko's The Wedding. This technique promoted our ensemble work and developed confident physicality both as a group and individually."*

In these types of milestone logs the recorded evidence often validated creative decisions and demonstrated confident and sophisticated performance skills.

> *"Through improvisation I devised movements in a duet. I used straight-arm swings and tilts with straight arms to reflect the movement of a clocks hand but also used fluid dynamics when moving my body to portray the melting state of the clock. I then improvised with the idea of using levels which would degrade slowly to reflect the idea of something melting away as time slowly passes."*

In some other cases there was less evidence of selectivity with learners only partially explaining the developing process and their creative ideas.

> *"In today's rehearsals we went through what we had done the previous lesson and what we needed to work on, change or add in to our performance piece. We had a full run through of each scene and if anything needed working on we corrected this. We agreed that we needed to polish and block each scene as well as sorting out the last scene, we want an emotional ending so it leaves the audience in shock and despair. Whilst doing this we realized a couple of the scenes weren't portraying the message we want to give the audience so we changed the ways of our characters, for example we wanted the main character to be more emotional and loving."*

In the less successful milestone log entries, there was over-reliance on limited and less sophisticated techniques (e.g. thought tracking and hot seating). In many cases, learners who were less successful often provided a simple and straightforward narrative of the

plot of the emerging piece and the log entries themselves tended to be narrative and descriptive in style with little sense of the exploratory process.

> *"The final decision we made was to have my character come on during the last chorus of the song, and be on the rostra watching the other characters together, then as I watch them walk off together I will transition into my song. Another character will also be on stage during the song but frozen and will unfreeze when….."*

In a few cases, it was a pity that there was excessive focus on the choice and selection of production elements, learners' music choices or the editing of the music, at the expense of covering the development and realisation of the devising process and the content of the piece, which is the focus of this external assessment.

Examiners reported that learners in some centres appeared to have been given paragraph starters to support their writing in their digital log entries. However in most cases, the result tended to be fairly generic and several learners appeared to have been limited from achieving higher marks because the structure they were following did not support them to develop their ideas and demonstrate '*insight*' and an '*accomplished ability*' to devise and create material.

Most learners, at the very least, generally demonstrated '*appropriate*' or '*consistent*' personal management skills in their logs and accompanying recorded evidence. However achievement at these levels was less robustly evidenced in those logs that focused on describing the development of the plot.

In the strongest log entries, learners' complete engagement with the devising process enabled them to fully convey an accomplished contribution to the developing work. Their personal management and collaborative skills were highly evident and richly conveyed as they discussed the development of their group work.

These learners often, although not always, included more personally selected recorded evidence and included an explanation for this in their log entries, providing clear justification for the award of higher marks in marking grids 2 and 3. In these cases the supporting material was not just evidence of a process but was judiciously used by the learner to help 'refine' the mid or final stages of the creative process.

Centres are advised that it is often more useful to show the creative process in recorded milestones 2 and 3 evidence rather than record a final moment which appears unchanged in the actual group workshop performance.

Some groups approached the devising process with each learner taking responsibility for a particular section, and then the group joining the sections together towards the end of the rehearsal process. This could for example be dancers who each choreographed a different section of the performance piece or actors who created individual monologues as their performance. These pieces tended to be disjointed and much less successful in performance. This approach also undermined the collaborative process and meant that the learner's account of the devising process for their milestone 2 and 3 entries was less effective.

Some learners had carried out a trial run of the performance work but then often spent too much time, in milestone 3 in particular, reporting on the feedback they had received. This did not contribute usefully as evidence for these milestones, particularly if learners were just recounting the peer feedback they had been given.

Several learners outlined their contribution in terms of rehearsal attendance and providing the costumes etc; however, this tended not to demonstrate as valuable a contribution to the process as those who detailed specific practical exercises they had participated in. In other words, AO3 was achieved more successfully by learners evidencing their personal management and contribution in their account of the devising process and generation of practical material, as opposed to listing or identifying their personal contribution/management separately.

Examiners reported that a few learners devoted some of these milestone entries to the disagreements and arguments they had experienced as part of the creative process, and this always limited the learner's achievement in assessment objectives 2 and 3.

Examiners did also note that less successful achievement was sometimes apparent in accompanying recordings of group discussions/practical work, where individuals were seen to be making a less effective contribution to the work.

In the most successful milestone entries, learners' sustained and accomplished contribution was evidenced through their personal input to the development of ideas, which often involved extensive planning, focused practical activity and an analytical approach to refining material during the creation and devising process.

> *"We experimented with lightning walks inspired by Frantic Assembly to show how life was still moving quickly around the main character who was placed on a central chair. This was effective he was still and high up, drawing the audience's attention. We decided to put a verbatim monologue here to contrast with the non-naturalistic movement so the character's story was believable. We experimented with a flip lift, but this did not look fluid enough so we did an elevation instead to show one character supporting another and ended up with them both looking at each other eye to eye. From this exercise we also devised a memory between the two actors/characters using guitars enhancing musical connection. We used hymns hands but decided to mirror the opening by not having anyone be able to touch him, showing lack of connection. This scene was effective as it showed an intimate moment invaded by others and demonstrating fading memory experienced with dementia. Experimenting with space led us to increase distance between the three characters, so they altered the memory from afar."*

In a significant number of milestone entries the opportunity to comment on the refining and 'polishing' of the material during the later stages was missed. There was also often little reference to the use of performance skills to develop and refine ideas. Centres are therefore advised to encourage learners to ensure they include reference to these areas in future series.

Milestone 4: Review and reflection

AO5: Review and reflect on the effectiveness of the working process and the workshop performance

In the final log entry, Milestone 4, the marking grid assesses the learner's ability to review and reflect upon the effectiveness of the development process and the final group workshop performance.

Learners must analyse the development process and the final workshop performance, evaluating the impact of their own and their group's personal management and collaborative skills plus the impact of their own and the group's creative and performance skills.

In addition, learners must provide their creative ideas for further development of the performance material.

This year most learners evaluated both the development process and the final performance in relation to the group and themselves.

> *"Technique was improved by using the full extent of my personal management skills. This was achieved by going over each step making sure the movement was correct and recording myself using it to look back on how I could improve and correct any mistakes. If I made a mistake I was able to keep calm and wait for the next count to re-join, this was a big improvement as I used to communicate mistakes through my facial expression which would then affected my technique and movement memory."*

Some learners used audience feedback very well to inform their own evaluation, sometimes making passing reference to the audience's opinions but always providing their own viewpoints.

> *"I personally thought I had good extension through my whole body; energy was incorporated throughout the routine particularly within the climax section. The audience feedback suggested that the climax was the most successful part of the piece as the whole group had the same energy level as each other and the movement was more chaotic. From this the audience gained the message that dreams are not always nice and can seem like a battle or a struggle, with each individual dreaming state. This feedback highlighted that our choreographic intentions were understood by the audience."*

Other responses that gained less marks, solely outlined the audience's feedback to their performance work and provided very few of there own judgments on the process and/or the final workshop performance. In these cases the learners' own judgments often tended to be limited.

> *"At the end of the performance we asked our audience some specific questions. One of the questions that we asked was 'What were your initial thoughts on the whole piece about the choreography and the performance?' The audience answered with ideas about the initial theme being about time and how they noticed throughout the whole performance we were trying to get across to the audience through our movement different ways time can take people through their lives and how it can turn out. Another member of the audience also stated that they thought we were really clever with our movement ideas…"*

In responses that gained less marks, ideas for improvement lacked detail and depth and

learners were unable to suggest creative and cohesive ideas for further development beyond the addition of simple suggestions for lighting, the development of other production elements or the need for further rehearsal. This was limited further in some responses to suggestions for making the performance longer.

> *"If we had to develop our performance to be performed as a professional production I would improve our dance sequence since it is the weakest scene in the play. I would improve our moves so they stand out. I would also add more context into the second scene with the two main characters so the audience feels emotion for these characters."*

In other cases many learners provided sophisticated and creative ideas for further development of the performance material.

> *"The devising approach we took meant that characterisation and dialogue were not focused on initially, and were established in later stages of rehearsal. Perhaps if we were to develop this piece we could have focused more on medical conversations and then used improvisation and scripting techniques to develop our dialogue in order that it was more sophisticated and factual information was integrated into our work. We could have gone on to devise or alter movement according to the characters so that we could embody them, concentrating more specifically on individual postures and gestures as well as doing more work with voice and the rhythms of each characters speech in order that they became more believable and we conveyed a greater insight into the characters' lives."*

Some learners used this milestone entry as a final 'log' of the last phases of rehearsal and performance. Unfortunately, it was often difficult to match this approach to the requirements of the assessment criteria, the requirements of which are outlined above at the beginning of this section, for this milestone entry.

In the best responses learners made perceptive and justified judgments on the process and the final performance piece in addition to providing sophisticated creative ideas for further development of the performance material. In these cases their evaluation was thorough and insightful.

Optional Evidence

Many learners demonstrated the good practice of including extra evidence to support their milestone log entries.

In some cases, this evidence amounted to blurred photographs of the learner's mind-maps, which could often not be easily read and were rarely referred to in the learner's milestone entries, and so were of little use to the assessment. In other cases the maximum number of images was used for each milestone entry. These images may have been relevant to the stimulus; however, often they did not appear relevant to the learner's creative process or there was a lack of evidence of how the images had been used in the development process. In these cases, the use of optional evidence, whilst not detracting from the milestone entries, did not support them either.

In the most useful cases, learners utilised very successfully the opportunity to provide additional, often practical, evidence of some of the exploratory techniques they were experimenting with during the devising process. In the most effective milestone log entries learners tended to also comment on and discuss the images or recorded evidence in their written work. When used effectively to record moments of the devising and development process, this optional evidence would support the assessment process and examiners could credit learners with marks for assessment objectives 2 and 3.

Some centres did not follow the specified guidance regarding permitted optional evidence in the set task. In some instances, recorded evidence was lengthy and beyond the 4 minutes stipulated for Milestone 2 and 3. This often failed to support the learner's achievement and as mentioned above, recordings sometimes actually captured the learner's lack of response and/or engagement with the developing work.

In the case of one centre, the optional evidence included Ted Talks, PowerPoint presentations used by the teacher, images and research downloaded from the Internet. It was also unclear which learner the research belonged to. In such cases, the evidence cannot be applied properly to the work of the learners and examiners are instructed not to base their assessment on this evidence.

It is worth noting that centres rarely identified learners in the recordings linked to Milestone 2 and 3 and should remember that examiners will be watching this work before they see the final workshop performance. Therefore identification of learners in milestone-recorded evidence would be useful in future. It may be appropriate to send a printed screen shot of an early moment in the recorded optional evidence in which learners are clearly identified.

Group Performance Workshop
AO4: Apply performance skills to communicate creative intentions during performance workshop

In their group performance workshop learners must apply their performance skills in order to communicate their creative ideas, dramatic intentions, meaning and performance style to an audience. They must also apply their performance skills and techniques in order to demonstrate their technical command of these skills. Whilst doing this, learners should interact and respond to other performers as they contribute to the whole ensemble performance.

Examiners this year were again impressed by the variety and range of the work they watched. Strong work was seen in all performance disciplines and in combinations of performance disciplines. There were some <u>very</u> impressive performances in all performance disciplines and in a range of styles within each discipline. Examiners were impressed with the innovation and creativity in many performances and saw some absolutely stunning pieces of devised work, many of which were exceptional at this level.

In the best work it was clear that learners had fully explored the devising process, had experimented with creativity, and by so doing had rejected material and closely refined their work. They created work with a depth of detail and understanding. These performances had a cohesive style and were clearly a response to the initial stimulus *The Persistence of Memory*.

It was apparent in a few performances that learners had not had engaged fully with the devising process, and personal contributions appeared to be limited and/or inconsistent. The use of simplistic devices and techniques often reduced achievement. Overall, this was reflected in the lack of substantial content and in unrefined and superficial performance work. As mentioned earlier the linked monologue approach and/or the series of individual or pair/small group dances linked together tended to limit the learner's ability to produce a highly creative piece of performance work. It also limited their ability to demonstrate how they had '*contributed seamlessly*' to the ensemble performance.

In one case a group had included so much pre-filmed and edited news footage that there wasn't much actual live performance on which to assess the learners themselves.

In contrast, some of the most successful work was devised in response to a clear creative intention. This provided learners with an opportunity to devise very creatively, with a clear performance style and in a highly original manner. This approach enabled highly able performers to really achieve and also supported those who were perhaps less confident performers throughout the devising process.

No one performance style or performance discipline was more interesting or successful than another The effectiveness of the final group workshop performance depended upon how closely the performance discipline, performance style or range of styles were matched to the content of the piece and to the learners' technical performance skills.

There were some outstanding performances, in which learners demonstrated

sophisticated performance skills which communicated highly original and creative performance intentions. These were always engaging and in some instances very moving. The most effective performance work was very creatively 'scripted', 'choreographed' and/or 'scored'. Another feature was that it was usually meticulously researched and the research was integrated seamlessly into the final performance.

Less effective performance work tended to have clumsy transitions from one moment to another and revealed a lack of rehearsal and/or engagement with the devising process.

Centres are reminded of the time limits for performances. The group performance should last between 10 and 20 minutes. If the performance was shorter than 10 minutes or longer than 20 minutes it was often self-penalising.

One centre, for example, had created an interesting piece set in the round. Unfortunately the piece only lasted three and a half minutes and more than a minute of this was the audience entering. This disadvantaged the learners, as there wasn't enough time to securely evidence communication of ideas and creative intention or to fully evidence the learner's performance skills and techniques.

Usually if a performance went over the 20 minute upper limit then the piece began to drop in pace or repeat ideas weakening the overall effectiveness of the work. Shorter pieces were again often a result of the learners' lack of engagement during the devising process and were often a result of a lack of material to create a piece of the appropriate length. These learners often referred in their milestone log to the necessity of creating additional material in order to 'plug the gap' and meet the minimum performance time.

Centres are reminded that it is not a requirement that each group member should have the same exposure in terms of 'on stage' performance time, and occasionally this practice of providing 'equal exposure' lead to a predictable structure with a sequence of solo performances that rarely conveyed a highly successful ensemble performance.

The maximum group size is 7 and all performers in the piece must be being assessed in this unit. It is understandable that occasionally a learner in the performance does not complete the course and therefore has not been entered for the exam. However, centres are reminded that it is not permitted for additional performers, who are not being assessed, to appear in this group workshop performance or to be part of the devising process.

If there are only one or two learners on the programme then prior permission needs to be obtained from Pearson in order to make the group size up to three.

A few centres still recorded the audience feedback session and centres are reminded that this is not a requirement of this unit. If these recordings are included they are not viewed by the examiner and/or used as part of the assessment process.

Examiners have reported the best and most memorable work 'staying with them'; and some notable examples of these were several highly sophisticated accounts of dementia or Alzheimer's; some from the family's viewpoint and some from the viewpoint of the person living with the illness. Other impressive performance pieces included a Verbatim

Theatre inspired piece on the Grenfell Tower tragedy and an abstract dance piece on the nature and progression of time.

Administration

Most centres this year presented the work as outlined in the Administrative Support Guide for this unit. However, there were administrative issues with some work from a small number of centres.

Centres must adhere fully to the demands of both the task for the specific year of entry and the requirements as detailed in the instructions within the Set Task Brief and as outlined in the Administrative Support Guide.

Centres are reminded that work must be submitted by the deadline date and in the correct format in terms of recordings and PDF files. A folder should be created for each respective performance group, and then sub-folders created for each learner within the relevant group folder/s. Each learner's work must be presented in its own sub-folder, along with others in the cohort, on a new, undamaged, DVD or USB in a format that will play on any commonly used laptop. Where encryption software has been used, a password must be provided.

It is worth noting that when DVDs were sent to examiners without any protection, this caused delays, as replacements were often needed because the DVD had arrived broken or damaged in the post. DVDs could also become damaged sometimes, even when sent in a case or protective covering and whilst it is permissible to submit work on either a DVD or USB flash drive/memory stick, in most cases USB's tended to be the safer and more reliable option.

Centres are reminded that each individual learner's work, including milestone log entries and any accompanying images, video and/or audio material plus the recording of the group workshop performance are assessed as a whole, so must be submitted together in a single folder for each learner and in an overall folder for all learners in each performance group within a centre.

Examiners are trained to mark the digital milestone log entries for all learners in each performance group before assessing learners in the relevant performance piece, hence the instruction for all learners work in each performance group to be grouped together and easily identified by the examiner.

Centres are also reminded that they must complete the essential documents relating to each learner and the centre itself. The examiner requires these for marking and centre/learner identification. It is essential that this paperwork is printed out and provided as a hard copy, which the examiner can write on, and not just sent digitally.

The milestone entries should be completed on the milestone templates available on the Pearson website. Once these have been completed they should be converted and saved as a PDF document. Some centres saved each milestone entry separately and others

saved all entries as one document, either approach is acceptable as long as the final version is on the official template and saved as a PDF.

Recordings were generally of a good quality making it easy to see individual learners throughout the performance and assess the specific detail of their performance.

In several cases however, the camera was too far away, sometimes behind the audience, making it difficult to see some of the details in the work learners were doing. In these cases learners sometimes could not be credited for some of the potential detail and technical skill within their performance work. It is worth remembering that this is an externally assessed task and that, for the sake of learners' assessment, the camera should have the best view of the performance work. Depending upon the performance space it may be more beneficial to the assessment process to film the group workshop performance in front of a small audience and then for the group to perform a second time, if the centre would so prefer, in front of a bigger audience.

In some cases, stage lighting sometimes impacted on the clarity of the recording and centres are again reminded that this is a 'workshop' performance not a final polished performance of the learners' work. The performance workshop should be filmed using natural lighting or a general lighting wash/cover. If groups choose to use more 'colourful' lighting then the centre should ensure that this does not have an impact on the clarity of the recording and that all learners can be seen clearly throughout the recording of the performance.

Centres should also ensure that the lights do not bleach out performers' faces and that the whole stage is in camera shot throughout the performance.

In other cases there was a problem with audibility because of the position of the camera and/or the quality of the recording.

In some workshop performances where learners used placards or signs, it was often difficult or, at times, impossible to see what was written on these. It was also often very difficult to see projections on the recording, particularly if the group were using projections simultaneously with stage lighting.

Centres are strongly advised to 'dummy run' film one of the final rehearsals with, if they are being used, the lighting, sound and costume that will be used in the final assessed performance, and with the camera in the same position as it will be for the assessed performance.

A few centres, but not all, who were performing in the round or in promenade sent in several different recordings of the same performance. This was not helpful to the assessment process, as examiners will only watch one recording. Obviously creativity in staging choices is to be applauded, however it is worth reminding learners that in this one unit their prime audience is their examiner who will access and assess their performance through a single recording of this work.

A group in one centre had created a particularly interesting piece of physical theatre with integrated music, which was performed in the round. This was a good example of

collaborative work but unfortunately the camera was too close to the action and therefore had to be kept moving left and right to capture each learner. In addition, the camera mounting squeaked loudly, which made it difficult for the examiner to hear the voices of the learners.

Examiners reported that it was easier to identify learners in most group workshop pieces this year. However there were still several instances when learners did not introduce themselves on the recordings and it was extremely difficult and time consuming for the examiner to work out who was who.

This was often the case if the identifications were filmed at a separate time with the learners in 'normal' clothes and then the learners appeared in the group performance in costume looking different, or alternatively where all learners in the group performance were dressed identically without any distinguishing features. The Administrative Support Guide clearly states that learners must introduce themselves, in costume, at the beginning of the recorded performance for their group. Centres are very strongly reminded that in order to support assessment of their learners (who the examiner has never seen before) this guidance must be followed and learners should be identified at the beginning of the group performance itself. In one case when it was extremely difficult to identify the learners there were school photographs of them in Year 7 (at the time of the assessment they would have been in Year 12 or 13) and the teacher identified them at the beginning of the recording by the colour of the nail polish they were wearing. Needless to say the camera was at a distance behind the audience and the colour of nail polish couldn't be seen in the performance!

In addition, if learners have made an artistic decision to perform in similar clothes and hairstyles, then examiners would appreciate the inclusion of a clear and visible distinguishing feature. One group of girls for example, all dressed in black with their hair up in buns very helpfully each used a blue ribbon placed in different places to distinguish themselves. This was very helpful and much appreciated by the examiner.

With some centres, as well as the learners identifying themselves on the recording, the examiner was sent a screenshot of their learners in the piece, which was also helpful for identification.

A few centres sent a contact detail and email address in case there were any problems with the work or media and this made it very easy for examiners to make contact and obtain a missing milestone log entry and/or request a replacement for a broken DVD. This was also particularly useful if the material had been encrypted.

Overall, centres must remember that whilst the performance should be to an audience, this is a 'workshop' performance and not a polished final performance. It is most important that learners can be clearly identified and that all of their hard work can be clearly seen within a recording in order to be assessed by the external examiner.

Summary

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

- Centres should prepare learners to devise original work and support them to engage fully with the creative and development process.

- Ensure learners do not complete their Milestone 1 log entry too early on in the process.

- Before writing their Milestone 1 log entries, learners should have undertaken a significant amount of relevant and useful research, decided upon their initial creative ideas and begun to practically explore and develop these creative ideas in response to the set stimulus.

- Milestone 2 and 3 should be used to evidence the exploratory process used to generate, develop and refine practical ideas including making reference to specific devising and/or performance techniques that learners have experimented with.

- There should be evidence of the learner's personal input to the development of ideas in Milestones 2 and 3. Learners should analyse the application of their personal management, group-work and collaborative skills and demonstrate their engagement and contribution to the process of developing their group performance workshop.

- Learners should comment on the refining and 'polishing' of the material they are devising in Milestones 2 and 3. There should be reference to the use of performance skills to develop and refine ideas.

- In their Milestone 4 log entry learners should ensure they cover all the required areas for Assessment Objective 5. They should evaluate the process, evaluate the final workshop performance and provide sophisticated and creative ideas for further development of the performance material.

- Any additional optional evidence for the digital process log should be used to provide evidence of some of the exploratory techniques learners have experimented with during the devising process. Learners should also aim to refer to this evidence in their log entry as they comment upon and analyse there developing practical work.

- Ensure learners can be clearly identified in their group performance workshop.

- Ensure the detail of learners' performance work can be clearly seen in the recording and that the performance work is not obscured by audience members, lighting issues, the staging configuration and/or the angle of the camera.

- The centre must ensure the task being responded to is for the correct series and learners are not responding to one of the Sample Assessment Materials or to a previous year's paper.

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