

GCSE

Examiners' Report

**GCSE
Drama (1699)**

JUNE 2003

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Paper 1 Exploration

Background

Initially, this paper was seen by many as a combination of the previous syllabus's (1698) coursework components - Paper 1 and Paper 2 - with the portfolio becoming more integrated into the practical drama. In practice the drama and portfolios had to be more inter-linked so that the latter not only reflected the drama but also contributed to it.

The specification's recognition of teacher's expertise, providing a programme of study through which to develop their good practice even further, may have been one of the reasons for the increase in the number of entries this year. Some centres, that had been used to syllabuses offered by other awarding bodies, found the transition difficult at first. The challenge for centres used to preparing performances with their candidates was having to adapt their practice to focus upon the exploration of ideas, issues and play scripts. Moderators felt that by and large this has been a successfully taught and examined paper although a number of centres did see Paper 1 as a rehearsal for Paper 2.

The most challenging of all aspects was the application of the criteria when marking practical and portfolio work. Philosophically the concept of holistic assessment was acceptable, but adapting theory into practice was more difficult. However, most centres were successful in achieving the balance in their marking - as was evident from the teacher-examiner comment sheets and the samples received for moderation.

Centre Area Standardisation Meetings

The Area Meetings gave centres their first practical insight into planning and assessing Paper 1. Teachers were very anxious to do the best for their candidates and most not only read everything they could but went to considerable efforts to restructure existing courses and rewrite schemes of work. A number of teachers were not able to attend the meetings - although all centres did receive the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document, information was available on the website and Customer Services endeavoured to answer all queries that were received. Teachers recruited during the year sometimes found themselves taking on one or both of the units without having been to an Area Meeting and it is to their credit that so many managed to complete the paper successfully. The chief benefit of the Area Meetings was that teachers were able to network, see examples of Year 10 records of work, video evidence and portfolios, which was reassuring and clarified a number of issues.

Paper 1

At first the division of Paper 1 into Units, Assessments and Tasks was difficult to grasp.

Centres that were used to the previous Edexcel syllabus found the vocabulary less difficult but, nonetheless, found the holistic approach and marking problematic. However, the nature of drama as an explorative medium was familiar to them.

Centres where there had been a change of staff between Y10 and Y11 often submitted one or more Units using the old pro formas from the original specification. This was acceptable in the first year but in future centres must use the pro-formas from the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) booklet. However, despite all the concerns it seems that most centres managed to meet all the requirements for the paper, apply the criteria correctly and mark accurately.

The specification requires that Paper 1 is not taught and examined until the summer term of Year 10 at the earliest, but many centres discovered that their candidates had matured by the beginning of Year 11 and felt that this would be a better time to set the Paper. Others preferred to complete Paper 1 at the end of Year 10 and devote Year 11 to Paper 2. While many centres taught and assessed the units in 6 hours of lesson time, others spread it out interspersing the assessed sessions with time to write up the portfolio, and some organised half or whole day sessions for the assessments leaving the portfolio until last.

Records of Work

The most satisfactory Records of Work consisted of pre-planned schemes that had been annotated by the teacher to show exactly what had taken place during the 6-hour assessment. This was particularly useful where several teachers in a centre had used the same scheme but had made slight alterations in practice. Other centres submitted hand written records. Centres using the pro-forma from the 2000 specification were more precise, but there was much less detail about the two 6 hours assessments.

Unit 1

The most exciting work seemed to be that which had been planned or adapted to suit the candidates. Centres advantaged their candidates by involving their cultures, languages and strengths within their structures - particularly if these led to new skills or genres. Many centres adapted work from the old syllabus' (1698) Paper 1, while others devised entirely new schemes to fit the requirements. Some of these were adapted from schemes in the Guide or other publications. Popular topics were Leaving Home, War, Peace and Conflict, while others used themes to explore genres such as Kabuki or physical theatre. A few centres saw this unit as a 6-hour preparation for an improvised performance that made it difficult for the candidates to meet the appropriate Assessment Objectives.

Unit 2

Centres who chose the play text to develop the candidates' interests as well as provide challenges were the most successful. There was much challenging work using texts and ideas that might have been considered for A level in the past: Brecht, Beckett, Wymark, Aristophanes, Churchill and Wertebaker for example. Generally centres fell into two camps: those whose schemes explored the text itself and experimented with methods of staging; and those who 'acted out' key scenes. The most commonly missed task was the evaluation for U2 - often the candidates submitted another evaluation of their own practical work instead of reviewing a live performance. Moderators felt that candidates who had not seen good quality live theatre had been disadvantaged and

were less able to make connections between their own experience of drama and that of practitioners. A few centres saw the 6 hours as a rehearsal for Paper 2, which disadvantaged their candidates.

Video and Video Time Sheet

Most centres seemed to have recorded several sessions and sent in one for each unit. Some videos had been edited to show series of presentations by the different candidates, others did not record task-setting or evaluation and some used camera operators who followed the teacher around the teaching space which was often very intrusive. However, most recorded full sessions and although candidates were sometimes inaudible their ability to work collaboratively - responding to stimuli, developing ideas and evaluating - was visible as they created and presented their ideas in drama form. Clear links between the video, the time sheet, the record of work and portfolio evidence led to the confident understanding of centres' standards.

Centre Details

The forms used to record centre details (D1c) did cause some problems and will be amended for next year. However, they did help demonstrate centres' range of marks and the spread across the bands as well as giving details of the number of staff, teaching groups and how the marking had been standardised.

Teacher Examiner Comments

Teacher-examiner comments do not have to be as fulsome as in the past for the old syllabus' Paper 1 but they do need to make links between practical drama and the evidence in the portfolio in justification of the marks. Most teachers understood this and were able to comment appropriately, but some only referred to written work. As it was, the moderators were reliant upon centres to underwrite their marking on the Teacher/ Examiner Comment Sheets and to comment upon the absence of the portfolio or individual tasks where necessary. Where candidates' portfolio work was of a different standard from their practical drama it was particularly important for teachers to give details.

Portfolios

In the event centres either integrated the practical work with portfolio tasks or set 'add-on' tasks - eg details about the issue or theatre form (costumes for Gut Girls, or research into Stanislavski). Candidates where the portfolios were completed to a formula that dwelt upon issues and ideas arising from the work rather than the drama itself, did not meet the tasks and were difficult to moderate as there was little evidence of the candidates' engagement. Similarly, information from the Internet was not appropriate. The most effective were where candidates had recorded their drama immediately after the session, perhaps adding more details at a later date, so that there was a sense of excitement and depth in their writing. Some centres used writing frames or questionnaires - these were often effective but could also restrict candidates from writing down their personal reflections. There were a wide variety of approaches: some centres presented all the work on A3, others on A4 and still more used a combination. Many candidates spent far too much time making their portfolios look attractive instead

of reflecting upon the drama experience, but most were able to show their depth of understanding about drama and the issues/texts they explored. The word limit was often ignored, with most centres being more strict about the number of sheets of paper used. Centres often went to great lengths to support candidates who found the portfolio daunting and produced some very interesting work. Similarly, those who enjoyed these tasks produced extraordinarily beautiful and detailed records of the sessions and the drama they had created. Candidates who had submitted few or none of the portfolio tasks presented difficulties because there was insufficient evidence of their participation.

There was much overlap of the use of language in writing about Response, Development and Evaluation, which was to be expected. The three tasks for each unit were quite separate in most cases but what was most evident was the use of subject specific terminology across the ability range.

Marking

It was felt that where the teacher had judged the appropriate level of challenges for the candidates' abilities, then the marking was more accurate, but where ready-made schemes had been used wholesale the work could be undemanding or inappropriate. The most significant factor was the quality of evidence: where the video, records of work, portfolios and accompanying documentation linked together coherently the moderators felt confident about the work of the centre and the standard of marking. A few centres misunderstood and marked Paper One on portfolio evidence only causing delays while their OPTEMs were resubmitted.

Most problems were the unavoidable: teachers left and were not replaced, there were deaths and illnesses, and centres struggled to gather the evidence in order to do the best for their candidates. Overall it was felt that centres had made considerable efforts to ensure that their candidates were able to complete all aspects of the course and meet the Assessment Objectives for this paper to their best of their abilities.

Deadlines

Although centres had been informed that Paper 1 materials could be sent as soon as they had been contacted by their moderator (February/March), most actually arrived during the week before the deadline in early May. A significant number of centres submitted Paper 1 materials after the deadline, which may have led to candidate marks being incomplete or unavailable in August, and could have jeopardised the issue of results.

Conclusion

This has been a remarkably successful first examination series chiefly due to the good practice and professionalism of the drama teachers concerned. Despite the inevitable difficulties that can arise with the introduction of a new specification, and the shortage of drama teachers most centres completed and examined the paper successfully. The quality of work has been both exciting and challenging showing a real progression since GCSE Drama was introduced.

The U9 individual report to centre forms will have given centres guidance about their own successes and what they may need to change for next year. Centres will also receive notes for guidance, as well as the ICE document, which contains all the proformas for next year's examination.

Everyone involved - teachers, candidates, moderators and the assessment team - should be congratulated on their hard work as pioneers in the first year of the new specification.

Paper 2 Performance

There were two major changes that impacted on this paper in 2003. Firstly the large number of new centres, a considerable number of which had not prepared candidates for an externally examined performance paper worth 40% of the total marks. Secondly it was clear to examiners, and the majority of teachers, that the assessment criteria, as originally published in the specification would not enable accurate marking of candidates in the live performance situation. Revised criteria, awarding all marks on performance only, and having common criteria (with the exception of creating roles for devised performance and interpreting roles for scripted performance) were submitted to and approved by QCA and distributed to all centres. It was felt that examiners, teachers and candidates could understand and apply the revised criteria to ensure clarity and rigour in marking this paper. This is now supported by the requirement that all centres must video all performances and presentations.

Area Standardisation for Centres

A video was prepared showing examples of devised and scripted work plus the presentation and supporting documentation of a costume candidate. This was available for use at the meetings to give centres a sense of the work produced for Paper 2 and an indication of the bands the work would represent. Feedback indicated that new centres found this helpful and supportive.

Performance of Candidates

Of the three options Devised Performance was, as with the previous syllabus, the most popular option. However there was a marked increase in the number of candidates doing Scripted Performance. It was felt there were two reasons for this. The new Paper One Unit Two Playtext requirement and the centres new to Edexcel who had worked with scripts in previous GCSE specifications. There was an increase in the number of candidates offering Performance Support but this remains a minority option.

It was clear that the most successful work resulted from thorough teaching of the Programme of Study that enabled candidates to select and use with understanding and confidence, in particular, the elements of drama and the drama medium. There was also evidence of the use of some of the explorative strategies being used in a performance context most effectively.

All candidates had explored a playtext in Paper One and this enhanced not only scripted work but also the theatrical effectiveness of devised work. The use of a range of stimulus material in the Programme of Study meant that candidates often stated the material that had been the starting point for their work for Paper Two.

It was clear that where candidates had had the opportunity to see exciting and challenging theatre as a member of the audience, and incorporate some of the ideas into their own work, this increased achievement in this paper.

There was concern that some centres had not understood the importance of the examination and some candidates were inadequately prepared. There was an increase in candidates being withdrawn at the last minute or simply not turning up on the day and in a group based examination this clearly had an impact on the remaining candidates.

Where centres do not have Performance Support candidates simple staging that did not divert the candidate's focus from their performances enabled them to give of their best. In all three options work was examined that covered the full mark range from zero to forty, and there were numerous examples of work of a higher standard than that required at GCSE.

Devised Performance

This remains the most popular option. Work that was devised to match the five assessment criteria was the strongest. Work that did not consider style and form or content and purpose could not score highly. Work that showed real understanding of creating theatre and was well researched in terms of content e.g. issues such as anorexia, countries at war or historical subjects often produced the best work. There were interesting examples of work that combined some written text work e.g. plays, poetry or prose with improvised sections. There were a wide variety of theatre techniques used in the strongest work.

Work that had a naturalistic narrative focus was in general less successful. Some work was heavily reliant on television or film formats e.g. Big Brother, The Office or Silence of the Lambs. This tended to produce shallow work that mimicked the original and gave limited scope for candidate's own creativity.

Many examiners report seeing work that was far too short for candidates to show what they could achieve. Eight minutes for six candidates means the examiner scarcely has time to identify them. At the other end of the scale fifty-four minutes for four candidates is also self-penalising. There was also concern that some centres were not using performance time well with far too many blackouts, set and costume changes, numerous very short scenes or candidates attempting too many different roles. Again, some centres failed to understand the importance of examiners being only able to mark work they could easily see and hear. The all black drama outfit is still very much in evidence and can disadvantage candidates in an externally examined paper.

Work for this option produced comments from 'a privilege to be there' to 'embarrassing in the extreme'. It was felt that there was an increase in candidates achieving marks at the very top of the mark range and also a considerable increase in work in the bottom band. In several centres there were candidates who achieved a mark of zero.

Scripted Performance

Many of the comments for devised work apply equally to this option particularly regarding preparation and times of performances. Candidates who were insecure in their lines or at worst attempting to read the scripts had a negative impact on others in the group. The centre choice of script for the candidates is crucial for success in this option. An extract out of any context often seemed a pointless exercise for the candidates and in terms of the exam. There were examples where a full-length play

was broken up into chunks for groups and this was felt not to advantage candidates. Equally when several or all groups in a centre performed the same extract this was unsatisfactory for candidates, audience and a challenge for the examiner.

Popular contemporary authors were John Godber, Alan Ackbourn, David Campton and Mark Wheeller. However candidates also performed work from ancient Greek Theatre, Shakespeare and his contemporaries, Victorian melodrama and a wide range of twentieth century authors. TIE texts worked very well in many centres.

For candidates to achieve in the is paper, the focus had to be their interpretation of the role(s) that they performed and not the set, costumes, lighting, sounds or “special effects”.

Performance Support

This year the work for this unit was in general polarized between the outstanding to the very poor. It was felt that too many teachers when faced with candidates who could not or would not perform in the other options entered them for this option. There were examples where it was clear to the examiner that the candidate had done nothing or very little and was hoping to gain credit for work done by the rest of the group. Some centres had misunderstood the requirement that each Performance Support candidate must take the responsibility for the chosen option for one single performance. At one end of the spectrum some candidates thought they could be examined on lighting for all the performances in the centre, at the other, four performers had seven Performance Support candidates all contributing one costume or make up. Some centres did not understand that the work had to be shown within the context of the examination performances and produced work for other performances for example the school production. This work will be **disallowed** from 2004 onwards.

The strongest work resulted from thorough teaching of the theatre craft and the candidate being fully integrated as part of the ensemble. It is a requirement that candidates make a short presentation to the examiner. Many had been ill prepared for this and some found it an ordeal. Some expected to have a dialogue with the examiner and/or teacher. Some were so committed to their presentations that they were almost as long as the performances.

Centres must ensure they can adequately resource this option to GCSE standard. Lighting and costume were the most popular options. There was some impressive sound and stage design work.

Video Evidence

Due to the ephemeral nature of the performance examinations the video evidence of the performances is vital. It is in effect the candidates’ “scripts” for this Unit. Centres must ensure that a clear video record is made of all performances and that the video is the best possible recording.

Candidates must identify themselves clearly on the video by name, candidate number and role(s) played before each performance, and also indicate any costume changes. Candidates should be filmed fully as they appear – not just head and shoulders. This is

best done immediately before the performance, in the performance space. However, candidates could be filmed earlier, and then edited on to the video before the relevant performance - but candidates must appear as they do in performance. Candidates must still identify themselves to the visiting examiner in attendance before the performance.

Performance Support candidates must be prepared to make their presentations to camera. These can be done in the performance space before the performance or in another room. Both work well and the centre should choose the best option for candidates, performers and audience.

The centre must check the video recording before sending to the examiner. Examiners have received incomplete recordings, silent recordings or those of such poor quality that it was impossible to identify candidates. It is essential when transferring to a standard VHS tape that a new tape is used. In the case of an Enquiry after Results (EAR) for any candidate this has to be done on the video evidence and examiners notes so the quality of the video is vital. Centres are required to keep a copy of all performances.

Administration

The written documentation required for performance examinations is to ensure that examiners can arrive at the centre well prepared for the wide range of work presented in a content free of the specification.

It is understood that some work may have some changes in the last days prior to the examination however documentation must be with examiners 10 days prior to the examination date. Examiners can be given any changes nearer the performance date.

For candidates doing Scripted Performance it is vital that the examiner has a clear copy of the script as performed with all candidates' roles clearly identified. This is of paramount importance if a role is being played by two or more candidates, for example Verity in Find Me. Also, if lines are reallocated to other characters, or chorus work is divided up, this must be clear to the examiner.

Candidates doing Devised Performance must be encouraged to give as much information as possible about their performance. There were excellent examples of very well word processed complete scripts, detailed programmes and scene by scene breakdowns including characters in each scene. This enables candidates to understand the importance of the practical examination as a well-prepared and rehearsed performance.

The greatest concern of examiners was the failure of centres to read carefully the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) booklet or seemingly disregard the requirements of this paper. There was concern that some centres had not given enough consideration to the importance of the preparation for and organisation of the examination day(s).

It is a requirement of the paper that the work is performed to an audience. This is in the majority of cases other GCSE drama candidates and this is often the most suitable audience, as they understand that all performances are most importantly examinations. Where centres had not considered the importance of a supportive audience this could

impact on candidate's achievement. Some audiences were too large, disruptive or inappropriate. It was felt the examiner and a teacher (often operating the video camera) did not provide enough of an audience or give the examination performance a sense of occasion.

In conclusion examiners report on having enjoyed the range and diversity of work seen in all 3 options for Paper Two. There was evidence that many teachers had prepared candidates well with close reference to the Programme of Study and assessment objectives for this paper. The best work was well rehearsed resulting in polished performances well supported by good technical skills and research into the content of the piece. It was clear many teachers are enabling candidates to explore and present work to make challenging and exciting theatre moving away from narrative naturalism including abstract forms, physical theatre and sound collages. There was a considerable amount of work that had depth, understanding and emotional maturity in presenting ideas and issues of real concern to 16 year olds at the beginning of the twenty first century.

Statistics

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Paper	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Mean Mark	Standard Deviation	% Contribution to Award
1	120	80.7	25	60
2	40	25.4	8.5	40

Grade Boundaries & Cumulative Percentages

Provisional statistics for the award (55993 candidates)

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Mark	96	85	73	61	49	37	26	15	0
Cumulative %	2.6	17.1	40.9	64.2	80.8	90.8	96.1	98.8	100

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