

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCSE

GCSE Drama (1699)

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Paper 1 Drama Exploration

Introduction

Once again, candidates who met all the assessment tasks and objectives during the two 6 hour practical workshops were able to meet the objectives. The specification continues to be popular and demonstrates excellent drama practice that takes place throughout the country regardless of advantage, geographical location or easy access to the theatre. It was noted that some of the most interesting work was planned and taught by NQTs, one-person departments and teachers new to the specification. It was also most gratifying to see that candidates across the ability range, including those from schools for specific learning difficulties, selective schools and evening courses at drama and dance academies, are not only benefiting from much good drama practice but also meeting their potential through the examination process.

There was concern that a few centres are assessing Paper 1 before the summer term of Year 10, which is not appropriate. An increasing number of centres are teaching and assessing Paper 1 in the autumn term of Year 11 when they feel their candidates are 'up to speed' and will be capable of meeting the objectives at a higher level.

Materials Submitted for Moderation

Unit 1: Exploration of a theme/issue

Some of the chosen issues were quite broad - Childhood, War, Racism - though some were far more specific - the Holocaust, Domestic Violence and Hurricane Katrina. Centres also made interesting connections between texts eg a clip from 'Dead Man Walking' contrasted with an extract from 'Example' about the Derek Bentley case. Where the response to the texts led on to an in-depth exploration of the issue itself candidates' work showed much depth and fluency in their use of drama strategies, elements and medium.

War was still the most popular issue but there was evidence of some schemes that were used in many centres across the country. For example, Madness used Munch's 'The Scream' as one of the texts, and Aberfan which focused upon contemporary news reports. These tended to focus largely on the interpretation of the chosen texts, often not exploring the issue in depth. Where the Evaluative phase led to the candidates making connections between the exploration of the issue and their own ideas the drama was most exciting.

A few centres used only two contrasting texts. For example, a piece of costume and an extract from a play, which focused the candidates more strongly on the issue that arose.

Issues arising

- Too many texts used as stimuli so that candidates spend 6 hours responding.
- A very basic use of strategies - Freeze Frame and Thoughts Aloud were used more than any other strategy.
- Using the texts as a basis for a devised piece.
- Interpreting the use of the drama medium as lighting, set and costume for a performance.
- Little evidence of the deliberate involvement of drama elements.

- Interpreting Development as further work on the texts used in Response instead of going on to explore the issue in depth.
- Unchallenging work.

Unit 2: Exploration of a complete and substantial playtext

While 'Blood Brothers' remains the most popular playtext a number of others are still favoured. For example, 'Woman in Black', 'Blue Remembered Hills', 'East is East', 'Our Day Out', 'Too Much Punch for Judy' and 'Teechers'. A few newcomers, such as 'Coram Boy', provided new challenges. Many centres evidently spent time exploring the play's themes before the assessment itself, so that candidates were well prepared. Some did this within the assessment, alternating assessed and non-assessed lessons over a period of weeks. Strategies for exploring the texts included experimenting with different genres and staging, pairing of roles to show subtext while presenting key scenes, and soundscapes to create atmosphere. Those lucky enough to see a production of the text were able to make links between their own experience and the professional interpretation in the theatre.

Most centres had evidently chosen the playtexts for their accessibility as well as providing appropriate challenges.

Issues arising

- Interpreting the unit as a six hour rehearsal for a scripted performance.
- Exploring the theme of the play rather than the text.
- Working off-text so that candidates do not have direct experience of the script.
- Seeing a film of the play and improvising scenes.
- Working from a few extracts.
- Shortened versions of Shakespeare which are not 'complete and substantial'.

Records of Work

Some were presented in great detail showing where assessment objectives had been met and how strategies, elements and medium had been involved. Many centres devote a page to each session, outlining teacher-led activities and where candidates have more autonomy. Others tabulate their schemes showing timings, assessment objectives and portfolio tasks.

Most centres send copies of printed texts used in Unit 1 and while some texts, such as artefacts and music cannot be sent, details of these were very useful. A few centres included a copy of the playtext for Unit 2.

Annotations to indicate what additions and alterations were made to the scheme during the assessment of either unit made moderators more confident that the centres concerned had observed the requirements. Where there was more than one teacher a few annotated the same scheme to show how each group had progressed while others sent separate altered copies. It was clear that the majority of centres had provided challenges to ensure their candidates met the objectives to the best of their abilities. Many centres now indicate which sessions were recorded for moderation.

Issues arising

- Schemes rather than Records of Work.
- Aims and Objectives having no connection with the specification.
- Basic outlines on a single sheet of A4.
- An overuse of a few basic strategies.
- Portfolio tasks that do not meet the assessment tasks.
- Assessed time allocated to making notes for portfolios.

DVD/Video

More centres submitted DVDs this year, but the video recording is still the most popular. The latter is generally easier to operate, with fast forward and rewind not being programmed in to many DVDs sent for moderation. The quality varied hugely; the size of teaching space, noise from outside the room being just two of the problems; but most provided a good view of complete sessions from each unit with a variety of activities, discussions and sharing of work, which really gave the moderators an understanding of the quality and standard of work. A few centres showed excellent practice with strategies for questioning and analysis which enabled the candidates to discuss their own work and that of others with depth of understanding, using drama terminology fluently.

Together with the Record of Work the DVD/Video recordings generally provided an excellent view of the assessments in the majority of centres. Much good practice was seen by moderators.

Issues arising

- Interpreting 'evaluation' as the naming and definition of strategies used in the lesson.
- Complete sessions where only one or two strategies were used.
- A basic use of drama which did not meet the standard indicated on the D1c: Centre Details form.
- Edited work from different sessions.
- Rehearsed performances
- Candidates making notes rather than discussing or working practically.
- DVDs that could not be played either on a domestic player.

Because moderators could not moderate centres where there was no recording of sessions from either or both units, only the portfolio marks could be moderated. It is felt that some centres do not take the recording of the assessments seriously enough.

Portfolios

Most candidates combined essay style writing with storyboards, role on the wall, diagrams and digital photographs to support their records of the practical work. Centres who ensured their candidates' work met the requirements, were also thorough about the quality of the evidence provided to support their marks. Where the focus had been upon exploration, rather than performance, the portfolio

evidence revealed depths of understanding and reflection that showed the quality of drama experience the candidates had enjoyed during the assessments.

Task 3 in each unit was often the most revealing. Where candidates discussed their own experiences of the work for Unit 1 both in terms of the issue explored and the drama they had used and then viewed the work of others objectively in Unit 2; whether it was a professional or amateur production, or another group in their class, the requirements were successfully met.

Most candidates were able to see a professional, amateur or school production and it was clear that a significant number had the choice of more than one to evaluate. While the experience of seeing different kinds of theatre advantaged these candidates there were some very perceptive discussions of work presented within the teaching group.

Some centres required their candidates to keep Drama Diaries which were used as the basis for the three pieces of writing in each unit. This was successful when the centre ensured the work met the assessment tasks.

Issues arising:

- Inappropriate pieces of writing that did not meet the assessment tasks.
- Plagiarism.
- Writing frames that were too prescriptive.
- Downloaded information and research material about the issue for Unit 1 or play for Unit 2.
- Overlong tasks.
- Portfolio work on card and/or A2.
- Decoration and collage.
- Dividing practical work responding to texts between Response and Development.
- Writing in role without links to the practical work.
- Evaluating their own work and that of others in performance for Task 3 of Unit 1 and Unit 2.
- D1a: Teacher-Examiner comment sheets not fastened to the work.
- No headings to indicate Response, Development or Evaluation.
- Drama Diary entries that recorded but did not reflect upon the work in depth.

Most centres completed these appropriately, providing essential information for the moderators.

The D1a: Teacher-Examiner comment sheets varied enormously. Most centres ensured that the marks added up accurately, that examples of practical work were referred to directly in support of the marks awarded and that each was signed by the candidate and the teacher. Unfortunately, more errors and omissions occurred with the D1a than any other part of the documentation - including the total mark not being the same as that entered on the OPTEMs.

Where the D1b: Video/DVD Time Sheet had been filled in with the appropriate details the moderators were able to see the standard of work on Video/DVD and identify the assessment objectives that had been marked.

The D1c: Centre Details forms provided valuable details that helped the moderators to understand the range of marks, size of entry and how work had been standardised.

Some teachers had been able to observe one another, team teach and share marking or discuss recordings with the portfolios as supporting evidence. Most centres with more than one teacher had evidently taken care to standardise their candidates across the different teaching groups.

D1d: Checklist - a few centres had experienced particular difficulties and these forms were completed to outline the issues involved.

Marks Awarded by Centres

Most centres took great care to work with the assessment criteria and mark their candidates appropriately. This was consistent across centres with large and small entries, amongst whom were candidates whose marks had ranged from 120 down to 30 or so.

There was some uneven marking where one teacher had taught and marked one unit before leaving and the next had completed the paper in the autumn term. This was understandable but there is concern that centres do not appreciate that unless a teacher completes all aspects of a unit (teaching, assessment, documentation and collection of evidence) the work may be invalid. Candidates cannot be marked on the basis of the written and recorded evidence alone - it can only be done by the teacher-examiner.

Where moderators generally agreed with centres' standards the marks were agreed, but there was an increase in the number of centres where the marking was too generous and adjustments were made. A minority were too harsh in the overall marking but this was rare, a significant number of centres had overmarked the practical work but awarded the candidates more appropriately for their portfolios.

Adjustments were made largely because inappropriate or missing portfolio work had been credited by the centres. A significant number of centres had not read the specification closely enough and their candidates' work had not met the requirements or assessment objectives. It was also felt that much practical work, as evidenced by the video/DVD recordings and the Records of Work, was basic and could not be credited with the marks that had been awarded.

Conclusion

Missing evidence has become a significant issue with Paper One. The most difficult situation was when a teacher left the centre, often having completed one unit at the end of Year 10. Where the materials, documentation and marks had been stored securely, such as with the examinations officer, there was less risk of them being damaged or mislaid.

Problems notwithstanding, much excellent drama practice was evident. Most centres have, as usual, ensured that their candidates have benefited from exciting and challenging GCSE courses and assessed units that enabled them to meet the objectives through interesting explorations of issues and playtexts. Confidence with the specification has led to the later assessment of Paper 1 so that many candidates are able to follow the programme of study throughout Year 10.

Difficulties relating to Assessment

- It was evident that there was an increase in centres where there had been staffing difficulties or changes that resulted in assessment evidence and documentation being incomplete or mislaid.
- A significant number of centres did not have video or DVD evidence so their practical marks could not be moderated.
- Many centres missed the deadline and risked their candidates' work not being moderated.

Although centres contacted Edexcel, extensions are not granted for coursework. Moderators are not obliged to moderate work received after the deadline.

Paper 2 Drama Performance

Introduction

Much of this report will reiterate comments made in previous years as although this is an externally examined paper, the assessment objectives and criteria do not change from those printed in the specification. In preparing candidates for this unit the specification must be read with close reference to the Instructions for Conduct of the Examination (ICE). Each centre chooses the options taken by candidates, the texts or content for devised work and the audience present for the examination performances. This paper uniquely has elements of both an examined and coursework unit.

Overall, the examining team reported that the standards of previous series had been maintained. In most centres there is a high level of understanding of the requirements of this paper and the majority of candidates are well prepared to both achieve in the examination and enjoy the experience of live performance both as performers and enthusiastic and supportive audience members. Examiners felt that there was a decrease in candidates being poorly prepared for this paper. Where work was seen that did not meet GCSE standards it was often felt to be due to lack of commitment by candidates including irregular attendance. However as in previous series there were many candidates who produced work that not only met the requirements of the paper but exceeded GCSE standard. These candidates were awarded full marks and often examiners noted that in fact they exceeded full marks.

Again this year there were a number of both new centres and teachers preparing candidates for the first time for this part of the examination. It was commented upon that many of these centres produced work that showed good understanding of the requirements of this paper. Those teachers in their first or early years of teaching who picked up a Year 11 group in September 2006 were praised by examiners as usually having enabled those candidates to achieve.

There is increased concern regarding the number of non-specialist or supply staff working with candidates on Paper 2. Some examiners noted that candidates had had several teachers in Year 11 and some were felt to have been left to their own devices with very little support or guidance. These candidates were disadvantaged by the situation. Centres are reminded that visiting examiners cannot give advice or comment on the work seen before, during or after the visit.

However, the majority of staff teaching this paper are highly skilled, experienced, committed and enthusiastic teachers whose understanding of the requirements of this paper and the needs and skills of their pupils produces work of high quality.

Requirements

Despite these being reported in considerable detail in 2006 the same issues of concern were reported by the entire examining team. Centres must ensure they put in place the requirements for this paper as detailed in the ICE. The ICE is revised each year in the light of both examiners' and teachers' suggestions to ensure that the administration of the paper is clear to all centres. This essential document was only available on the Edexcel website for 2007 and will be so for the remainder of this specification. **No hard copies will be sent.** A considerable number of centres used the 2006 ICE or even earlier. The ICE also includes all the documentation

needed for this paper. Centres must download copies of the 2008 ICE. The specification is also available from the Edexcel website and Edexcel Publications.

There was increased concern that centres do not appreciate the need for this paper to be examined in appropriate examination conditions to support the candidates. These are clearly stated in the ICE document. Centres should ensure that 2 centre staff are involved in the role of 'invigilators' as would be required in a written examination. Centre staff must ensure that all candidates and audiences understand that this is an examination that happens to be a performance. Providing candidates with the best possible conditions is of paramount importance. It was felt there was an increase in the perceived needs of the audience taking precedence over those of the candidates. This was particularly true of evening performances. There were still a number of inappropriate and often disruptive audiences and extraneous noise often meant that candidates lost focus or examiners could not hear the performance clearly.

There was only one change made to the documentation for this paper this year which required centres to send 3 copies of the centre register. This is to support the monitoring and tracking of the marking of this paper. However, examiners report a noticeable decline in the attention to detail by centres in completing the necessary paperwork for this paper and meeting the deadlines for administration both before and after the examination sessions. In particular, the candidate sheets requiring a description to be given of how the candidate will appear in the performance were left blank. Examiners are not required to complete this task.

Many recordings were sent many days or weeks after the seven working days deadline. There were in number of centres who did not send any recordings at all. It was also clear that many centres do not check the recordings. Examiners on receiving them report a catalogue of problems. The main concerns this year was DVDs that could not be played in a standard player and the performances being so badly recorded it was impossible to identify candidates.

Timing of the Examination

There was an increase in centres choosing to have twilight or evening sessions again this year. This often seemed to have two major advantages. Firstly, the examination as a performance had a greater sense of occasion and appropriate audiences could attend. As stated above there was evidence of inappropriate audiences also. It was felt examination conditions particularly regarding external noise and giving examiners a private place to consider their marks between performances could be easier to put in place.

This year fewer Paper 2 exams took place in mid to late May. Very late exams caused concerns as candidates were involved in other exams or on study leave. Examiners felt that some candidates had not had a final concentrated preparation time immediately before the examination.

Administration

The overwhelming concern from examiners this year was the poor administration by too many centres throughout the process. A great deal of the required paperwork was incomplete, inaccurate, late or non-existent until the examiner's arrival in the centre. Examiners wish to come well prepared for the examination and cannot do so

without this vital information. Examiners are instructed to arrive 30 minutes prior to the first performance/presentation so any changes can be considered at that time.

Last year's concerns regarding the time management of the examination was overall much better. This may be due to the timing of the sessions being set during the initial contact with the centre. Examiners expect to examine at least 20 candidates in a 3-hour session. The sessions (morning /afternoon/twilight/evening) must run concurrently.

However, again this year some examiners arrived at the centre at the agreed time and were waiting for a considerable time before meeting the candidates. Some examiners report arriving promptly for a morning session to be told candidates were not present or ready and the examination was not starting until after 10 a.m. This was also true of twilight and evening sessions. At times this resulted in candidates performing after 10 p.m. again this year.

There remain a small number of centres with fewer than 20 candidates wanting the examination to take place over one or more days or wanting a time that was spread over 2 sessions, for example a morning start and late afternoon finish. Centres wishing to have a time period or day outside the regulations of this examination will be required to record the work for external assessment.

There was also concern that some examiners were given very little time to consider their marking between performances and a private place to mark was not provided.

It would be unfair to give the impression that this lack of thought applied to the majority of centres. Most centres completed all administration very well and the examination was run with professionalism throughout.

There was a substantial increase in centres providing the examiner with large group colour photographs clearly labelled with candidate names, numbers and roles played. These centres had also enabled candidates to introduce themselves clearly on the recording. Hurried head shots not in costume edited in at a later date were unhelpful and should not be used in future.

Again this year thanks must be given to the centres that had an accompanied visit from members of the senior team. This is an important part of the ongoing monitoring of examiners for the practical performance units. At all times this extra requirement was dealt with by centres with understanding. Although these visits should not have effected the running time of the examination in some cases it did occur and Edexcel apologises for this.

The Importance of the Recording of the Performances/Presentations

It is felt that most centres do understand the importance of the very best possible recording being made of all performances and presentations. In order to maintain the standards of the examination and ensure that examiners work is monitored throughout the process a great deal of centres' work is viewed by the senior team alongside examiners' notes.

Unfortunately this year, it was felt that the quality of the recorded work was even worse than in previous series. Too often the camera was not placed close to the examiner and was frequently so far back from the performance that the candidates

could not be identified. Another common mistake was where examiner and audience heads took up most of the frame. If there is a large performance space and scenes are performed in different areas the camera may pan to record the work. If the person operating the camera knows the piece some judicious use of close ups can be useful in capturing individual performances.

Performance Support candidates' presentations must be made to the camera and the examiner will sit next to it. Some examiners felt that candidates expected them to question them as they looked at the documentation. Examiners will look at this evidence after the presentation but will not question the candidates. Performance Support presentations can be pre recorded and viewed by the examiner prior to the performance, along with the documentation.

Centres must keep a copy of the recorded examination work. Centres are reminded that the recording sent to Edexcel via the examiner is the basis of any Enquiries About Results.

Fewer centres completed the time sheet well. This is most important for the ease of finding performances or presentations when looking for specific groups or individual candidate's work. It is also important that centres comment on the quality of the recording. Many centres realise that the recording did not capture the performance well or was incomplete. However, some centres did not complete this form at all. Centres must check all performances and presentations in their entirety for the correct timings and the quality of the recording. This was clearly not done by far too many centres. Missing or poor quality recordings of performances mean that work cannot be checked or re-marked.

Centres may submit work on DVD. Examiners and centres welcomed this as when it is correctly presented the quality of the recordings is excellent and is easily accessible. However, there were considerable problems again this year. Centres must ensure that the DVD can be played on a standard domestic player. Examiners are not required to use computers to view the work. Also each presentation/performance must be given a chapter.

The main problem again this year was that many centres failed to send the recording to the visiting examiner within seven working days. Examiners spent much time contacting centres trying to get the recording and many were never sent at all. In this cases, all written documentation had to be sent to Edexcel with no recordings and no Enquiries About Results will be possible for these centres.

Identification of Candidates on the Recording

Despite concerns in other aspects of administration this was one area that was completed well by many centres. Without exception, examiners commented on how much less stressful it was for all involved if candidate identification was swift to complete. It is invaluable to later viewing of performances in the recorded format.

Centres must ensure that all candidates introduce themselves immediately before their performance /presentation, as it will appear on the recording. This can be pre-recorded and edited in by the centre. Design candidates must state clearly and slowly the centre name and number followed by their name, candidate number, chosen skill and the performance title and group number. It can be helpful if they have the centre name and number, their name and candidate number written clearly on paper and held up to camera.

Performance candidates must line up in their performance group. It can be helpful if this is done in order of appearance. The first candidate must state clearly and slowly the centre name and number, the date of the performance followed by the performance title and group number.

All candidates must then state clearly and slowly their name and candidate number, role(s) played and give verbal description of all costumes worn in the performance. It is helpful, if there are costume changes any costumes worn later are shown to the camera. It can be helpful if their name, candidate number and role(s) played are written clearly on paper and held up to the camera.

The camera must then record them as a group in long shot. It can be helpful if candidates then repeat their name and roles played. The group shot must be held for enough time for someone watching the recording to clearly identify all candidates in the group. This is the equivalent completing the front sheet of a written paper.

Centres are strongly encouraged to provide the visiting examiner with a group colour photograph for each performance on arrival prior to the examination. On the examiner candidate mark sheets candidates should give detailed written descriptions of how they will appear in the performance, both physical appearance and costume. Small head and shoulder shots must not be attached to the form as they have proved to be of limited use in aiding identification and can be time consuming for centres to provide.

Inappropriate Work

This has been commented on by a very few examiners in previous series. This year it is of note that there was a considerable increase in the number of examiners who reported concerns with this from many more centres this year. Centres are reminded that this paper is a GCSE examination.

There seems to be two areas of concern. Most importantly the content of the work and its treatment in performance. Centres must take responsibility for monitoring this, particularly in relation to the audience viewing the piece. Some examiners were concerned that younger pupils were an inappropriate audience for some work.

Inappropriate language was the main concern. At times this was 'inserted' by candidates on the day and centres took appropriate action after the performance. Other performances were felt to have included this in the preparation period and centres must consider the extent to which this is acceptable in an examination context within the school environment.

There also appeared to be an increase in work being far too focussed on the examiner. Candidates questioned examiners rhetorically but often quite aggressively within the context of the performance or designed the performance to have close contact with the examiner. For example, sitting on the examiner's desk or crawling around at their feet. Centres are reminded that candidates must demonstrate communication with the whole audience. It was strongly felt this was poor practice as examiners must have the facilities to mark throughout the performance without interference.

Devised Performance

As in all previous series this is the option taken by the majority of candidates. Work was seen by examiners that covered the full mark range. A minority of candidates did attend the performance but did so little that no marks could be awarded. Contrastingly, there were many candidates whose work exceeded GCSE standard.

Examiners comment on a very high level of understanding of the criteria for this option and it was clear that a well-structured preparation and rehearsal period had taken place. In many centres, examiners noted a 'house style' that could support the candidates' approach and final performance. However, there was concern that although this was sometimes seen to support less confident candidates it could be limiting for the stronger candidates.

One very positive development noted last year was the detail provided for the Outline Description of the Performance. This was even stronger this year. Many centres continue to produce a pro forma for this that matched their style of performance. Many more produced complete or outline scripts. These were often of an excellent standard. Some detailed such things as moves, motivations and music cues. It was felt that the understanding of the layout of scripts had been influenced by the work done in Paper One Unit Two. Examiners praised this as it enabled them to be well prepared for the wide range of performance styles and subject matter chosen by candidates and also showed an understanding of the importance of thorough preparation for this performance paper.

A breakdown of scenes was also useful, particularly if candidates put the whole performance in context with an introductory paragraph. Many examiners comment on both the thoughtful and often witty titles given to performances.

The content of devised performances was as diverse as always. The most effective work was when candidates had something they really wanted to communicate to their audience and had researched their material. It was noticeable that many referred to work completed in Paper One or earlier in the Programme of Study. The challenges of contemporary teenage life remain a popular topic as do the issues facing contemporary society such as race, class, gender and conflict. It was of particular note that much of the work this year was supported by considerable research into the subject matter and some centres included it or references to it in the information provided to the examiner.

More successful work used a range of strategies, for example monologue, freeze frame, flashback, abstract movement or physical theatre. It was felt there was an increase in centres using a wider range of candidates' performance skills such as dance, music, costuming and settings. In the majority of cases this enhanced the performances. However, there was some concern that candidates did not meet the specific criteria where there was a lack of balance. Much of the work was felt to be innovative, challenging and thought provoking theatre as well as a GCSE examination.

Less effective work often tended to have a more naturalistic approach and linear narrative structure. Other work attempted to squeeze in too great a range of both ideas and approaches and so did not produce a coherent performance. It was felt that some work was highly influenced by current popular television or films and was often a poor copy or parody lacking a sense of candidate ownership or creativity. This

was particularly true of comedy performances. Centres need to enable candidates to understand the demands of live theatre performance.

There was concern that some groups had chosen challenging and demanding subject matter but in the performance it was shown without enough understanding or respect and elicited an inappropriate response from the audience. Some examples given were family abuse, rape, alcoholism, euthanasia, slavery and the Holocaust. In fairness, all Of these examples were also cited as the basis of mature, moving and excellent work.

Overall, the great majority of centres had ensured that group size and performance length requirements were met. Most common were groups were between 4 and 6 candidates producing a performance of around 20 minutes. There were fewer overlong performances. However, there was a significant increase in very short performances this was a major concern for examiners this year. Some centres gave estimated performance times that matched the requirements while others listed the number of candidates e.g. 4 to 6 and said that the time would be in single figures. This did severely limit candidates' achievements. It was noted that some performances when seen in the recordings were even shorter than examiners had thought in the live work. Centres must address this time requirement in future. There was concern that for some tight ensemble pieces using lots of group movement and vocal work, it was a challenge for examiners to identify and mark each individual.

Scripted Performance

In 2006 it was reported there was a noticeable increase in candidates choosing this option. This year however, there were fewer groups choosing complete short plays, extracts or adaptations.

There were still a number of candidates who did not appear to understand the demands of this option and were under prepared, in some cases sitting and attempting to read an extract from a play. However, examiners commented again this year that work that exceeded performances seen for AS Unit 2 performance was seen.

As the examination is well established there are certain authors including John Godber, Mark Wheeller, Berkoff and Brecht whose texts are frequently used. There was an increase in challenging texts being performed with high levels of understanding and often considerable style. These ranged from Shakespeare and Marlowe to Pinter and Churchill. Some interesting work was seen from genres such as Victorian Melodrama or Theatre of the Absurd. There seemed to be more candidates wishing to work on comedy texts. This can be a great challenge but Oscar Wilde, Noel Coward and Jo Orton were all seen with a full range of achievement. There was considerable concern where centres let candidates choose comedy sketches in the main written for film and television as this was all too often a poor immature imitation. 'Catherine Tate', 'Little Britain' and 'Monty Python' were given as examples.

In general, extracts could be poorly chosen and were less successful than when candidates communicated a sense of the whole text. However, some extracts do make a coherent performance.

The centre must provide, in advance, a copy of the text as performed. Many centres also provided notes that gave an insight into the interpretation. This was excellent practice and is encouraged for future exam series.

Scripted work was often overlong and candidates lost focus and pace. Centres are reminded that marks can only be awarded within the time limits of this paper. Examiners felt that some of the work was being used in another context and did not meet the requirements of this paper. There was an increase in work being shown that had several non examination candidates. Most commonly, extracts from a fully mounted production previously produced. This was usually unsuccessful and should not be done in future as all examiners seeing this work felt it disadvantaged candidates in the examination context.

Overall, there was an increase in candidates not turning up for the performance. Examiners felt that this most disadvantaged candidates offering scripted work as other students or teachers had to read in and this had an impact on the whole performance and candidates' marks.

The Third Way (Scripted/Devised hybrid)

There was an increase in candidates choosing this option. It was felt in previous series that this was chosen by stronger candidates. This year work was seen that covered the entire mark range. In general, previously a play text was used as the stimulus and the final performance included both devised and scripted scenes. It was interesting to note that this year some film texts were used or prose texts including novels and short stories. Examiners felt they were in this form as the final performances used the characters and lines from the original texts rather than being devised around the ideas or themes of the original.

Centres are reminded that the criteria for performance candidates are identical except for in scripted work the descriptor is 'interpret a role(s)' and in devised it is 'create a role(s)' This option has elements of both.

Again, it was felt this approach supported all candidates as it could give them a clear structure, defined roles and well crafted language to build their performances on.

Performance Support

Again in 2007 this is the least popular option. Many examiners report seeing no Performance support candidates this year. It was felt that it was most often seen in centres with Performing Arts status where there were the facilities and resources needed to support this option. There was some excellent work seen but also some very weak work. These candidates frequently had no supporting evidence and refused to do a presentation. Some did not attend at all or left the exam before their group performance.

It was felt that there was a noticeable improvement in how well candidates had been prepared for the presentations and support materials. There was evidence of in depth research, a sense of working with the performers and available resources in order to produce in performance a contribution that reflects 40% of a GCSE course.

Lighting and costume remain the most popular choices. Last year it was reported that set design sometimes had many interesting ideas that could not be realised in performance and so could not be awarded marks. This year examiner report seeing

simple but well thought out and highly effective sets that gave a real sense of performance values to both scripted and devised work. Some candidates had good knowledge of and skills in using new technologies. There was some impressive use of projection both to give information in a true Brechtian style or create atmosphere or environment.

The majority of performance groups work without a Performance Support candidate but can use sound, set, lighting and costume to enhance their performance. However, there was concern that some centres placed too great an emphasis on these elements and there was not enough focus on the actual individual performance work of the candidates.

The Performance of Candidates in this Paper

High scoring work was felt to show some of these features:

- Well taught with close reference to the specification and ICE 2007
- Reflected standard of 40% of a 5 term GCSE course
- Met all five criteria
- Performed with a sense of occasion to a suitable audience
- Understood that the performance was an examination
- Communicated with enthusiasm, passion and commitment
- Well prepared and presented
- Clear ownership of the performance
- Devised work had a challenging and imaginative initial stimulus
- Scripted work was well edited and structured

Middle scoring work was felt to show some of these features:

- Often well taught but candidates had not put in enough individual effort
- Erratic attendance had hampered group achievement
- Inappropriate stimulus material given
- Too little teacher input during preparation
- Too little preparation time
- Too long preparation time
- Poor choice of text for candidates' ability
- Brief or overlong performances
- Scripted work had unimaginative adaptations dividing a longer script into meaningless sections

Low scoring work was felt to be:

- Under prepared, some improvised on the day
- Poor attendance by group members
- Under or over confident performers
- Unsuitable material
- Little understanding of creating live performance
- Often very brief
- Did not meet all criteria

Consortium Centres

Again this year there were some difficulties with centres, which had not completed the Consortium Information Form available in the ICE document. The completed forms must be sent to Edexcel as early as possible in the academic year. For all candidates being examined in another centre the examiner must be informed beforehand and 2 copies of separate register must be provided giving full details of 'home' centre name, number, candidate name and number. This information must also be detailed on the DVD or videotape.

Conclusion

As in previous reports the concerns detailed in this report could be addressed if all centres referred closely to the Specification and ICE document.

Centres are reminded that Edexcel offers a national programme of Inset courses led by members of the senior examining team. Details have been sent to centres and are available with booking details on the Edexcel website. Edexcel can also provide individual support to centres, details of which are on the website.

This report has highlighted examiners' concerns in some detail but overall it was felt that the standard of work was very much in line with previous series. Even non-specialist staff were felt to be enabling candidates to achieve. Again this year, low marks were often symptomatic of pupil disaffection rather than centre inadequacy. However, it was often mentioned by teachers and rightly ignored by examiners, that this was the only GCSE taken by some students.

It is heartening to report that again this year the number of centres and candidates entered for this exam has increased. The range and diversity of centres and candidates involved in this specification would seem to show that this is a specification that has the flexibility for the widest range of candidates to achieve and all teachers to bring their own skills and enthusiasms to the delivery of Paper Two. It is a unique examination that enables candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of drama in a performance. Examiners report every year on the great pleasure it gives them to work with all those involved in this examination.

Beyond the requirements of this paper the work done to encourage creativity, confidence, leadership, working as a member of a group, meeting deadlines, making decisions will all be skills that young people will need in the rapidly changing 21st century.

It was a pleasure for examiners to see such a wealth of creative, challenging, thoughtful and engaging work. Young people today have much to give the older generation and in this examination they certainly did so in 2007. A credit to themselves and their inspiring teachers.

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Lower Limit	100	97	87	76	65	53	41	29	17	0

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