

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCSE

GCSE Drama (1699)

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Paper 1 Drama Exploration

Introduction

A wide range of candidates and different types of centre were involved in Drama GCSE in 2009 including hospitals, pupil referral units, selective, comprehensive, international and independent schools. It was noted by a number of moderators that candidates of different physical abilities as well as those with special educational needs in mainstream schools had also taken part and been assessed in this paper.

Centres where there is good drama practice and care was taken to meet the assessment requirements and tasks outlined in the specification as well as the Instruction for Conduct of the Examination ensured that their submission for moderation best met the standard for GCSE. This was as true of centres with only one teacher as those with larger Drama departments.

A marked change has been the shift from candidate autonomy as a result of past reports to a more tightly controlled teacher led paper which has meant that candidates may have fewer opportunities to select from the drama medium, strategies and elements within set tasks.

It was also noted that centres who had taken action as a result of the previous year's E9 Moderators' Report enable their candidates to meet the paper's requirements and assessment criteria more fully. This applies to centres where marks had been changed as much as those where the moderator had indicated an issue that needed to be addressed.

Records of Work

Recent changes observed by moderators include the use of strategies as performance techniques rather than a spontaneous part of exploration e.g. hot seating. A number of centres use forum theatre as a rehearsal device instead of an approach to analysing and exploring a given situation. There are also more references to practitioners such as Stanislavsky, Artaud and Brecht; the activities concerned are focused more on approach than theory but it is an introduction to a more complex understanding of drama.

A number of centres are still over focused on performance as an outcome of each unit instead of an exploration that leads to real understanding of the chosen issue and playtext.

The presentation of Records of Work varied widely and included annotated schemes, tabulated outlines and brief lists of tasks. Some were extremely detailed with lists of drama strategies, medium and elements as well as texts/playtext etc. Where their use was indicated in the body of the 6 hours' outline and annotated to show alterations and omissions as well as where the assessment objectives had been met, the records inspired confidence.

Those centres which focused on Response with some Evaluation in the first part of the 6 hours' assessments then progressed to Development and Evaluation in the second half ensured that their candidates were able to explore the chosen issue of playtext in more depth.

There is a continued use of published schemes of work, often verbatim, which are appropriate for the Programme of Study but may not meet the requirements of the paper or be sufficiently challenging for the candidates. Where these had been appropriately altered to show how the requirements and assessment objectives had been met then they were felt to be more successful.

An increasing number of centres are providing schemes of work - often with a strong centre style - which are difficult to reconcile with the work seen on the recordings and in the portfolios.

Moderators were more confident of centres where the teachers had provided clear records of what had taken place, where the drama medium, strategies and elements had been used and how the candidates had been assessed during each 6 hour Unit.

Another recent development is the workbook, complete with instructions for portfolio tasks. Although these gave insight into the intentions for the candidates' practical and portfolio work they did not give the moderator a teacher's-eye-view of either unit. In some centres these are used as the basis for appropriately teacher led and assessed sessions; at the other end of the spectrum are the few centres where candidates work in discrete groups with their own stimuli and playtexts.

The inclusion of stimulus material, where possible, was most useful. A number of centres included copies of playtexts, which is less necessary, although the intention to ensure the moderator was fully informed is appreciated.

Unit 1

The variety of chosen themes is much the same as before; racism, war, violence, fame, oppression and conflict are perennial favourites. Others, such as Craig and Bentley, the Disappeared and Ruth Ellis focus on specific times and contexts with interesting questions addressed through the practical work.

More open subject e.g. Oppression, Living with Fear and Destination Unknown led to the most inventive work where centres had been flexible as a result of candidates' responses to the introductory texts leading to work of real depth. This choice also ensures that candidates do respond to texts from different times and/or cultures which broadens their experience.

A few centres examiner theatre-focused topics such as masks and women in Shakespeare's plays that provided limited opportunities for the candidates to work exploratively with a theme or issue.

Those that began with poetry - Nobody's Fault or Behind the Wall, for example - either led to some challenging use of drama form to explore the issues and dilemmas involved or were confined to literal re-enactment of the events narrated in the stimuli.

For some centres the theme or issue for Unit 1 has gradually become a linear re-enactment of the stimuli provided at the beginning of the assessment; candidates use each text not as a stimulus but as a text to be performed which either focuses on a single event (e.g. Craig and Bentley) or contrasts (e.g. Rosa Parks and Emily Davidson) but the issues of capital punishment or emancipation are not explored in depth.

War is still the most popular theme and while a few centres have given their candidates space to make links with the present situation the majority explore past conflicts as a more open option.

A few centres still concentrate on using the 6 hours as a rehearsal period for a final devised performance which is inappropriate.

Most centres structured sessions that challenged their candidates to use strategies inventively and employ the drama medium and elements to inform and express their ideas throughout the exploration of the chosen theme or issue.

Unit 2

Centres where candidates had read or seen the play and explored its major themes in advance of the 6 hour assessment ensured they were able to focus upon the text itself and meet the requirements to the fullest extent. There was much evidence that candidates had been able to read the play in class or extracts linked to scenarios given by the teacher. Although there were some candidates who may not have seen the text at all, there were fewer centres where the unit was devoted to exploring the themes and character background alone. Where off text work had also been used to inform on-text tasks candidates' understanding of the playwright's intentions and different interpretations was more extensive.

Blood Brothers remains the most popular play for Unit 2 but there was a wide variety of approaches used to explore the text in different centres. It was good to see candidates engaging in the text through Greek theatre, choral work and narration rather than being confined to plot and character.

Where candidates really showed they had developed a deeper understanding of the issues in the play through their practical drama there was a real engagement with the text itself.

The majority of Records of Work were interesting, challenging and creative. The exploration of texts such as *Woman in Black*, *Stags and Hens*, *Blue Remembered Hills* and *Too Much Punch for Judy* showed that centres had chosen carefully for their candidates' strengths and interests, but more challenging texts such as *Blood Wedding*, *The Crucible* and *The Glass Menagerie* were equally well explored. It was felt by all moderators that candidates were better able to meet the marks in higher bands if the text was more challenging and complex.

A few centres confuse Units 1 and 2 and focus on 2 playtexts which does not meet the assessment requirements. As in Unit 1, some candidates worked towards a scripted performance or alternative endings to the play which did not enable them to meet the criteria for the paper.

There was much evidence of more invention in the exploration of the playtexts; rarely do centres have their candidates standing around awkwardly reading their way through scene.

DVD/VHS

Although missing DVD or VHS recordings occurred once more there were fewer than in past years.

Most centres have heeded advice about retaining original copies of the recordings so that replacements could be made if the discs or tapes had been damaged in transit. There were difficulties with some types of DVD but centres who had met the requirements outlined in the Instructions for Conduct did not cause problems to the moderation process.

Centres who had completed the D1b: Time Sheet in detail ensured that the moderator could observe the sessions through the teacher's eyes and understand how the work had met the assessment objectives concerned. This was particularly useful where the quality of sound was poor.

Centres where it was evident that the candidates across the range had met their potential ensured that the recorded session involved a variety of practical tasks so that the standard could be seen in support of the marks awarded. Where candidates were engaged in rehearsal or worked on one strategy for most of the session it was difficult to see how the standard had been achieved. A few centres include an inappropriate amount of written tasks during the assessed sessions.

The recorded sessions put both the Records of Work and the portfolio tasks into context; moderators could recognise the standard of practical work in action where there was correlation between the three forms of evidence. This was particularly true of centres where tasks or outcomes had been differentiated so that candidates across the ability range were challenged and able to meet the opportunities provided. Candidates were advantaged by teachers who varied the type of task and approach to suit the issue or playtext.

There was evidently a huge divide between teachers who focus their candidates on quality of presentation - facing front, avoiding masking one another, not speaking at once etc. and those who focus upon the objective/subjective experience through drama and how it contributes to the group's learning process.

Portfolios

Centres who ensured their candidates met the assessment tasks and criteria for each unit as outlined in the specification best met the requirements. Of all the 6 portfolio tasks it was Unit 2 Task 3 that was the most consistently met by candidates.

Candidates were best able to record and reflect upon their practical work when the teacher had given them clear tasks, titles and aims for each discrete task. However, it was noted that some tasks given in the candidate workbooks were inappropriate.

Candidates were successful where Response focused on the use of strategies to respond to and make connections between the texts in Unit 1. Candidates were more able to discuss how the use of strategies had enhanced understanding on Unit 2, however, where they could relate the experience to exploration of the plot and characters.

Where creative writing formed part of Development candidates were able to show how the transcribed improvisation or storyboard in Unit 1 or the extract in Unit 2 had been developed in depth but diary entries or letters alone could not meet the criteria. By focusing on the theme arising from the texts or further exploration of the playtext candidates were able to discuss their practical drama in more depth in both units. However, Development in Unit 1 rarely met the requirements - annotated photographs and short scripts of hot seating exercises were the nearest many candidates' work got to the requirement for a script or storyboard - although more centres are focusing upon further work in depth in this task.

Many candidates included an annotated extract of a scene they had developed while others wrote a scenario of a section of the play that was explored; unless this included an analytical description of how the work was developed it was difficult to ascertain the depth or extent of shaping that had taken place.

Set and costume design in Development caused considerable concern; where they recorded and reflected upon the candidates' own use of space or the symbolic use of a garment when working on a scene the criteria were met. Separate design tasks that did not arise directly from practical work were inappropriate.

Evaluation in Unit 1 has improved and more centres enable their candidates to consider the learning process during the exploration of the chosen issue and their use of drama with some good analysis. However, too many candidates confine this task to evaluating their own performance and that of others as outcomes rather than part of the process.

Unit 2 Evaluation is the most successfully met of all the portfolio tasks. There was a wide range of performances seen; the collective experience gained by a teaching group seeing and evaluating the same production added to their understanding of drama as much as centres where different candidates had seen different productions. *Woman in Black* and *Blood Brothers* are still the most frequently evaluated but a substantial number of candidates had been able to see challenging and innovative theatre in touring venues, school performances and by local professional companies. A few candidates evaluated their own work for Unit 2 but they were a small minority.

It was felt that most candidates are able to differentiate between the drama medium, strategies and elements and understand how to use them to explore and express ideas. Centres where the blanket terms 'techniques' or 'skills' are used make it more difficult for their candidates to meet the Response and Development tasks.

Portfolios often reflected the candidates' enthusiasm for their drama; diagrams, storyboards and digital photographs enable them to be precise in their recording of the work and more thorough about analysing and synthesising aspects of the exploration. Most showed evidence of candidates' engagement and through the stimuli, issue and playtext. Some clearly had an excellent grasp of the language and forms of drama and used this to communicate to a similar standard in all 3 portfolio sections.

A few centres permit candidates to present work on card, A2 paper and pull out sections often resulting in work that lacks depth and fails to meet the criteria. Carelessly paper-clipped or stapled work often meant it was difficult to identify the candidate to whom it belonged.

Centres where the Instructions for Conduct had been carefully observed ensured that the work was accessible and legible for moderation purposes e.g. discrete tasks in each unit, less evidence of downloaded information and overlong tasks. Candidates achieved more depth where Response and Development tasks described and discussed work at different stages in the 6 hour assessments.

The D1a: Teacher Examiner Comments were invaluable to the moderation process; centres where examples of candidates' practical work were given and that drew the moderator's attention to links between the portfolio evidence and practical drama best supported the marks awarded.

Administration

It was pleasing that much of the work for moderation arrived before the deadline this year.

Where centres had read and applied the Instructions for Conduct 2009 the submission for moderation and any subsequently requested portfolios smoothed the moderation process e.g. including the highest and lowest marked candidates' work.

Centres that responded swiftly to contact from the moderators were able to ensure that any additional material could be sent or issues clarified e.g. where a candidate's marks on the D1a differed from those on the OPTEMs.

There were fewer centres with damaged or missing VHS or DVD recordings. Replacements were usually provided in good time or appropriate paperwork completed if there were no originals.

It was felt that where paperwork had been completed as soon as each unit had been taught and assessed, candidate details and comments on the D1a: Teacher Examiner Comment sheets were more thorough and accurately completed. Teachers who had been able to give examples from the practical work best supported their candidates' practical marks.

Marks

In centres where the activities were challenging and provided for a range of responses from the candidates, marks in the higher bands were more frequently awarded. Where centre marks were agreed it was evident that teachers had made great efforts to ensure that their candidates were able to achieve to their full potential within the assessment requirements.

Where the work did not meet the requirements and it was felt that the standard of practical and portfolio evidence did not match the marks awarded, adjustments were made by the moderator.

Paper 2 Drama Performance

Introduction

This GCSE specification was first examined in 2003 and will be examined for the final time in 2010. It was clear from the reports from examiners this year that there is now a very high level of understanding of the requirements of this paper.

For many centres much of this report will cover information that has been in previous reports and so will be familiar. However this year there were many teachers delivering this paper for the first time so detailed information regarding procedures has been included again this year.

Centres are reminded that although this is an externally examined paper, the assessment objectives and criteria do not change from those printed in the specification so work presented does not need to reflect the demands of the questions set each year for a written examination. In preparing candidates for this unit the specification must be read with close reference to the I.C.E. document for the current examination series. 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. However examiners felt that there was a slight increase in candidates being poorly prepared for this paper when compared to previous series. Where work was seen that could only be awarded marks in the bottom two mark bands it was often felt to be due to lack of commitment by candidates often reflecting inconsistent attendance.

As in previous series there were candidates who produced work that met the requirements of the paper but exceeded top GCSE standard. These candidates were awarded full marks and examiners noted that in fact they were '40 plus'.

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 reported 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 eleven group in September 2008 were praised by examiners as usually having enabled those candidates to have a sense of achievement in their performances. Centres are reminded that visiting examiners cannot give advice or comment on the work seen before, during or after the visit.

This paper continues to have a majority of 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 on in considerable detail in the three previous examiners reports 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 I.C.E. document. This is revised each year in the light of both examiner's and teacher's suggestions to ensure that the administration of the paper is clear to all centres. This essential document is only available on the Edexcel website. **No hard copies will be sent.** A considerable number of centres used 2008 or even earlier series. The I.C.E. document also includes all the documentation needed for this paper. Centres must download copies of the 2010 I.C.E. document for use next year. This will be on the website in the autumn term. The specification is also available from the Edexcel website. Other Edexcel publications are available from Edexcel publications.

In 2008 the report highlighted the concern that centres do not appreciate the need for this paper to have examination conditions to support the candidates and ensure security of the examination. These are clearly stated in the I.C.E. document. Examiners report that an increased number of centres ensured that 2 or more centre staff were available throughout the examination sessions to ensure the performances ran under exam conditions. 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. This year there was less concern that the needs of the audience took precedence over those of the candidates. There continues to be an increase in centres choosing evening performances and although centres have the choice of examination time examiners report that not enough time was allowed between performances for them to consider their marks as the centre was more concerned that the audience should 'not have to wait'.

There were no changes made to the documentation for this paper this year. However many centres failed to supply 3 copies of the registers. This is to support the monitoring and tracking of the marking of this paper. Examiners report again this year a noticeable lack of 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. Increasingly this year 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 yet again in 2009 a number of centres who did not send any recordings at all. It was also clear that many centres do not check the recordings. Members of the senior team on receiving recordings as part of the monitoring of examiners report a number of problems. There was an increase in centres supplying the recordings of the performances on DVDs and many of these were of excellent quality. There are still a number that could not be played in a standard DVD player despite more detailed information being given in the I.C.E. document Summer 2009. All centres are reminded that Enquiries after Results will be undertaken on the recordings sent by the centre and further copies will not be requested.

Timing of the Examination

The examination can take place in March, April and May. Most centres were contacted in early January and the vast majority of visits were arranged and confirmed swiftly. There were centres who having arranged a date requested a change of date and/or time near to the exam. All centres are reminded that examiners cannot be expected to rearrange visits at late notice and centres may have to have their performances marked on a recording.

Twilight or evening sessions were popular again this year. Centres felt the examination as a performance had a greater sense of occasion and appropriate audiences could attend. But examiners report concerns that inappropriate audiences disadvantaged some candidates. This year it was felt that some audience members only wished to see certain performances and that the constant changing of audience numbers did not create a supportive atmosphere. Some centres reported that it was easier to put examination conditions in place, particularly regarding external noise and giving examiners a private place to consider their marks between performances outside normal school hours. But examiners report that there was pressure on them not to leave the performance area and be given enough time between each group.

Administration

It is very disappointing to report again this year the poor administration by 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 will struggle to 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.

Overall the time management of the examination was overall felt to be well done particularly in centres doing paper 2 during the school day. This was felt to 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 not starting until after 10 a.m. This was also true of twilight and evening sessions.

All centres are reminded that examiners expect to mark at least 20 candidates in a 3 hour session. Examiners report that some centres requested much longer time allowances for example wanting 1 performance in each 1 hour lesson period. This meant examiners having to wait between over 40 minutes between performances. Centres must ensure this is not expected in future.

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 completed all administration very well and the examination was run with professionalism throughout.

The practice of providing the examiner with large group colour photographs clearly labelled with candidate names, numbers and roles played increased again this year. This is both very helpful for the visiting examiner and can be invaluable to any senior examiner monitoring the work on the recording. Most centres ensured candidates

introduced themselves clearly on the recording. Hurried head shots not in costume edited in at a later date were unhelpful and should not be done in future.

Again this year thanks must be given to the centres, which 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.

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 examiner work is monitored throughout the process a great deal of centre's work is viewed by the senior team alongside examiner's notes. Centres should be aware that the senior team may randomly check centre's work and if examiners have any concerns they must seek another opinion.

Overall it was felt the recordings of the performances had improved. Where the recording was poor examiners identify the following errors. Too often the camera was not placed close to the examiner and was frequently so far distant from the performance that it was sometimes difficult to identify candidates. Another common mistake was the examiner and audience heads taking up most of the frame. If there is a large performance space and scenes are performed in different areas the camera should 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 candidate's presentations must be made to the camera and the examiner will sit next to it. Some examiners felt that candidates expected them to ask them questions 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 will be viewed by the examiner prior to the performance along with the documentation.

Centres must also 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 after Results procedures.

Many 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. Also it is important that centres comment on the quality of the recording. Many centres realise that the recording did not capture the performance well or had incomplete recordings. 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. Again this year this was clearly not done by some centres. Missing or poor quality recordings of performances mean that work cannot be remarked.

Many more centres sent 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 and there were considerably less problems this year. **Centres must ensure that the DVD can be played on a standard domestic player** (as advised in the I.C.E. document). Examiners will not use computers to view the work. Examiners report that far too many performances and presentations not been given a chapter. It was

felt that good practice was when each performance and presentations by performance support candidates was provided on a separate DVD.

Identification of the Candidates on the Recordings

Despite concerns in other aspects of administration this was one area that was completed well by many centres again this year. 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 if any costumes worn later are shown to the camera. It can be helpful if their name and 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 they repeat their name and roles played. The group shot must be held for enough time for someone watching the recording to clearly identify them all. 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.

Issues of Concern Feedback

Examiners report that there was definitely an improvement when centres had received the individual feedback from 2008 and acted upon it in 2009. This information is sent in hard copy to the centre not the teacher running the GCSE course in the autumn term.

Inappropriate Work

In 2008 it was noted that there was a considerable increase in the number of examiners who reported concerns with this and this year it was felt that even more work was seen that was unsuitable for paper 2. Centres are reminded that this paper is a GCSE examination.

There seems to be two areas of concern. Most importantly it is the content of the work and its treatment in performance. Centres must take the responsibility to monitor 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 remains 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. Centres choosing evening performances to a wider audience must also consider this.

Examiners have been instructed this year to include in their notes any concerns regarding the above. There were several instances where the teacher apologised to the examiner where candidates had shown in performance work that the teacher had not seen in the preparation for the exam and planned to take appropriate action after the examination.

This year there was less work being far too focussed on the examiner. Some 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 examiners desk or crawling around at their feet. This was often felt to be a 'house style' of performance.

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 throughout the performance to mark without interference. In future if examiners feel they cannot mark and make notes with security they will stop the performance.

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 few candidates did attend the performance but did so little that no marks could be awarded. There were many candidates whose work exceeded GCSE standards.

Examiners comment on a very high level of understanding by centres 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 candidate's 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 more able.

The detail provided for the Outline Description of the Performance was again excellent this year from the majority of centres. 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 of these 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 1 Unit 2. Examiners greatly 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. 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 diverse as always. The most effective work was when candidates had something they really wanted to communicate to their audience and had done research into their material. It was noticeable that many referred to work done in paper 1 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. Much work considered the ongoing concerns with gangs and knife crime, lack of tolerance and contemporary issues such as ongoing war situations. It was of particular note that much of the work again 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.

Many examiners reported that there seemed to be an increase in more light hearted performances. There were some very amusing work based on existing genres such as murder mysteries, melodramas or commedia del arte.

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 candidate's performance skills such as dance, music, costuming and settings. In the majority of cases enhanced the performances but there was some concern if there was a lack of balance so candidates did not meet the specific criteria. There was concern that some performances included too much miming and moving to pop songs. However much of this 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 often 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 which were often based on television comedy shows such as Little Britain or Horne and Cordon. Centres need to enable candidates to understand the demands of live theatre performance.

Some groups had chosen challenging and demanding subject matter and there was concern the performance was shown without enough understanding or respect and elicited an inappropriate response from the audience. Some examples given were domestic violence, rape, addiction, homophobia, terrorism and religious belief. Equally all the above examples could also be the basis of mature, moving and excellent work.

Again this year the great majority of centres had ensured that group size and performance length requirements were met. Most groups were between 4 and 6 candidates producing a performance of around 20 minutes. There were fewer overlong performances. There remain a number of very short performances that are self penalising. Some gave estimated performance times that matched the requirements while some listed the number of candidates for example between 4 and 6 and said the time would be in single figures. This did severely limit candidate's

achievements. It was of note 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. There was some concern that for some tight ensemble pieces using much group movement and vocal work it was a challenge for examiners to identify and mark each individual.

Examiners report that there were instances of very overlong performances and often these were seen in centres where there were only one or two performance groups. All centres are reminded that examiners stopped marking at the times given in the I.C.E. document.

Scripted Performance

The number of candidates offering scripted performance was much in line with 2008. Centres chose to present 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 comment again this year that work was seen that exceeded performances seen for AS Unit 2 performance.

Again this year authors including John Godber, Mark Wheeller, Berkoff and Brecht work was frequently seen. There was an increase in challenging texts being performed with high levels of understanding and often considerable style, ranging from Shakespeare both in extracts or using some excellent published adaptations to contemporary young writers working with theatres such as The Royal Court or National Theatre Connections programme. Again this year some interesting work was seen from genres such as Victorian Melodrama or Verbatim Theatre. Some candidates presented comedy texts. This can be a great challenge but again Oscar Wilde and Jo Orton were seen as positive choices for candidates. Again 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 and immature imitation.

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 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 this work was being used in another context and did not meet the requirements of this paper. Again there was working 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.

The Third Way

This is an increasingly popular option. Again this year work was seen that covered the complete mark range. Play texts, film adaptations, novels, short stories and poetry

were used as the stimulus and the final performance included both devised and original text. Examiners felt that this approach was supportive to all candidates giving them a clear basis that led to the final performances using the characters and lines from the original texts as well as devised scenes.

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

As in all previous series this is the least chosen option. Most examiners report seeing no candidates again 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 clear evidence of how well candidates had been prepared for the presentations and supporting 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. In 2008 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. Again this year examiners 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 an increase in the use of projection either to give information in a true Brechtian style or create atmosphere or environments. Much of this work was very impressive both technically and creatively.

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 some 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 I.C.E. 2008
- 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 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 candidate's 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 Forms available in the I.C.E. document. The completed forms must be sent to Edexcel as early as possible in the academic year. For all candidates being examined not in their registered 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 I.C.E. documentation.

The report has highlighted examiner's 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

The range and diversity of centres and candidates involved in this specification would seem to continue to show that this is a specification that has the flexibility for the widest range of candidates to achieve and for all teachers to bring their own skills and enthusiasms to the delivery of paper 2. It is a unique examination that enables candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of drama by

demonstrating it in a performance. Examiners report every year on the great pleasure it gives them to work with all those involved in this examination.

Again in 2009 it was a pleasure for examiners to see such a wealth of creative, challenging, thoughtful and engaging work. It has been said in the several previous reports that despite much that we read about young people the majority of GCSE drama students in 2009 were a credit to themselves and their inspiring and hard working teachers.

Centres are reminded that 2010 will be the final year of paper 2 examination. The new Drama GCSE specification has 3 units and unit 3 replaces current paper 2. There are some changes to the performance work. All centres are reminded that this will first be examined in 2011.

Grade Boundaries

Overall GCSE Drama Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Lower Limit	100	97	88	76	65	53	41	29	17	0

Paper 1 Drama Exploration Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Lower Limit	120	110	95	81	66	51	37	23	0

Paper 2 Drama Performance Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Lower Limit	40	35	29	24	19	14	10	6	0

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