

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE Drama (5DR03)  
Paper 01 Drama Performance

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## **5DR03 Drama Performance**

### **Introduction**

The Performance examination is worth 40% of the total GCSE qualification.

This is an externally examined unit and the assessment objectives and criteria do not change from those printed in the specification. This unit uniquely has elements of both an examined and coursework unit.

In preparing students for this unit the specification must be read with close reference to the Administrative Support Guide for the current examination series.

Centres choose the options taken by students, the texts or content for devised work and the audience present for the examination performances. All work presented for examination must meet the requirements of the Assignment Brief for that year.

This unit uniquely has elements of both an examined and coursework unit. Examiners report that this year was a year of consolidation and both the achievements and concerns remain very much in line with those in the previous series.

The statistical evidence supports that overall student achievement was somewhat higher than in previous series.

### **The Assignment Brief (AB)**

In line with units in other GCSE specifications that have a written examination, a different focus must be set by the awarding body each year.

The Assignment Brief for 2013 was available on the website from the last Monday in October.

Centres are reminded that the texts or ideas in the brief are suggestions only and it remains Edexcel policy not to approve or recommend any texts or material for Unit 3.

The Assignment Brief for 2013 was 'Performances must make the audience watch and think'.

The Assignment Brief details the options (A-G) available for performance students and all the options were seen in 2013.

It is not possible to have accurate information regarding the distribution of each option but reports from examiners indicate that the devised options remain the most popular.

Completely devised work (Option A) in responding to the Assignment Brief must also have some stimulus material set by the centre. In some centres the same stimulus was set for all groups in others each group worked with

an individual focus. There were examples of groups developing the topic, theme or issue explored in Unit 1. There was not seen to be an advantage in either approach.

A combination of devised and text taken from a published text (Option E) remains a popular choice. Many students detailed that the work was based on their exploration of a text in Unit 2 or another text by the same playwright.

There was an increase in scripted work presented for examination this year. The majority were adaptations of full length texts (Option D). There were some examples of short published plays (Option B) and very few of just extracts from full length texts (Option C).

Examiners report that Option D enabled the most flexible and possibly creative approach and supported students in achieving against the criteria.

There were many examples of Theatre in Education performances (Option F). The most successful were when the target audience was present for the examination performance. Examiners report that centres felt the 2013 AB supported this option.

Devised performances that can include a range of published material (Option G) were listed the least but examiners report that this option was seen but as Option A. There were some interesting performances that used a great deal of factual material and were examples of students producing 'verbatim theatre' at a high level.

A very few centres did not include written details of how the performances relate to the Assignment Brief when documentation was sent to the examiner. Many did not complete the Option letter on the Group Performance Sheet (D3a).

Centres are reminded that they must download the Assignment Brief and make this available to the students at the beginning of the preparation period.

### **Devised Performance (Option A)**

Work was seen by examiners that covered the full mark range. A few students were present at the examination but did so little that no marks could be awarded. Full marks were also awarded.

There were some students who examiners reported produced performances that exceeded the GCSE level. This was a reflection of their ability and skill but also their commitment and passion for the creation of theatre. This is in line with student achievement in previous series.

Where work was awarded marks in the higher levels it was clear that a well-structured preparation and rehearsal period had taken place. This built on the skills and understanding gained in the Programme of Study.

In many centres examiners noted a 'house style' that could support the students approach and final performance. However there was concern that although this was sometimes seen to support some students it could be limiting for the more creative and imaginative students.

Examiners commented there was an improvement in the quality of the documentation sent prior to the exam sessions. This enabled them to be well prepared for the wide range of performance styles and subject matter chosen by students and also showed an understanding of the importance of thorough preparation for this performance paper.

Less well prepared written documentation was often reflected in less well prepared and secure performances.

Many examiners comment on the ingenuity of the titles given to the performances. These were often written as questions that the performance would address or used quotes from the performances.

The content of devised performances was diverse as in previous series. The most effective work was when candidates had content they really wanted to communicate to their audience on order to 'make them think '. Examiners reported that the brief had encouraged much more in depth research into the material. Some of this was very impressive and supported performances gaining marks in the higher levels.

Examiners commented on these being positive examples of work seen in 2014 to meet the AB.

It is of note that in 2014 performances looked at serious issues with fewer examples of pure comedy.

### **Exploration of a range of psychological and contemporary issues**

- Challenges of new social media
- Victims and Perpetrators
- Family conflicts
- Gang Culture
- The uncertainty of the future
- What can be learnt from the past
- The impact of contemporary or past leaders/innovators/thinkers
- TIE looking at Stranger Danger/Underage Drinking/Bullying

Performances awarded marks in the higher levels demonstrated a confident and skilled use of a range of strategies for example monologue, freeze frame, flashback, abstract movement or physical theatre. Some centres used a range of performance skills such as dance, music, costuming and settings. In the majority of cases this enhanced the performances but there was some concern that it could detract from the individual student's performances.

Overwhelmingly examiners report every year and this year was no exception that 'less is more' in supporting student achievement in devised

performances. As well as a GCSE examination much of this work was felt to be innovative, challenging and above all thought provoking theatre.

Less effective work often tended to have a more naturalistic approach and linear narrative structure. There were examples of less coherent performances often because students were attempting to communicate ideas that were not well researched or understood by the students.

### **Scripted Performance (Option B/C/D)**

There was an increase in the number of students offering scripted performance. Examiners report seeing the majority of performances were well rehearsed and presented.

There were still a small number of centres who did not appear to understand the demands of this option and the students were under prepared, in some cases sitting and attempting to read an extract from a play.

Examiners commented on the following being positive examples seen in 2013 to meet the AB.

“Find Me” considering the lack of understanding of mental illness

“Hard to Swallow” considering the problems of anorexia

“Fear and Misery in the Third Reich” considering issues regarding this period of history

“Macbeth” considering the effect of ambition or belief in the supernatural

“The Long Road” considering the effects of crime

“Bouncers” considering the effects of binge drinking

As can be seen by the above there was evidence of challenging texts being performed with high levels of understanding of the text and the writers intentions.

“DNA” was one of the suggested texts and this was a popular choice as was “Chat Room” both from the NT Connections.

There were some scripted performances that were considerably overlong and this often meant that students lost focus and pace.

Again this year there were instances of students not being present for the performance. Examiners felt that this most disadvantaged students offering scripted work as other students or teachers had to read in and this had an impact on the whole performance and student’s achievements.

## **Combination of Devised and Scripted Performances (Options E and G)**

This remains very popular option. Work was seen that covered the complete mark range. Play texts, and factual material were the most popular choices of stimulus and the final performance included both devised and original text. Examiners continue to report that this approach was supportive to all students giving them a clear basis that led to the final performances using the characters and lines from the original texts/material as well as devised scenes. This approach supported all students as it could give them a clear structure in relation to content, style and form, defined roles and well crafted language to build their performances on.

Examiners comment on these being positive examples of work seen in 2013 to meet the AB

“Blood Brothers” with devised scenes of the inquest into the shooting of Eddie by Mickey

Factual material including documentary transcripts with devised scenes about 7/11

Song lyrics and screenplay text with devised scenes to tell the life story of Marilyn Monroe

“The Curious Incident of the Dog in The Night” with roles added not in the original text.

The comments regarding scripted and devised performances also apply

Performance Support (can be used to support all options)

This remains the least chosen option. No performance support students were seen by many examiners in 2013. It was felt that it was most often seen in centres with Performing Arts status or where there were theatre technicians on the staff as then there were the facilities and resources needed to support this option.

However there were centres where a substantial number of students chose this option and the teaching of the required skills had been built into the Programme of Study and students had been well supported in the preparation process.

The specification lists the minimum requirements for the documentation for each option but many students produced detailed work that exceeded this. The main concern was that centres were offering this as an option where the centres did not have the resources or technical knowledge to teach this up to GCSE level. Because of this there was some very poor work seen. These students frequently had no or very little supporting evidence and sometimes refused to do a presentation.



However this year there was a much greater range of work seen across all mark levels.

Some centres contacted Edexcel asking for support in preparing Performance Support students but it is the centre responsibility to only allow students to make this choice if they can give them the support they need.

Centres are reminded that the presentation can be pre recorded and shown to the examiner before the performance. This worked well in several centres as it took the pressure off those students who were either anxious or also working with the group for example operating the lighting/sound.

It was felt that there was clear evidence of how well students achieving in the higher levels had been prepared for the presentations and supporting documentation. 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. Some candidates had good knowledge of and skills in using new technologies and computerised equipment. 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. There were also examples of very effective sets being created but this was a demanding option as this had to work within the time and location constraints of the examination.

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. This was most often where students had not been able to rehearse in costumes so were ill at ease in performance

### **Performance Times**

The majority of centres had ensured that group size and performance length requirements were met. Most examination groups were between 4 and 6 students producing a performance of around 20 minutes.

There were many examples of over time performances. The main concern was with groups of 3 or 4 performing for 30 to 45 minutes.

Centres are reminded that all examiners will stop marking at the maximum time limit for the group size as detailed in the ASG. Often the strongest work was seen after the time limit and could be awarded no marks.

There were a number of very short performances that are self penalising. Some gave estimated performance times that matched the requirements but the actual performance was considerably shorter. This can severely limit

student's ability to meet the criteria. Centres must address this time requirement.

Whatever the time of the complete performance and number of students there is a concern that for some tight ensemble pieces using much group movement and choral vocal work it was a challenge for examiners to securely identify and mark each individual

### **Administration Issues**

In previous series concerns from examiners have been reported in considerable detail. It is disappointing to report that again the same issues have been reported.

Centres must ensure they put in place the requirements for this unit as detailed in the Administrative Support Guide. 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. The 2014 Administrative Support Guide will be on the website in the autumn term of 2013. The specification is also available from the Edexcel website. Other support materials are available both on the website and in publications.

### **Examination Conditions**

Centres are reminded of the need for this paper to have examination conditions to support the students and ensure security of the examination. These are clearly stated in the ASG document. Examiners report that many centres ensured that two or more centre staff were present throughout the examination sessions to ensure the performances ran under exam conditions. Centre staff must ensure that all students and audiences understand that this is an examination that happens to be a performance. Providing students with the best possible conditions is of paramount importance.

Examiners were required to arrive approximately 30 minutes before the first performance/presentation. Centres must understand that many examiners have lengthy journeys and that travel conditions on the day of the exam can vary greatly. The provision of clear directions by centres proved to be very helpful although some centres expected examiners to find all details from the internet. Information on available parking, particularly in urban areas and the provision of a parking space should be done in centres where this may be an issue.

Centres are required to provide the conditions where examiners can mark professionally and with security. This was put in place by most centres this year. The provision of a private place to mark was often some distance from the examination room but centres had not factored this into the examination time table and this caused extra pressure on the examination timetables in some cases.

Many examiners are willing to work undisturbed at the back of the examination room between performances but this must be discussed and clarified with each individual examiner well in advance of the examination dates.

The requirement that at least 20 students can be marked in a 3 hour session was understood by most centres. The timing of each session is dependent on many factors, for example if there are Performance Support students. The size of each performance group is also a factor as all examiners will need more time to consider the marks of large groups.

Some examiners felt under pressure this year to move onto the next group too swiftly. However Edexcel also understands that a few examiners took too long between performances and did not maintain the timetable as agreed with the centre. Edexcel apologises to the centres where this occurred.

### **Small Centres**

If centres have only 1 or 2 students for Unit 3 they will be required to record the performances and send the DVD and all other supporting documentation to Edexcel where it will be despatched and sent to a senior examiner for marking. This needs to be done as soon as possible after the performance and not by the final deadline date. Full details of the procedures can be found on the GCSE drama homepage with the Instructions to Overseas Centres as most of these centres also have to record.

### **Centre Documentation**

The majority of centres completed the documentation well with thought and attention to detail.

There were some centres which did not complete the necessary documentation and meet the deadlines for administration both before and after the examination sessions. This does not support the students as it does not support the examiner in being well prepared.

On the front page of the Assignment Brief all the options are given a letter A-G. This needs to be completed in the Performance Option box on the Group Performance Sheet (D3a).

This is a student task with support from the teacher. Only one is needed per performance group.

Attached to this must be a paragraph that details how the performance has met the Assignment Brief for that year and in addition a paragraph (or more) to put the performance in context.

This is a student task with support from the teacher. Only one is needed per performance group.

There is no prescribed format for this. However examiners report that there was in the majority of cases a correlation between the detail with which this was completed and the standard of the performances seen.

Devised work often had a complete or outline script, breakdown of the scenes and could include details of what forms/style were being used. Some were even more detailed including stage directions, cues and even 'sub text' notes regarding the motivations or unspoken thoughts of the characters. Centres are strongly advised to ensure the completion of this task is built into the preparation of the Unit 3 performances.

Again this year many students failed to complete Section A on form D3b. This again is an individual student task and is to enable all examiners to be well prepared in advance of the exam. The decision of how the students will appear in the performance must be finalised before the documentation is sent to the examiner.

### **Timing of the Examination**

There was a change in the dates the examination can take place. The examination window is the 1st February to 31<sup>st</sup> May. Most centres were contacted by the first week of February 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 Edexcel will not change agreed visit dates visits or find alternative examiners. In these cases centres must be prepared have to have their performances marked on a recording.

There were an increased number of twilight or evening sessions Centres reported that the examination as a performance had a greater sense of occasion and appropriate audiences could attend. But there were instances of inappropriate audiences disadvantaged some candidates. 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. There were concerns that some audience members did not appreciate the role of the examiner and attempted to engage them in conversation between and after the performances.

When exam performances took place during the school day this required careful organisation by the centre to ensure that at least 20 students could be examined in a 3 hour session.

Most examiners reported that this was well managed by centres with break and lunchtimes being used for examiners to consider the marking of students.

Centres wishing to have an extended time period or day outside the regulations of this examination will be required to record the work for external assessment.

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

### **Identification of Students**

Overwhelmingly this was the major concern reported by examiners. A separate paragraph was in the 2012 report regarding this so it is disappointing to report that many centres did not ensure that all students could be clearly identified.

Centres must ensure that clear and detailed descriptions are sent to the examiner in advance (Form D3b).

Centres must ensure that candidates can be clearly identified throughout the performances. There was an increase in groups wearing almost identical costumes. These were frequently 'theatre blacks'. There has been a plea from many examiners that Edexcel should ban this but this cannot be done as it is not in the specification.

The addition inadequate identifiers such as ribbons on student's wrists, labels/badges, headbands, small scarves or flowers is of no use as there most often cannot be seen in performance and certainly not in the recordings.

There was also a difficulty with students wearing several costumes or hats during the performance.

Often this was not mentioned in either the written student descriptions or spoken introductions. Again this was frequently confusing for examiners who were then unable to concentrate fully on the performance in order to be able to award secure marks.

When masks were worn for a part of the performance this also meant examiners could not identify individual student's contributions.

The best practice remains having students in different coloured costumes/outfits that are worn throughout the performance. If appropriate, the addition of some simple item for example an apron or white coat can be used to show different roles.

The practice of providing the examiner with large group full length colour photographs clearly labelled with student names, numbers and roles played was again very helpful for identification by the visiting examiner and invaluable to any senior examiner monitoring the work on the recording.

Most centres ensured candidates introduced themselves clearly on the recording and that this was seen in full head to toe shot not just head and shoulders. Head and shoulder recordings made in advance of the examination performance and edited into the recording are not helpful for identification and should not be done.

Small head shot photographs taken from centre data bases are of no use and centres should not waste their time and money in providing these.

## **Accompanied Visits**

An important aspect of the extensive monitoring process required by Edexcel is that all examiners had an accompanied visit from their Team Leader. This was dealt with by centres with understanding. The choice of centre visits is wholly driven by the available dates of the senior team.

All Team Leaders are instructed that a visit by them must not affect the agreed timetable of the performances but that discussion must take place at a suitable break. Edexcel understands that in a very few cases this did not happen this year and apologises that the correct procedure was not followed.

All Team Leaders were monitored once by their line manager who is an Assistant Principal Examiner. All Assistant Principal Examiners were monitored by either the Principal Examiner or Chair of Examiners. These visits can tend to take a little longer between each performance but all centres should be informed well in advance by their examiner.

The Principal Examiner would like to thank all the centres that she visited this year for the professionalism and positive approach they maintained in the light of having a quartet of examiners present. It is a most rewarding part of the role to see live in centres from all over the country the diversity of the performances presented for the examination.

## **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 centre's work is viewed by the senior team. In line with monitoring procedures for written papers 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.

Centres are required to make a recording of the performance with an unobstructed view. The major concern remains that many of these recordings were dominated by the view of the back of the audiences or examiner(s) head(s) or recorded from a position that did not capture the complete performance on the DVD.

Centres are strongly advised to consider the following concerns regarding the recordings seen:

- Too often the camera was not placed close to the examiner and was frequently so far distant from the performance that the candidates could not be identified.
- The 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 did not pan to record the complete performance
- There was too much use of close ups but these did not always focus on the students speaking at that time but if the person operating the camera knows the piece some judicious use of close ups can be useful in capturing individual performances.
- The camera operators were noisy and conversations or laughter drowned out the sound of the performance
- No body monitored the camera so if it moved during the performance only the floor or ceiling was recorded
- New DVDs were not used so the quality was poor and other work was seen between performances or as 'shadows'
- DVDs were sent that were not of the GCSE Performances but of other student work or even films or television programmes.

Performance Support student's presentations must be made to the camera and the examiner will sit next to it.

Examiners will look at the documentation after the presentation but it must also be clearly recorded after the presentation and edited into the recording. Good practice was noted as many centres gave examiners hard copies of power point presentations.

The requirements for Performance Support students were done very well by the majority of centres.

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.

Many centres completed the time sheet well. Centres are reminded that all performances/presentations must be chapterised. This is most important for finding performances or presentations when reviewing work for monitoring purposes. It is important that centres comment on the quality of the recording. Many centres realise that the recording did not capture the performance well nor 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 on the DVDs 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 checked or reviewed.

The deadline for sending the DVD copies of the examination performances is 10 working days after the final examination session. Many centres did not meet the deadline and a number of centres did not send any recordings at all.

It was also clear that some centres do not check the recordings. Members of the senior team on receiving recordings as part of the monitoring of examiners report a range of problems. The vast majority of centres now send DVDs and many of these were of excellent quality. As detailed in the ASG these will only be played in a standard DVD player for both monitoring and Enquiries About Results (EAR) procedures.

Many DVDs were not sent in hard protective cases and become damaged in the post so could not be used as part of the extensive monitoring process. Many arrived with examiners either with no protective covering or just a paper envelope or plastic cover in a paper envelope.

Examiners are not required to check the recordings or inform centres where the DVD is damaged.

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. This may result in any Enquiries after Results having to be cancelled as they cannot be completed.

## **Summary**

It is positive to report that the standard of achievement by students in 2013 was somewhat higher than in previous series.

The range and diversity of centres and students involved in this specification demonstrates 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 Unit Three.

It is a unique examination that enables candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of drama by demonstrating it in a live performance to an audience. Examiners report on the positive experience that it was to work with all those involved in this examination. Work seen was described as creative, thought provoking, emotionally and intellectually challenging, and inspiring.

The performances seen reinforced that centres continue to work to encourage in all students' creativity, confidence, leadership, working as a member of a group, meeting deadlines, making decisions, and working co-operatively. Examiners confirmed their belief these would all be of great value to the students in their future lives.

It is both to the credit of the 2013 cohort of students and the creative and committed teachers who have worked with them that this examination has been again a success in 2013.



Based on their performance in this Unit, centres and students should:

- Centres must ensure that both the specification and Assessment Support Guide requirements are adhered to in preparation for the performance examination
- Centres must support all students in making a positive choice from the options in Unit 3
- Centres must ensure the very best possible recordings are made of all performances and presentations
- Students must ensure they are secure with all aspects of their final performance
- Students must ensure they complete all the written requirements of Unit 3
- Students must ensure they can be clearly identified throughout the performance by not wearing similar costumes to any other group member



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