

Principal Moderator's Report

Summer 2017

GCSE Drama (5DR01)
Unit 1: Drama Exploration

5DR01 Drama Exploration

Introduction

This is the final year of examination of the three unit GCSE specification 2DR01 and as such, the Controlled Assessment Unit 5DR01 is well-established, and has been well-supported by a myriad of online resources. Extensive Reports from the Principal Moderator are available online for the previous three years; this report is therefore a summative one, designed to support centres by highlighting key issues for the 2017 series only.

Content of 5DR01

The 5DR01 unit is made up of two components, each with a separate assessment objective. The focus of the unit has been the exploration of a centre-chosen theme/ topic/ issue over 6 hours of practical drama, taught and assessed by the teacher for Paper 01 Exploration. This exploration has then been evaluated in a written Documentary Response which comprises Paper 02 Evaluation.

Key requirements and elements of content:

- Paper 01 and paper 02 have been assessed in Controlled Conditions (level of control - medium), with the drama teacher supervising, assessing and facilitating the work
- The theme/ topic/ issue has been selected by the centre to meet the needs of each group of students
- At least two different types of stimuli have been chosen, through which the theme/ topic/ issue has been explored
- 6 hours of Practical Exploration has been made available to all students
- Skills used throughout the unit have included the use of at least four strategies, two uses of the drama medium and the use of Drama elements for Paper 01, and the evaluation of students' own work and the work of others for Paper 02.

There has been essential guidance for all centres about all GCSE units in the Administrative Support Guide (ASG) document, which has been updated for each series, has been made available to centres online each Autumn and was re-formatted for ease of reference in 2017. The Assessment forms for all three units have also been made available as both PDF and editable Word documents.

Records of Work

A detailed Record of the Work undertaken by each group of students when exploring the chosen theme, topic or issue, has been a requirement of 5DR01; detailed guidance about this was once again provided in the 2017 ASG document in addition to the **optional** Record of Work pro-forma D1e. Popular themes for 5DR01 Exploration included, but were not limited to:

- Madness/ Mental Health/ Monsters of the Mind
- Persecution/ Stand up for your rights/ Feminism
- Gangs and Riots/ Conflict/ War
- Identity/ Fame/ Body-image

The overwhelming majority of centres in 2017 chose a concrete theme/ issue rather than a topic although there were some successful narrative units seen for example, work focused on the 'story' of a specific individual or on a specific historical event, for example the Aberfan disaster or the Columbine shooting. There were also a number centres who took inspiration from more recent events such as the Syrian immigration crisis or the Paris/ London terrorist attacks. Where centres selected the theme, topic or issue carefully, with their own specific students in mind, the exploration tended to be interesting for both the candidates to engage with and for the moderator to watch.

Stimuli chosen have tended to be largely literary with a significant proportion of centres using music and/ or images to supplement written stimuli. Most centres met the requirements here although there were some centres where students explored the theme generally in one or two sessions before moving onto make use of chosen stimuli. Such choices did not tend to support students fully; similarly, where chosen themes were either too abstract, or too broad in scope, understanding often proved elusive for students. The choice and development of theme by the teacher-assessor was significant in how candidates achieved in the 2017 series and best practice was seen where this development was clearly demonstrated through the Record of Work.

Once again in 2017, the optional form D1e was made available to centres, aiding in the presentation of Records of Work, supporting the submission of records of practical work actually completed, rather than a scheme of planned possible lessons. For the majority of centres this pro-forma helped centres to produce a detailed and helpful working document which aided the moderation process. Equally, there were many clearly annotated schemes of work which recorded with clarity the exploration completed by students across the six hours. The best practice seen included timings and clear records of the actual strategies, medium and elements of Drama used in each session by each teaching group. A copy of the stimulus material, the Documentary Response notes tasks and/ or guidance sheets were helpfully presented by many centres and centres presented their records of work both in the future tense (“students will complete...”) the present tense (“students complete...”) and the past (“students completed...”) Any/ all of these options have been acceptable provided that the activities listed are those actually completed by each group of students.

The most successful ROWs offered students the opportunity to experiment with form and were based on challenging issues/topics/themes which caught the imagination and interest of the students. Successful units clearly addressed the need for a range of strategies/medium in each session of the 6 hours, while less effective ROWs often tended to focus on breadth rather than depth, for example through the use of one strategy and/ or one stimulus per session, without for example, offering students the opportunity to develop their exploration of the chosen stimulus by using an additional strategy.

Paper 01 Practical Exploration

Paper 01 marks have been based on the entire six-hour exploration and the marks awarded were required to reflect the application and imagination shown across all the workshops. A recording of one sample practical session with five students identified for moderation purposes, has been a requirement of the unit, and teacher-assessors have been required provide marks **for that session only** for the five identified students, based on their achievement in the recorded session. As in 2016, teacher-assessors were required to make a summative comment on every students' achievement over the 6-hour exploration on the D1a Controlled Assessment Record card and a detailed comment on the D1c Sample Session for the sample students only. Many centres made effective use of the D1c to record marks and comments regarding the achievement of the selected students during the sample session, avoiding repetition of the assessment criteria, and offering clear examples in support.

In 2017, the practical activities carried out for the Sample Session ranged from the highly imaginative and clearly focused on the immediate exploration of the chosen theme, topic or issue, to the recording of activities which should have taken place outside of the 6-hour exploration such as note-taking, gaining knowledge of the stimulus material and warm up activities un-related to the theme, topic or issue in question. Teacher-assessors have been free to choose the most suitable tasks for their students within each session of exploration, considering, in addition to theme and stimulus, the pace of each session, the nature of each task, the length of time allowed for development and opportunities for creative exploration and progression of student understanding of theme, topic or issue.

The role of the teacher in this filmed session has therefore been of vital importance and the most successful recordings have shown the teacher facilitating exploration while providing the freedom for creative collaboration to take place. The overwhelming majority of centres supported their students appropriately, demonstrating one of the strengths of the specification which has been the freedom of teacher-assessors to provide the level of support required by their individual students.

The structure and pace of the session has also been a key factor; where strategies were used at an appropriate pace and then developed into further exploration, generally students were more creative, had greater opportunities for collaboration, and their work was of a higher quality in all respects. Where the pace of activities lacked challenge, for example the completion of one still image as the main task for the session, students tended to drift into repetition and/ or lose focus and of necessity, this limited the outcome for all students. Sharing of work, where centres had made the distinction between 'work in progress' and 'performance', has been particularly helpful to the moderation of the session.

There were centres in 2017 where this distinction had not been fully realised and students clearly understood themselves to be engaged in the production of performance work. While the sharing of work in process would have been an integral part of the six hours for all students, the work shared will not have been polished or prepared to a performance standard as what has been assessed here is the process rather than the product of the practical exploration.

Verbal evaluation took place in many recorded sessions and this was often evidently both helpful and supportive to students where the evaluation of the work shared linked clearly to the exploration of the theme, topic or issue rather than to performance skills. However, in a small proportion of centres, candidates were somewhat disadvantaged where centres had tried to justify understanding through long periods of discussion or verbal evaluation to camera, rather than evidencing the actual practical exploration. Evaluation has always been assessed through the written Documentary Response (Paper 02) only.

The Sample Session

Throughout the specification, the requirement of the unit has been for a single unedited teaching session, ideally of approximately one hour and of no longer than two hours in length. This should have been recorded from a **fixed camera** position, although in 2017, the requirements for formatting was extended to include USB pen drives and portable hard drives as well as DVDs, and to allow recordings completed using Windows Media Player, Quick-time and VLC as well as those formatted to play on a conventional DVD player.

The quality of the recording has been of paramount importance throughout the life of the specification; centres have been required to ensure that they are able to produce a clear, good quality recording for the moderator.

Most centres provided their recorded evidence on either DVD or USB with very few centres submitting hard drives. In the vast majority of cases, DVDs were clearly chapterised and clearly labelled, both on the disc and on the case. USBs did not tend to be labelled but where the pen drive was both clearly labelled and named, this was most supportive to the moderation process. Recordings tended to be of good to reasonable quality, with some examples of excellent practice. As in previous series', the best practice was often seen where teacher assessors had seemingly viewed the recording although this is not a requirement of the specification.

Students have been required identify themselves on the recording with clear statement of name and student number. Teachers have also been required to clearly identify students on the D1c Sample Session Record card. In 2017, while many centres had ensured that students were easily identifiable, moderators reported that identification was still a problem in some sample sessions.

As in 2016, there were some examples of practices such as the use of small labels and ribbons to identify students (which tended not to be visible to the camera) and where a fixed camera recorded the entire session without any use of pan or zoom functions. In a very few cases, there were students selected for moderation whose work was not sufficiently visible to camera to support the moderation process. There were also a minority of centres that made use of a 'roaming' camera and/ or who asked students to explain their ideas to camera; this practice did not support students in their exploration as the camera/ teacher-assessor became an intrusion/ interruption and as marks awarded for this paper are for practical exploration only.

For the new specification Component 1, advice on the identification of students for the moderator and on creating high quality recordings is available in the appendices to the specification document.

Paper 02 Documentary Response

The Practical Exploration process has been evaluated in the Documentary Response to Unit One, an on-paper evaluation, with a maximum of 2,000 words to be submitted for assessment/ moderation. The requirement has been for this piece of work to be completed in Controlled Conditions. Students have been given the opportunity to record the exploration process over the course of the unit. These notes have been used to support the completion of the final documentary response in the Controlled Conditions Assessment sessions and have been refined to encapsulate the students' evaluative response to the exploration process and the way in which they explored the theme, topic or issue throughout this exploration. All reflection, analysis and evaluation within the Documentary Response is required to relate to the six-hour practical exploration.

In most centres, students recorded accurate word counts for the documentary evidence but there were others where this was approximate, where the word count was not completed and/ or where students had clearly exceeded the maximum number of words. This year, it was reported that a larger number of responses exceeded the word limit than in previous series, some writing as much as 2,900 words. In cases where the word limit was exceeded, some of the best work came after the 2,000 words, although this was not always the case. Documentary Responses were moderated only up to the point where the word count was exceeded.

Overall, responses made good use of the allowable word maximum of 2,000 words for this paper. Where candidates had exceeded this word maximum, or had failed to make full use of it, this was acknowledged by the majority of teacher-assessors in both their D1a comments and the marks awarded. It was also very pleasing to note that many centres this year had supported students in providing clear, specific examples of both their own work and the work of others, and the best practice showed students evaluating these very specific examples clearly and in balance.

Overall, most Documentary Responses were this year presented on A4 paper, word processed and in a continuous prose format. Writing frames were once again used by many centres which was supportive to many less able students although this could be somewhat limiting for some of the more able students. As with Paper 1, it was noted that where candidates had been allowed a degree of freedom there was scope for greater depth of understanding. Some centres had encouraged candidates to reflect upon practitioner theory which is not a specific focus for GCSE; while in some instances this was supportive to students, in many instances this demonstrated a lack of holistic understanding of the practical drama exploration that had taken place.

The moderating team reported in 2018 a larger incidence of plagiarism than had ever been seen in 5DR01, where students appeared to have accessed the work of other students online or from their own centre. It was thought that this may have been due to the gradual phasing out of Controlled Conditions in core subjects in centres, due to the changes in the new specifications. Regardless of Controlled Conditions, the requirement for internally assessed units across all specifications is that teacher-assessors must authenticate that the assessed work is the candidates' own. Where teacher-assessors are unable to do this, the work must be withdrawn and the candidates involved awarded zero. Where moderators identify possible plagiarism, the work of the entire centre must be referred to the Pearson malpractice team. These procedures will remain relevant to the Non-Examined Assessment work assessed and submitted for Component 1 in 2018 and beyond.

See the JCQ website for further information:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/in>

This paper has never required students to write about all six hours of exploration; a number of student responses demonstrated an episodic account of what candidates had said and done in each of the practical sessions; this approach tended to lack depth of evaluation and understanding. More successful in this final year was the approach where teacher-assessors had prepared students in considering their journey over the unit, with a sense of cross-reference between sessions, and of a development of ideas as a result of completing the six-hour assessment. This enabled students' work to evidence both depth and breadth of understanding and to meet the assessment criteria at the highest levels.

Administration and Centre Documentation

The majority of centres completed this effectively and met the submission deadline of May 15th with no issues. There was an administrative change to all internally assessed units in all subjects during the series in 2017, where marks were required to be submitted via Edexcel online only, as Pearson had withdrawn the use of OPTeMs across all subject areas. As this was a late change, the requirement to submit a hard copy of the submitted marks, with the authentication statement signed by the centre assessor, was understandably misunderstood by some centres, and this caused a delay in moderating team the work submitted by these centres.

Most teacher-assessors had completed all documentation effectively and accurately, but according to the moderating team, there was a slight increase in the number of missing materials, and administrative errors for example missing or incomplete Records of Work, D1c forms missing from packs and incomplete D1a and D1c forms. There were also more instances reported where online marks did not match marks recorded on the assessment forms and as these needed to be verified, this also caused a delay to the moderation of these centres' work.

Edexcel Feedback and Support to Centres

Enquiries about Results

These are completed by members of the senior team using the original Documentary Responses, and/ or Recordings as well as the Assessment Forms which have this year been returned to centres. An Enquiry can be requested on either Paper 01 or Paper 02 or on both aspects of the unit. EARs for this unit are for the whole centre as the original moderation process will be repeated by the EAR moderator and centres will be charged for re-moderation unless centre marks are re-instated. A detailed report will be produced for each centre, providing feedback for the centre, and explaining the findings of the re-moderation process.

Drama Subject Advisory Team

Paul Webster, a full-time member of Pearsons/ Edexcel staff, has been available again throughout the 2017 series to respond to centre queries and to support centres via telephone and email contact as well as through social networking sites. This has proved a successful innovation for the specification.

He and his team are available to respond to centre queries via email at:

TeachingPerformingArts@Pearson.com

Student queries can be addressed to students@pearson.com.

It must be noted that the Subject Advisor has no access to centre data, and cannot comment on the moderation process in terms of mark regression or on the content of E9 reports to centres. Where centres require more detailed information, an EAR must be requested for that paper.

Approval of material to be used or any administrative issues is beyond the remit of the subject advisory team.

Training From Edexcel

Edexcel has a programme of national, face to face, free standardisation meetings, as well as online training. All details are available on the Edexcel website via the training home page.

Conclusion

In the final year of the specification, it is pleasing to note that centres this year have demonstrated continuing assurance in with the 5DR01 unit, with students almost universally demonstrating engagement, enjoyment and understanding as the result of their Unit 1 exploration.

Centre marking in the vast majority of centres remained accurate in terms of the rank order of marks for students sampled on both papers; however, many teacher-assessors have continued to struggle to accurately judge the level at which their students are working. There was evidence of

harsh marking by centres at the lower end of the ability range, sometimes for example where candidates' verbal input within the practical exploration was limited but practical engagement or collaborative work had not been recognised or acknowledged. Equally, at the top of the ability range, teacher-assessors did not always accurately assess the levels of creativity and imaginative exploration evidenced in that session, assuming that their highest achieving candidate was worthy of full marks. The result of this was that the spread of the candidates' marks was in some cases less wide than originally judged by the teacher-assessor.

Moderators in 2017 once more commented that, in the vast majority of cases, GCSE Drama students were exceptionally focused and committed to their work in Drama; for the entire team, there was a sense that it had been another highly positive experience to share the journey of drama exploration with all our students.

Exploration has been a significant element of the assessed component to GCSE Drama, not only within the 2DR01 specification but also within the legacy specifications which preceded it. While it is sad to see the end of assessed practical exploration in this final year of 2DR01, the wealth of skills, resources and experience developed by centres delivering this unit will undoubtedly support the GCSE Drama students of the future in creating their own devised performance work as well as in evaluating the devising process, and their own contribution to this process and to the final performances produced. Further, the new assessment objective 'create and develop' focusses on the skills used in 5DR01, albeit with the assessment of this work taking place in a different form. I very much look forward to seeing how creatively centres will develop their approaches to this assessment objective in the future, using their experience from 5DR01.

I wish I could personally thank all the teachers of drama, specialist and non-specialist, who have worked so hard to make Unit 1 a life-enhancing experience for all our students, facing the challenges of teaching in the Creative Arts in 2017 with resilience and a passionate belief in Drama. I would also want to acknowledge the contribution of the many highly committed moderators who have worked tirelessly to ensure that every student achieves the right mark, first time. Many of these dedicated professionals will go forward to deliver and assess the new specification with the same levels of commitment and professionalism and I know that all at Pearson look forward to this continuing professional relationship.

This unit, developing skills of empathy and imagination alongside the capacity for individuals to collaborate and to create understanding **together**, is something of which every teacher and student of GCSE Drama over the life of the specification can feel justly proud. As Principal throughout the series, I, along with the dedicated moderation team, have been privileged to be a part of the drama process whereby students have learnt a little more about Drama, about life, and about themselves and each-other.