GCSE

Drama

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J315**

Examiners' Reports

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Drama (J315)

EXAMINERS' REPORTS

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A581 From Page to Stage

Page to Stage allows candidates to explore how a published script is animated and brought to life for an audience whilst focusing on the original intentions of the playwright. Candidates have the opportunity to research the historical and cultural context of the text and adopt or adapt the design elements in the script.

The unit requires candidates to rehearse their chosen extract for a final performance having developed and practised the skills necessary to deliver an effective performance.

Most centres had fulfilled all the requirements of this unit with due regard for the assessment criteria.

The texts chosen for performance covered a diverse range of genre and style.

By far the most popular texts were 'Blood Brothers' and 'Bouncers'. However, those centres who allowed candidates to perform cross gender should consider whether girls playing 'Mickey' and 'Edward' or four female 'Bouncers' allowed their candidates to realise their full abilities and whether the original intentions of the playwright were fully understood.

Set Task

Moderators reported the following:

- Some centres exceeded the maximum number in a group which penalised some candidates.
- Candidates who did not exceed the time limit found it easier to maintain their focus, character and context than those whose extract was a series of sections from a text or ran on too long.
- The majority of centres used stage lighting to create mood and atmosphere. However in some centres the lighting states did not allow the moderator to fully observe and track the candidate throughout the extract.
- Moderators reported the following positives:
- Although the content of this unit was a departure from the previous specification, candidates had in the main embraced the changes with enthusiasm and integrity.
- The series of workshops prior to the controlled assessment had clearly encouraged students to explore and research the text and background.
- In the main performances had clearly been well rehearsed and very few candidates were not totally confident about their lines.
- Centres were commended for their imaginative use of a range of semiotics. In particular the use of costume, props, lighting and sound

The Working Record

Moderators reported the following:

- High achieving candidates were restricted by the use of writing frames and templates.
- Some centres had not allowed sufficient time for due evaluation to be recorded.
- Moderators highlighted these positives:
- The most successful notebooks were succinct documents, which were clearly divided into three sections. Such notebooks included a pertinent understanding of the genre, style, social, historical and geographical context of the script. An understanding of the playwright's intentions and implications for performance formed the basis for the working record.
- Candidates who produced apt designs, sketches and ground plans which were well drawn and appropriately labelled enhanced their notebooks.
- Candidates who included a succinct evaluation of their own performance, that of one other candidate and audience response were commended. Some centres included copies of focused questionnaires completed by the audience. These questionnaires allowed candidates to reflect on a range of detailed and useful feedback.
- Clearly marked and annotated work aided the moderation process.

Moderators reported the following issues regarding DVD evidence:

- DVD's needed to be checked before sending to the moderator for both oral and visual clarity.
- The camera should be placed in front of the audience in a central position. A tripod should be used to avoid a 'shaky' presentation.
- Centres should ensure that any stage lighting allows all candidates to be recognised and tracked throughout the extract.
- Where possible centres should ensure their DVD's are compatible with 'Windows Media'.
- All work should be chaptered and a clear running order provided for the moderator.
- Before performing all candidates in the group should speak their name, candidate number and role slowly and clearly to the camera.
- All centres should keep a copy of the DVD.

In conclusion moderators spoke positively about the enthusiasm and engagement that candidates demonstrated both in the performance area and in their working records for their chosen text.

Shortly a list of suitable texts for this unit will be posted on the e community at OCR. Please peruse the list and add to it if you have a text which you have found successful.

A582 Drama in the Making

The spirit of this unit is for candidates to explore and develop understanding of the devising process using stimulus material. It is comparable to the way many playwrights work with an acting company to devise a play – the early improvisations, discussions and explorations they do. In doing this they demonstrate critical and reflective thinking.

The three items for assessment seen by moderators in this session covered a wide range of drama and theatre possibilities. This was as it should be. Stimuli used were varied and appropriate except in a few centres where a text was used as a stimulus. The playwright has already devised the character, plot, structure and contexts, so these opportunities are denied the candidates. In centres taking this approach the emphasis was more on performing than devising. Such an approach is the heart of unit A581 Page to Stage not this unit.

Moderators reported the following:

Item 1 the group improvisation was familiar territory and was tackled with confidence. Two issues arose:

1. Some centres were approaching this as a full scale rehearsed and performed piece, to the extent of using lights and costume. This item is meant to be a disciplined, well planned improvisation, which is testing whether the ideas would be worth fully developing as a play. For example one centre had a group perform two versions with slight alternatives to assess which has the better potential. Time taken polishing and costuming is taking time away from considering alternatives to structure, plot, character, themes, which are all central to this unit.
2. To ensure there is opportunity for each candidate to try their ideas. Both centres and moderators noted that a group size of no more than 4 works best. Where there were groups of six some candidates did not have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability. This resulted in such candidates scoring less marks on this item than later ones.

Moderators highlighted this positive approach:

- Candidates who led feedback after the presentation by asking their audience specific questions were demonstrating their evaluative skills. This was all evidence for their evaluation. This feedback is filmed as part of the presentation and constitutes part of the Working Record. (Note this can be done after any of the 3 items is presented).

Items 2/3 demonstrated a wide variety of approaches and allowed many candidates to be creative and demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding in ways that were not possible in item 1. Sharing their ideas as a formal presentation obviously gave many of them a real sense of achievement and audiences were attentive and enthusiastic.

Moderators reported the following:

1. Candidates who were given a license to explore were often more engaging than those who worked to prescribed set tasks.
2. Ideally each item should be totally separate and generate new material. So for instance writing a monologue for item 2 then performing it for item 3. Only one piece of potential content for the play has been generated. It would be better to have three completely different pieces of material.

3. In group presentations there must be sufficient clear evidence for each individual candidate. Design ideas and scripting may best be kept as individual items. Although individual creative solutions can be generated that do work e.g. a centre had small groups working on alternative endings to a scene, which involved them acting out the alternatives and analyzing the pros and cons. There was enough material generated and individual contributions were identifiable. The same centre had used a group approach to a set design where a mock up had been created and each candidate had enough individual contribution. This was rare as in most examples seen a group presented a sheet of designs with no indication of who was responsible for what. Such a task needs to be sub-divided with individuals taking responsibility for their section.

Moderators highlighted these positives:

*   Monologues and duologues were very well tackled, both in terms of performance skills and the quality of the script itself.
*   Teacher's deciding whether an item is marked as a Performer or Deviser. (For example a candidate acts out monologue, do you want to mark it as a performance or as a script)
*   The varied ways candidates presented design ideas, some mocking up simple ideas on stage and 'walking through' the ideas to illustrate and give clarity.
*   Lighting ideas accompanied by illustrative power points or in some cases with a simple demonstration.
*   Director/playwright explanations of how the material could be developed – social/cultural/historical context, genre, performance style and audience.
*   Director working with an actor directing them through part of a script.
*   Devisers explaining their selection of language and demonstrating how phrases/lines work in action.

NOTE: Presentations are an oral part of the Working Record and cut down the need to put everything in writing. Candidates should reference them in their Working Record eg '*See presentation for item 2 for my staging ideas.*'

Moderators reported the following issues regarding DVD evidence:

1. DVD's. These need to be of good quality in regards of sound and vision. Items need to be chaptered for ease of navigation. Candidates need to identify themselves before each item, stating name and candidate number. This must be done very slowly and clearly and not rushed. It is perfectly acceptable and helpful to put a candidate's items 2 and 3 together on the DVD.
2. Items filmed under stage lights often completely wash out candidates faces making moderation difficult. In this unit stage lighting is only relevant to a candidate presenting on stage lighting or semiotics.
3. The DVD should be accompanied with a paper running order listing names and candidate numbers.
4. It may not be necessary to film a presentation for each item, for example if a candidate has written a piece of script for Item 2 that is the presentation. Or if they create slides for a power point on their design ideas, the print out is the presentation.
5. The candidates Working Record needs to be clearly sectioned and labelled. There are 5 sections. The Introduction (in 1 hour the candidates have before the 10 hours practical work), Item 1 , Item 2, Item 3 and Final Evaluation (in the 1 hour after 10 hours practical is complete).

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