



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Performing Arts

48801

(Specification 4880)

Unit 1: Skills development

Report on the Examination

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Unit 1- 48801: Skills development

Introduction

This is the second year of examination for this Unit; the first Unit of study within this specification of GCSE Performing Arts. Moderators reported that the majority of centres now have a clear understanding of the Unit requirements. The main focus for this Unit is to equip candidates with the skills and approaches necessary to develop themselves as practitioners within the performing arts. It is certainly exciting to see the range of disciplines covered within centres, including non performance roles such as design skills and technical theatre. Work submitted covered the full range of achievement and clearly there is some excellent practice in centres from the evidence in candidate portfolios. Only a minority of centres attended the standardisation meetings in the autumn and early spring terms but many centre teachers made good use of the Controlled Assessment Advisers throughout the delivery of the Unit.

Administration

Please note that the deadline for the submission of marks is 7th May. Although some centres adhered to this deadline, moderators reported that a significant proportion were (to differing degrees) late; which creates a delay in the process. Centres which have 20 candidates or fewer for this Unit should submit all portfolios with their marks by the 7th May deadline. Moderators reported that some centres had not given sufficient consideration to the collation of the portfolios; poorly fastened work comes loose in the post. Centres must ensure that work is securely collated; spiral binding and stapling are effective methods. Please do not send work in bulky folders or ring binders. Centres are advised to take care when adding up marks to avoid unnecessary addition errors.

Centre marking

It is imperative that all portfolios give a clear indication of how centre teachers have arrived at the mark awarded for each assessment objective. An assessment grid must be included with each of the sampled portfolios with a clear commentary and reference to page numbers to clarify where credit has been awarded. Most centres also provided annotation within the portfolio itself to indicate the coverage of assessment objectives or to indicate a mark band which is extremely supportive of the moderation process. Work which is forwarded to the moderator with insufficient evidence of centre marking may be returned to the centre for additional comment.

Organisation of portfolios

It is advisable for centres and candidates to give careful consideration to the structure of the portfolio. Some portfolios provided a very clear picture of the candidate's journey throughout the Unit, with a careful contextualisation of the briefs, workshops and research undertaken. This made it straightforward for the moderator to understand the nature of the work and link written records and evaluations to practical experience. Other portfolios were extremely chaotic and offered very little explanation of how written evidence related to practical activity. Whilst it is acceptable for candidates to use the GCSE Performing Arts course as a vehicle to explore other subjects it must be clear that all evidence offered clearly relates to the assessment objectives and the aims of the course. Please note that 48801 Skills Development is intended to be a practically explored Unit. The coverage of all assessment objectives should be related to practical activity and experience and this should be evidenced in the portfolio. Many centres are to be congratulated on the range of practical experiences

offered to candidates who have clearly benefitted from an exciting course. Thought should be given to the three observations of the candidate's practice included within the portfolio. For some candidates these were detailed and insightful, for others they were so general that they offered little or no helpful comment. Finally, many moderators have commented on the sheer size of some portfolios; literally hundreds of pages. Whilst the commitment of candidates is to be congratulated it is absolutely unnecessary to produce portfolios of this size. On closer inspection, these portfolios are often 'padded' with unnecessary material such as very generalised research, unannotated scripts with no suggestion of authorship, unannotated photographs etc. Such material should be removed.

The following sections offer a brief analysis of moderators' comments on centre responses to each assessment objective:

Skills Development

All candidates should clearly identify their skills base in a detailed audit at the start of the Unit. Although checklists might be a valuable aid for this task, more extended comment is required to access the higher mark bands. This section is closely related to the practical activities undertaken. Candidates should analyse how their skills have improved throughout the Unit as an outcome of practice, rehearsal and reflection. It was encouraging to see centres offering a range of disciplines for candidates to experience including makeup, costume, puppetry, sound and lighting as well as drama, music and dance. A wide range of evidence was seen by moderators. Lesson logs and diaries are acceptable as long as they do not become overly narrative and lack focus on the skills development of the individual candidate. Photographic evidence was used by some candidates which is useful if candidates comment on how the practical work relates to ongoing skills development. Some centres made excellent use of target setting exercises where candidates reflected very precisely on how progress had been made against clearly defined goals. It was encouraging to see an improvement in the use of appropriate technical vocabulary across a range of disciplines. Weaker responses tended to offer 'descriptions' of the practical work undertaken without any real reflective comment on how the experience had developed skills. For this assessment objective, candidates should focus on their own skills, not the skills of a group. Please note that evidence for 'health and safety' should be awarded credit within 'Skills development', not 'Contextual understanding of work related aspects'.

Planning and research

Most centres have a good grasp of the evidence required for this assessment objective. There is certainly a tendency for portfolios to have more evidence of planning than research. Planning may be evidenced in the form of rehearsal diaries, schedules, designs, sketches, annotated scripts etc. It is extremely important that the individual candidate's contribution to the planning is absolutely clear. Copied 'group' evidence in more than one portfolio is not good practice unless it is heavily personalised with detailed annotation. Evidence for research can be problematic. Some portfolios have extended sections of thematic research that have been downloaded from the internet, with little comment as to how it relates to any practical activity or the brief. Such evidence will gain very little or no credit. Good examples of research included specific exploration to inform the development of a character or design element; specific research into a theme or influencing practitioner. The key element is that the research must be focused and the relevance to the practical work it informs must be clear.

Practical activities

This section holds the largest share of the marks awarded for this Unit (25). Teachers will base this mark on an assessment of the candidate's contribution to the practical activities

s/he has been involved in over the duration of the Unit. This may well include both performance practice and other practical experience such as design and/or technical tasks. Some centres awarded very high marks for this assessment objective with very little portfolio evidence to support the mark. It is important that portfolios offer a record of evidence for the practical work undertaken. This might include: annotated photographs; teacher/peer observations; reviews; performance evaluations; programs etc.

Contextual understanding of work related aspects

For the majority of centres this was the weakest area. Candidates should endeavour to link their exploration of professional practice with their own development. Many candidates offered research based evidence into actors or dancers but with little or no relevance to their own practice. No credit can be given for unannotated information from the internet. Better examples offered evidence of theatre visits, workshops, and interviews with practitioners and placement work. Candidates linked this learning with their own practice/skills development very directly as opposed to vague 'influences'. Some centres are to be highly commended for the efforts they make to cover this assessment objective with candidates benefitting from very direct engagement with professional practice.

Evaluation

There was some very good evidence of teacher support with this assessment objective with effective use of self, peer and group assessment strategies. Most candidates offered a range of evidence including evaluations of productions seen and evaluative comment throughout design-based briefs. Weaker responses tended to explain 'what they had done' rather than reflect on the process with any evaluative comment. It is the 'how' and 'why' which are the important factors in this area. Very strong evidence for this assessment objective considered how a candidate's practice may have changed/developed as a result of the evaluation undertaken, with specific examples offered in support. It was good to see some excellent use of technical vocabulary across a range of disciplines, which added authority to candidates' responses.