



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Performing Arts

48803

(Specification 4880)

Unit 3: Working to a commission

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2011 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

Unit 3- 48803: Working to a commission

Introduction

This is the first year of examination for this Unit and the assessment objectives demand that centres recognise the key features of evidence for candidate portfolios. Moderators reported that although they saw some excellent practice, some centres had clearly not fully appreciated the developments in the specification. This is the first Unit of the Double Award and candidates are expected to build on the foundations they have made through studying Unit 1 Skills Development and Unit 2 Showcase Performance. Primarily they will be experiencing a series of simulations or practice commissions throughout their exploration of Unit 3, which will in turn help them to tackle Unit 4 Final performance / designs for the chosen commission.

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 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 practice commissions and other work undertaken. This made it straightforward for the moderator to understand the nature of the work and link written records and evaluation to practical experience. Other portfolios were extremely chaotic and offered very little explanation of how written evidence related to practical activity.

Please note that it is a requirement of this Unit that candidates include two observations of their practice during the Unit; one by a teacher and one by a peer. These observations must be sufficiently detailed to make a contribution to the overall evidence of the candidate's performance.

Centres should be aware that work that has already been assessed for Unit 1 must not be included in Unit 3 portfolios. 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

The majority of centres had clearly helped candidates to reflect on the skills they had developed throughout the Single Award. It is certainly good practice for candidates to identify these skills and to set some clear goals for improvement during Unit 3. Some centres clearly encouraged candidates to diversify during this Unit which added a greater range and depth to their practical work. The majority of centres had appreciated the requirement for the work for this Unit to be primarily centred on practice commissions and the skills appropriate for the chosen topics. Frequently this gave a real sense of vocational purpose to the candidates' development. Many candidates were aware of health and safety considerations and how they applied to the rehearsal process as well as performance. Some candidates carefully considered how their individual skills were appropriate to specific audiences and locations. It was pleasing to see that many candidates had a confident grasp of appropriate technical language as it applied to a range of disciplines. Weaker work tended to be rather narrative and explain or describe practical experience rather than analyse how improvements in specific skills had been made. One concern was that some candidates who had clearly been involved in group performances rarely reflected on their own practice but constantly referred to the work of the group.

Research and planning

Most candidates dealt with this section reasonably effectively. Research was applied to the requirements of the commission and was most effective where clear links were made to the impact of the research on the developing practical work. Very generalised research that offered limited personal insight gained little credit. Many of the practice commissions had a thematic base and they provided excellent opportunities for candidates to use research to strengthen their ideas and performance outcomes.

Evidence of planning was variable. It included designs, notes, agendas and minutes from company meetings, schedules and budgets. Some evidence was very well presented and the planning process was made very clear. It was easy to recognise the individual candidate's contribution. In other cases, evidence for planning was very haphazard and chaotic with very little explanation of the responsibilities of the individual candidate.

It is very important that for each practice commission and the Unit 4 commission that candidates include clear details of two proposals for the project with reasons given for the selection of the chosen option.

Simulations /Practice Commissions

It is essential that centres appreciate that the practical mark for this assessment objective is based on the work completed on the simulations and practice commissions and not the development of the Unit 4 commission.

Some centres had chosen to work on several ‘mini’ commissions whilst others focused on fewer and longer practice commissions. Evidence for this area was most effective when it was absolutely clear what the commission entailed, the candidate’s role within it and a documentation of the performance. In some portfolios it was very difficult to see how the practical work completed related to specific commissions. More time should be given over to the layout and organisation of the evidence in portfolios. It is the candidate’s responsibility to provide documentary evidence of the practical work undertaken, e.g. annotated photos, evaluations, witness statements, programs and performance records to support the mark awarded.

Contextual understanding of work related aspects

This assessment objective was generally the weakest in terms of candidate response. It is essential that candidates link their exploration of professional practice with their own ongoing work. In the very best examples, candidates who were exploring commissions that were based, for example, on Theatre in Education models conducted detailed research into professional companies that were working in a similar field. The very best links were first hand, with visits to performances, interviews and involvement in workshops. Other good examples included candidates who allowed themselves to be influenced by the style of a specific working practitioner and could relate specific steps in their development to this influence. Less successful were candidates who interpreted ‘influence’ purely as ‘motivation’ and offered very general comments about why they admired a celebrity or figure from the entertainment industry. Such evidence offered no real insight into why such an influence was of any specific use to the commission in question.

Many candidates failed to include a CV which is now a requirement for this assessment objective. Several different and acceptable approaches to the presentation of CVs were offered by candidates. The best examples were provided by candidates who had clearly researched a range of examples.

Evaluation

Most candidates offered a range of evidence including evaluations of productions seen, the work of others and evaluative comments throughout the process of developing the practice commissions. Weaker responses tended to explain ‘what they had done’ rather than reflect on the process with any perceptive evaluative comment. It is the ‘how’ and ‘why’ which are the important factors in this area. Several centres used the format of lesson diaries which in some cases was a good source of evidence. This format does not provide good evidence of evaluation when the candidate merely ‘reports’ what has happened in the session without any reflective comment. Very strong evidence for this assessment objective considered how a candidate’s practice may have changed or developed as a result of the evaluation undertaken with specific examples offered in support. Again, it was good to see some excellent use of technical vocabulary across a range of disciplines, which added authority to candidates’ responses.