



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Performing Arts

48803

(Specification 4880)

Unit 3: Working to a commission

Report on the Examination

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Unit 3- 48803: Working to a commission

Introduction

This is the second year of the revised Double Award examination. Moderators noted that the majority of schools had a clearer understanding of the key requirements for this Unit. In Unit 3, students are expected to build on the skills and understanding they have developed during Units 1 and 2. The focus of the work should be on a series of simulations or practice commissions, each incorporating all four assessment objectives. Students will therefore be prepared for the challenges of Unit 4: Final Performance/designs for the chosen commission.

There were fewer entries for this Unit in 2012 than in the previous year, but clearly some exciting and carefully considered practical work had been carried out in schools. It was very encouraging to see the number of schools who were requiring students to work in real community contexts, including performances in local schools, community events and festivals. This approach is very supportive of the aims of this specification. Work submitted in this series covered the full range of achievement. It is essential that all teachers of this specification complete the on-line moderator standardisation exercise on the AQA secure website during the Autumn term. Examination Officers will be able to advise teachers on how to access this site. Only a minority of teachers attended the two face-to-face standardisation meetings held during the Autumn term. However, many schools made good use of their Controlled Assessment Advisers; this service is available to all schools who are delivering the specification.

Administration

Please note that the deadline for the submission of marks is the 7th May. Moderators reported that there were still a significant number of schools who were very late with the submission of marks. Schools which have 20 students or fewer for this Unit must send all portfolios with the Centre Mark Forms in the first instance for the 7th May deadline. Moderators also reported that a significant amount of time was taken up with communication difficulties encountered when trying to chase up late marks and/or work from schools. More consideration could be given by some schools to the collation of portfolios. Poorly fastened work will come loose in the post. Ring binders are too bulky and again, will come open in the post. Schools are strongly advised to avoid folders entirely and securely staple or spiral bind the portfolios. Plastic wallets should also be avoided. Some schools use other size formats than A4 for portfolios, but again, these frequently become damaged in transit. Schools are advised to take care when adding up marks to avoid unnecessary errors in addition. Moderators reported that a number of schools did not initially include the Centre Declaration Sheet, which is a requirement for all moderated components.

Some schools are still neglecting to include work carried out in preparation for Unit 4 in Unit 3 portfolios. All work should be included.

Centre Marking

It is a requirement that teachers clearly offer evidence with each portfolio for how the assessment criteria have been applied to the marking of the work. An assessment grid (available on the AQA website) must be included with each portfolio, relating the assessment criteria to specific pages of evidence within the portfolio. Many teachers annotated the work itself which is extremely helpful for moderators when seeking evidence to support centre marking. Work forwarded for moderation with insufficient evidence of centre marking will be

returned to the school for further details of how the marks have been arrived at by the teacher(s).

Organisation of portfolios

Careful structuring of portfolios by the students is necessary so that each assessment objective can be clearly evidenced. The majority of schools adopt a chronological approach, with the work being set out in the order of the simulations/practice commissions undertaken. A minority of schools use the assessment objectives as 'chapters' - Skills Development, Planning and Research etc. This can be problematic as frequently evidence for more than one area of assessment can be found in a single record of work. However the portfolio is structured, it is essential to make it clear that all work relates to the Unit requirements. Some work included in this series did not gain marks because it did not relate to any of the assessment objectives. Whilst it is acceptable to use the GCSE Performing Arts course as a vehicle to explore other subjects, it must be absolutely clear that all work offered in this Unit relates to the assessment objectives and aims of the course. It was noted that a minority of schools failed to include the two observations of each student's practice with the portfolio. This is a Unit requirement. The observation should be as personal and detailed as possible. Once again some moderators reported that some students submitted portfolios of immense size - up to 300 pages in length. Frequently these portfolios were 'padded' with irrelevant material and the scale of portfolio made moderation very difficult. Students should aim to be as concise as possible - some students achieved full marks for this Unit with portfolios of no more than 50 pages.

The following sections offer an analysis of moderators' comments on how students performed against each assessment criteria for Unit 3:

Skills Development

Most schools adopted the good practice of encouraging students to thoroughly reflect on the skills they had developed during the Single Award. Such reviews were frequently detailed and referred to evidence. Clear targets for improvement were set which aided further review later in the course. A range of proformas were adopted by schools to support students with the tracking of their skills development. The most successful were those that supported personal analysis and extended comment, the least effective tended to be 'tick sheets' with very limited opportunity for reflective comment. The simulations/practice commissions chosen by schools frequently offered students the scope to deepen and broaden skills they had developed during the Single Award. As mentioned earlier, when this occurred in vocational contexts, students could also assess the development of their 'wider' skills, such as communication with external organisations and how they overcame administrative or logistical challenges. Some students however, placed rather too much emphasis on these areas as it is essential to focus primarily on the performing arts skills that are being developed. Once again it was a concern to moderators when students consistently referred to the work of the 'group'. It is each student's responsibility to be clear about their own input into any practical experience by evaluating the progression of their skills and understanding. Weaker work tended to focus on 'what had been done' in a narrative format. Very little credit (in any of the assessment bands) can be awarded for this approach. As with Unit 1, some students neglected the requirement to consider *health and safety* as part of this objective.

Planning and research

Most students linked this area to the demands of specific simulations/practice commissions. The best work made the links very clear and the impact of the planning and research on the success of the work was obvious. Some students, however, included reams of copied material which served to confuse rather than inform. Encouraging students to only include material which has been interpreted in their own words and is thoroughly explained or linked to performance requirements is good practice. Teachers can support this objective with careful planning of the simulations/practice commissions undertaken. Some thematic or historical starting points offered students excellent opportunities for success with this objective. Planning was generally well-handled with a range of evidence being offered such as diagrammatic staging plans, notes on choreography, design sketches etc. It is important for the student to remember to explain the purpose of all evidence presented within the context of the simulation/practice commission. Copied 'group' evidence is not acceptable. The contribution of each student must be clearly identifiable. It should be noted that evidence for planning and research should be balanced as some portfolios were strong in one aspect but weak in the other.

It is very important that students include clear details of two proposals for each practice commission / simulation undertaken. This also applies to the Unit 4 record of evidence.

Simulations/practice commissions

Schools should note that the mark of 25 available for this objective is awarded to work carried out during practice commissions/simulations and not for preparatory work for Unit 4. A minority of students still offered very little evidence of any other practical work than that carried out for Unit 4 in their portfolios. It is central to the work carried out for this Unit that students experience more than one practice commission. Schools had differing approaches to this challenge; some opted for two longer projects whilst others worked on several mini commissions; either approach is acceptable. It is important that students include detailed evidence of the practical activities that have been undertaken during the course in their portfolios. This might include performance-based work but also design and technical experience. This evidence could include: annotated photographs; observations; teacher assessments; reviews; evaluations and evidence from performances such as annotated programs, running orders etc. Please note that it is not a requirement to send DVD evidence for this Unit. Moderators will not view DVDs supplied as evidence for any assessment objective.

Contextual understanding of work related aspects

This area continues to be the weakest assessment objective for this Unit. To achieve marks in the higher bands, students must show the evidence of how their exploration of work-related contexts has informed their current planning for a commissioned performance. Some schools went to lengths to ensure that this was the case. Explorations into children's theatre companies, including visits and interviews, supported TIE based commissions. The *influence* of a contemporary practitioner was made clear on the stylistic features of a performance (sometimes this was linked to a theatre visit). The weakest evidence offered unexplained research into a celebrity without any apparent link to the student's practice except for admiration! Schools seemed more aware this year of the requirement to include a CV for each student. Students were imaginative in the way they presented their CVs. It is worthwhile for students to spend some time researching approaches to the writing and layout of a CV and looking at a range of examples before completing one.

Evaluation

As with Unit 1, moderators witnessed some effective use of proformas and ‘help sheets’ for this objective. Evidence of evaluation will gain marks in the higher bands when it is specific and incisive. Again, it is expected that students use the appropriate technical language when evaluating their experiences. It is advisable to offer a range of evaluative evidence by one’s self, peers and the group. Many students were able to state ‘what had worked/not worked’ but not ‘how’ or ‘why’, which are the important considerations. Some students tended to offer summative evaluation only at the end of a simulation/practice commission. It is good practice to evaluate the rehearsal and creative process so that changes and decisions made during the development stage can be evaluated on an on-going basis. Students should consider how their practice has altered or improved as an outcome of effective evaluation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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