

**GCE**



**Chief Examiner's and  
Principal Moderator's Report  
Performing Arts**

**Summer Series 2019**





## Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2019 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's section on our website at [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk).



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# GCE PERFORMING ARTS

## Principal Moderator's Report

### Overview

The key features of the specification are as follows:

- It has four assessment units: AS 1 and A2 1 are internally assessed and externally moderated. AS 2 and A2 2 are externally set and externally assessed.
- Candidates have the opportunity to develop specialist knowledge, understanding and skills in either performance or production.
- Candidates choose one discipline, within either performance or production, to develop through AS and A2.
- Candidates investigate employment opportunities and working methods linked to industry practice, providing a sound basis for progression to further training and/or study.
- Assessment at A2 includes stretch and challenge reflected in working to a commission brief, undertaking an administrative role, synoptic assessment and extended writing.

## Assessment Unit AS 1      Developing Skills and Repertoire

### Overview

This unit gives candidates the opportunity to develop one discipline within Performing Arts (from either Performance or Production) and then apply this discipline in a performance context. To develop the discipline, candidates work individually and in groups of between two and nine. They explore two contrasting extracts of repertoire from a range of existing material including musical scores, set works and published extracts.

Candidates research their chosen discipline to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of professional practice. They research the style and genre of their chosen discipline and the skills it requires. They develop awareness of new technologies in performance or production, as appropriate.

Candidates assess their current skill level linked to the research of their chosen discipline and complete a skills audit. They then choose and research two contrasting extracts of repertoire, including information on the social, cultural and historical background of each extract.

Candidates select an existing extract of repertoire from a preferred period of time, a specific practitioner or a particular style or genre to present individually. They research the social, cultural and historical context of the first extract and develop an action plan, outlining strategies to improve their skill level in their first extract of repertoire. They keep a record of their skills development in their first extract as they rehearse and practise the performance, setting targets for improvement.

They then select a second existing extract of repertoire that contrasts with their first extract. Candidates individually research the social, cultural and historical context of their second extract and work in a group of between two and nine candidates to realise this in a performance.

Candidates then develop an action plan outlining strategies to improve their skill level in their second extract of repertoire. They keep a record of their skills development in their second extract as they rehearse and practise the performance, setting targets for improvement.

Candidates compile a record of work that shows evidence of their development as a performer or production worker. Their record should demonstrate a clear understanding of the preparatory work required for the performance or production of each extract of repertoire. A risk assessment detailing health and safety issues relating to their chosen discipline will also be completed.

Candidates engage in ongoing self-evaluation and record their progress throughout, setting targets for improvement. Each candidate should also be given the opportunity to assess the final performance of one other candidate and record their evaluation. Candidates evaluate their own and others' contribution to the final performance, including analysis of aesthetic and technical quality, and audience approval.

## **Administration**

The majority of centres included candidates whose discipline was acting or music (singing). There were however more production candidates this year including lighting technicians, costume and set design. Administration was reasonably well managed for most centres, however, there were some significant problems in a minority of cases. The comments on the e-candidate record sheet were mostly clear, detailed and supported the marks awarded. However, some centres did not include any comments or brief statements. Some candidates' folders presented work that was not correctly ordered resulting in the moderator having to search through portfolios to source specific sections. There were also missing elements in a number of candidates' work that were not noted on the eCRS and appeared not to be accounted for in assessment. In general, around half of the centres were not consistently adhering to page limits and/or font size/type guidelines. In most centres the teacher's annotation, both in the main body of candidates' work and in summative comments, was criterion based and helpful to the moderation process. In a minority of centres there was a lack of summative comments and no indication of a score or mark on each section. This would have been helpful.

The quality of the recordings was generally good. Centres that clearly labelled files or DVDs for each candidate facilitated the moderation process. For several centres, files were not labelled correctly. This hindered the moderation process, particularly when group performances were not labelled as it was very challenging to identify which performance included which candidate. Not all candidates introduced themselves by name and candidate number at the opening of each performance, which again made it difficult to identify candidates within group performances.

Points to consider:

- Submit the sample in rank order and include the Tac 1.
- Complete eCRS comments for the sample referencing the assessment criteria.
- All work should be annotated.
- Recordings of all three stages, for both extract 1 and 2, should be included and clearly organised by stage and candidate, not as one continuous recording.
- All candidates need to be clearly identified to camera at the start of the final stage recording.
- Each candidates work should be organised in the order outlined in the Assessment Evidence on pages 11 -13 of the specification and clearly headed with the title of each section, candidate name and number.

## **A01: A Summary of research and skills audit**

In Section 1, responses showed evidence of research into styles and genre, however, candidates need to make clear links to the chosen discipline. Centres are reminded that candidates should include footnotes to show evidence of research.

In Section 2, the majority of candidates referred to the skills relevant to their discipline, as outlined in pages 8 -10 of the specification. Production candidates need to ensure they lead with the learning outcomes and draw the skills needed from these outcomes. Candidates should focus on examples from professional practice to support their knowledge and understanding of the skills required to work professionally. Some candidates were disadvantaged by the fact that they referenced their own work in this section, which should only be included in the Skills Audit. A significant number of candidates are failing to reference any professional practice and are simply expanding on their understanding of the skills list by providing generic definitions. Centres should remind candidates to include a range of examples from professional practice.

Section 3 continues to be the weakest section in the Summary of Research. Whilst some candidates focus on the use of technology relevant to their discipline, the majority of candidates' responses are too generic and lack depth of research. Some candidates would benefit from considering a wider range of new technologies in relation to their discipline, as most focused on internet based technology. Centres would better facilitate candidates in reaching the higher mark bands by discussing a wider variety of theatre based technology, and by highlighting examples of technology being used in performance/productions for candidates to further research.

The Skills Audit is executed well by the majority of candidates, with the highest performing candidates providing detailed examples and insights from their own work.

Points to consider:

- Connect genre to style of performance/production as relevant to discipline in Section 1.
- Research professional practice in discipline and site examples in the body of work with clear footnotes.
- Develop depth of research and connection to demands of specific discipline with focus on performer/production worker, not the performance for Section 3.
- Direct candidates to integrate their understanding of current technologies throughout the piece, as this holistic approach facilitates the evidencing of an in-depth knowledge and understanding of current professional practice.
- Ensure candidates audit all the skills listed in pages 8-10 of the specification in the Skills Audit.

## **A02: A record of work**

Overall, there was an improvement in the approach by centres, and in the attainment of candidates in this section.

### **Action Plans**

In general, actions plans did take account of the demands of the chosen extracts. A significant number of candidates failed to include dates and in some cases the Action Plans for Extracts 1 and 2 were very similar and not specific to the chosen extract. Centres should be reminded of the need for specific reference to working with others in the action plan for the second extract. A small minority of candidates included only 1 action plan.

## Social, Cultural and Historical Research

This year there was more focus on the extract itself, rather than generic research into the play/production. However, greater consideration should be given to different versions of repertoire and to the varying performance conditions over time. In a few cases candidates tended to summarise the events of the extract rather than evidence concrete research. Some candidates discussed in significant detail their aims for their performance in this section, overlapping with material included in action plans and evidence of practice. In the higher mark range there was evidence of excellent research informing candidates' practice. Centres are reminded to ensure candidates reference their research clearly in this section.

## Evidence of Practice

There were a variety of approaches adopted with regards to the rehearsal and preparation process, with some centres taking a workshop based approach. Candidates at the top of the mark range were able to specifically link workshops to their extracts and performance needs. However, some candidates struggled to connect the workshop specifically to the extract or to differentiate contrasting skills between the two extracts. It also led to a similarity in the candidates work across that centre, perhaps hindering more creative development. In some cases the evidence of practice gave a clear overview of the rehearsal process, but the candidates needed to offer more specific examples of contrasting skills being developed within each extract, which would provide evidence of their developing personal style and progression. Other centres focused predominantly on reviewing the baseline and mid recording, leading to preparation for the final performance. This resulted in candidates struggling to evidence a wide range of skills and techniques. Centres that adopted a skills based approach to the rehearsal process, and employed various techniques aimed at skill development, performed best in this section. Using rehearsal methods linked to practitioners is good practice, and provides opportunities for stretch and challenge.

Centres should ensure that there are a variety of techniques used across the two extracts. Candidates who used the headings from the assessment criteria to structure their work had a more focused approach. Candidates should be encouraged to use the full number of pages available to them in order to ensure that work is sufficiently detailed.

Points to consider:

- Social, cultural and historical research should consider a variety of performance conditions.
- All research should be footnoted.
- Action Plans should differentiate clearly between extract 1 and 2, and explicitly reference working with others for extract 2.
- Evidence of Practice should focus on a wider range of techniques, skills development and personal progression.

## A03:

### (i) A Risk Assessment

There was a decline in the standard of work submitted, with an over-reliance on exemplar material evident.

Candidates should be encouraged to complete relevant research into Health and Safety, particularly in relation to control measures to be employed. Candidates at the top end of the assessment criteria made explicit reference to various Health and Safety Acts and documentation. Centres are reminded to adhere to the page limit of two, A4 pages in total for both extracts.

Points to consider:

- Guide and support candidates to avail of the wealth of documentation that is available to support the completion of appropriate risk assessments, which reflect current professional practice.

## **(ii) A Performance/Presentation**

The work submitted was engaging and showed a wide range of repertoire being explored. It is clear that centres are exploring a wide range of styles to suit the abilities of their candidates and to give them the best chance of accessing marks in this assessment objective. In a minority of cases, middle or final performances were missing or not easily identifiable. Some centres had clearly directed candidates to choose extracts that offered a clear contrast in style, genre and skills, facilitating higher marks. In other cases, however, there was not a significant contrast in the performance style and skills between the two extracts.

Centres are reminded to ensure all candidates are identified at the start of the final stage recording of the group piece. Some production candidates were under prepared for their final stage assessments. Centres are reminded that the final stage is a summative assessment and should include evidence of all of the skills list on pages 8 -10 of the specification. In some centres, the final stage assessments for production candidates were very short, which prevented them from demonstrating their application of all the skills developed during their preparation of the extract.

Points to consider:

- Organise recordings into three distinct stages.
- Clearly identify candidates at the start of final stage recordings.
- Summative production presentations should demonstrate all skills and relevant paperwork as outlined on pages 8 -10 of specification.
- Ensure contrasting skills are evident between extract 1 and 2.

## **A04: An Evaluation**

In general, evaluations were managed well across most centres. Candidates reflected their engagement with their own and others' work. Evaluations showed secure focus on the skills evident and the impact on audience. Candidates should focus explicitly on the aesthetic and the impact of the audience, which was overlooked by some candidates and affected their attainment. 'Target setting for the future' is an important aspect of the Assessment Objective and must be given fair attention. This was lacking in many candidates work. Best practice included a specific section in which candidates set clear and explicit targets for future development. A significant number of candidates are assessing two different candidates in the peer evaluation. Centres are reminded that candidates should choose one peer to assess across both extracts.

Points to consider:

- Candidates should assess one peer across both extracts.
- Candidates should explicitly evaluate the technical and aesthetics of the final product, and the impact on the audience.
- A discrete section on target setting for the future will enable candidates to address all aspects of the assessment criteria.

## Chief Examiner's Report

### Assessment Unit AS 2

### Planning and Realising a Performing Arts Event - Supporting Document

#### Overview

This unit gives candidates, as a group, the opportunity to plan and realise a Performing Arts event in response to the pre-release stimulus material. Candidates agree the venue, target audience, style, form and genre. They must analyse a range of live or recorded Performing Arts events that relate to the chosen style, form and genre.

Each candidate must produce a **supporting document** from his or her notes under controlled conditions. This document can be either handwritten or word-processed.

The **supporting document** should include the following sections:

#### Section 1 (maximum of 600 words)

A response to the pre-release stimulus material, including:

- A summary of research into the social, cultural and historical context of the chosen performance style, form and genre.
- A summary of practical and artistic constraints that includes information on the:
  - group's skills;
  - venue;
  - target audience;
  - length of performance; and
  - production costs.

#### Section 2 (maximum of 1200 words)

Developing the Performing Arts event:

- A summary review of **two** live or recorded Performing Arts events from the perspective of the candidate's chosen discipline.
- A summary of experimentation in rehearsal of **two** ideas drawn from the candidate's review of live or recorded Performing Arts events.

#### Section 3 (maximum of 600 words)

- Rationale for the candidate's choice of one idea that they have implemented in their realisation of the Performing Arts event.
- An evaluation of how the candidate's and other group members' ideas contributed to the Performing Arts event.
- A summative statement linking the candidate's experience of working on the Performing Arts event to employment opportunities in the Performing Arts industry.

## Comments

The majority of supporting documents were focused on the pre-release stimulus material, "Generations." Whilst there were some strong and well-prepared documents, the majority of candidates found the examination quite challenging and very few candidates were awarded Mark Band 4.

Most centres demonstrated appropriate or effective research into the social, cultural and historical context of the chosen material. Very few provided research on both the material and the chosen style, and instead researched themes and topics from the chosen material. In some cases, the style was identified but not explained or supported with research. Some candidates identified two or three different styles and it was therefore difficult to provide research on all three within the set word limit.

Some strong candidates provided considerable detail on group skills referring to skills achieved in Unit 1 of the AS examination. However, for a number of candidates not enough information was given to the practical and artistic constraints meaning that only Mark Band 2: satisfactory and Mark Band 3: good, could be awarded.

In Section 2, some candidates tended to move away from the skills of their chosen discipline and reviewed all aspects of performance rather than focusing on their chosen discipline. Candidates used resources provided in the specification to support description and vocabulary, and in some cases the key words were highlighted throughout. Some candidates provided plot summaries of the review material and described how the review material linked to the pre-release stimulus. Unfortunately, some centres took a group rather than an individual approach and could not access higher mark bands. Recognition of strengths and weakness was mostly implied but some responses provided sub-headings enabling candidates to give very explicit detail. Many centres did not require candidates to detail the word limit for each section, and Section 2 appeared to be significantly under the set word limit of 1200 words.

Candidates who achieved top marks had clearly divided the supporting document in three or four sections and placed a word count at the end of each section. It would have been useful to have the candidates chosen discipline detailed on the cover sheet. This would help to link research in Section 1, and reviews and experimentation in Section 2 to remain focused on the skills and techniques of the chosen discipline.

Overall, it is still believed that not enough time is dedicated to the Supporting Document, bearing in mind that is worth 16 more marks than the production/performance element of the examination.

### **A01 Section 1: A Response to the Pre-Release Stimulus Material**

- Most candidates were focused on the pre-release stimulus material, 'Generations' with a good number of candidates providing effective and detailed research on the chosen performance, style, genre and material.
- Research on the playwright and material was often the focus of most candidates' research.
- Some strong candidates referred to research into the social, cultural and historical context of the chosen material and style.
- A minority of candidates provided research on key influences of the performance style and genre.
- Some candidates provided research on the play's themes and described how the chosen material linked to the pre-release stimulus.

- Strong candidates referred in detail to artistic constraints of staging a production including reference to editing the script, multi rolling and group skills.
- Some good responses accounted for both group and individual skills that were developed in Unit 1 of the AS examination.
- Purposeful reference was made to individual and group skills in stronger responses.
- Strong responses paid particular attention to the practical constraints of the performance.

#### Points for Consideration:

- Candidates need to clearly state the name of the chosen material and the chosen style of performance.
- Candidates should focus on research of one or two styles. Some centres referred to three different performance styles and struggled to demonstrate effective and detailed research.
- Candidates do not need to describe other material that was considered for Unit 2.
- Some candidates did not provide any research on social, cultural or historical context for the material chosen, style or genre.
- Research often focused too closely on the plot summary of the chosen material.
- Candidates spent a considerable amount of words describing how the material and style matched the pre-release stimulus.
- Most candidates focused on the practical constraints rather than the artistic. Some candidates made no reference to group skills.
- Many candidates did not refer to the length of the performance and gave vague reference to production costs.
- Some practical constraints could not be considered where candidates were significantly over the word limit.

### **A02 Section 2: Developing the Performing Arts Event**

- A wide range of live and recorded Performing Arts events were reviewed in Section 2.
- There was evidence of some candidates having a secure appreciation of the skills and techniques of their chosen discipline.
- Many candidates made use of resources from the CCEA website and used key vocabulary throughout reviews. This allowed candidates to demonstrate a more secure appreciation of skills.
- Stronger candidates took an individualised approach to experimentation.
- Candidates who had referenced specific skills from the live or recorded event were more successful at meeting the demands of the mark scheme.
- The strongest responses dealt with the section in five discreet paragraphs or sub headed sections; Review 1, Review 2, Experiment 1, Experiment 2 and Strengths and Weaknesses.
- The best answers made specific reference to the candidate's strengths and weaknesses and weaved the shaping of work through the body of the answer.

**Points for Consideration:**

- Some candidates tended to move away from the skills of their chosen discipline and reviewed all aspects of performance.
- A significant range of skills must be explicit in order to show a 'thorough appreciation' and therefore access Mark Band 4.
- Many candidates focused on retelling the plot or describing how the reviewed material linked to their chosen material for the Performing Arts realisation.
- Often ideas for experimentation were not taken from reviews and more than two experimentation ideas were provided.
- Weaker candidates took a group approach to experimentation and the same ideas were used across the centre. Some candidates referred to 'we' throughout.
- Some candidates only submitted half the required word count and were unable to meet the demands and requirements of the mark scheme.
- Recognition of strengths and weakness when shaping work was an area that was not clear and detailed in most candidates supporting document.
- A number of candidates did not include a word count.

**AO4 Section 3: A Rationale, an Evaluation and a Summative Statement**

- This section was generally answered well, with a considerable number achieving at least Mark Band 3
- The strongest responses took one idea from Section 2 and gave a full and justified explanation of why it was relevant to the realisation of the performance.
- Strong candidates analysed how their experimentation idea, and the experimentation ideas of other group members, had contributed to the event.
- The summary of the experience was handled well by a large proportion of the candidates.
- Some candidates made links to future A2 studies and how the skills developed could be noted on their CV.

**Points for Consideration:**

- Some candidates provided two ideas for implementation and offered justification for both ideas. This was not required.
- For a number of candidates the final idea for implementation was unclear with only a description of a range of ideas provided.
- At times ideas were not taken directly from the reviews in Section 2 and not focused on the skills or techniques of the chosen discipline.
- Evaluations tended to be mainly descriptive with only some analysis of their own and others' ideas.
- Often there was little reference to the candidate's own work.
- Future links to opportunities and employment was not always evident with only the minority of candidates providing a specific link.
- For some candidates this section was not completed at all.

## Assessment Unit AS 2      Planning and Realising a Performing Arts Event - Visiting Exam

### Overview

This unit involves responding to pre-release stimulus material. The pre-release stimulus material will be concept, theme or issue based. Candidates interpret this stimulus to create a Performing Arts event that will draw on existing material. An external examiner examines each candidate in their chosen discipline, which reflects the development of their skills from AS Unit 1.

Candidates present their Performing Arts event to an audience and the external examiner in groups. Each group should consist of between two and nine candidates. Although each group prepares and presents the work, the external examiner assesses each candidate as an individual. There must be a minimum of one performer per group. No more than one candidate per group can undertake a particular production discipline (for example, one designer and/or one lighting candidate per group). Performances should last between 10 and 40 minutes, depending on the size of the group. Larger groups should not exceed the maximum time limit. Each production candidate gives a presentation, lasting between 5 and 10 minutes, to the external examiner. They also carry out their role during the performance.

### Comments

Once again the team of examiners were generally pleased with the overall quality of performance and production observed during this series. The work presented was of a good standard overall, with examples of excellent work evidenced at some very strong centres.

The most popular discipline remained as Drama. Most centres presented performances which showed an appropriate response to the pre-release stimulus, however, some did not address the style and genre aspect of the marking criteria as effectively as they needed to. "Generations" proved to be more of a challenge than last year's pre-release. Some centres ignored the plural version of the word and interpreted it as "Generation x", or "Our Generation" or "This Generation."

Nevertheless, good work was seen and there were some very strong centres. It was clear that most candidates had been well prepared for performances, and some material had been well selected.

The choice of material remains critical to the success of the examination and should be given the upmost attention to ensure each candidate has access to Mark Band 4. The performance material was generally accessible and aimed at the ability level of the candidates, allowing them to demonstrate a wide range of skills. Well directed performances advantaged the candidates and created impact for the audience.

Performances were presented in a range of styles including naturalism and Brechtian. Suitable audiences had been invited at most centres and this proved beneficial to the mood and atmosphere for the Performing Arts Event. Most performance spaces were appropriate for the examination and really enhanced the experience for the audience.

In general, the paperwork was carefully dealt with. Centres should be reminded that they are to identify, on the examination record sheet, the specific style/genre of their Performing Arts Event. It is also advised that the source of any dance or music work is referenced by stating the choreographer or composer. This, along with the detailed description, enables the examiner to mark the bullet point in the assessment criteria for AO3 (Section 3.1 of

the specification). A completed Candidate Assessment Form should be available for every candidate and handed to the Visiting Examiner on arrival. Centres are required to post a recording of the examination to CCEA within 5 days.

The examining team were warmly welcomed at all centres again this year which was very much appreciated. The majority of centres created a conducive environment, with an audience, to ensure the atmosphere of a performance event was created. It would be appreciated if centres remembered that examiners will need to make notes, so a desk and light are necessary.

There was a range of marks at centres, with a small minority at the top of Mark Band 4. A general impression was that work may not have been just as effective as in other years.

### **A03: Working independently and with others to deliver performance skills/production ideas**

- The majority of performances showed the candidates had worked independently and as a group to present very interesting and entertaining work.
- Some very challenging pieces were presented, allowing the full range of marks to be awarded to some candidates.
- The pre-release stimulus of 'Generations' was clearly considered by most centres.
- The final outcomes, at the majority of centres, had the feel of a Performing Arts Event, with examiners commending the professionalism and talent of some outstanding candidates.
- Generally, the production candidates had worked effectively with their groups to reflect the production needs of the event in their presentation and production ideas.

Points for Consideration:

- The specification states performances should be between 10-40 minutes. There was a significant number of centres not adhering to this time frame. Please be aware that examiners stop marking after the time allowance has been met.
- Drama candidates playing several different roles tended to be disadvantaged as they were unable to show full development.
- Production candidates should take note of Section 3.1 of the specification, where it outlines the evidence required for the examiner.
- It is advised that presentations take place in a separate space prior to the performance, allowing for the perusal of the evidence by the examiner.

### **A03: A performance/presentation that conveys the chosen style, form and genre of the event**

- The majority of centres outlined a specific style and genre, and recorded this on the examination record sheet.
- It was clear where candidates had undertaken research and practical development in a specific style or genre; these candidates tended to gain higher marks.
- Performance candidates produced good quality work, using a range of influential practitioners to shape their work.
- The vast majority of centres chose to present their work with set, costume, lighting and sound, which contributed to creating the atmosphere of a Performing Arts Event.

## Points for Consideration:

- More emphasis needs placed on the chosen form, style and genre that are detailed on the examination record form. Centres should be reminded to keep a copy of all documentation sent to CCEA.
- Some candidates showed great skill, however, they were unable to gain access to the higher mark bands as they did not have enough time on stage or had several multi-role characters that did not fully develop.
- Some candidates had not worked to develop characters, and lacked energy and commitment in performance.
- Some moments in performance did not match the chosen style detailed by the centre and some centres were unclear about the style of the performances.
- Music and Production Candidates need to be aware of the chosen style and ensure that this is clearly conveyed in their performance or presentation.

### **A03: Communication of ideas to the audience through application of personal technique**

- Well directed performances advantaged the candidates and created impact for the audience.
- The vast majority of performers were fully committed, well prepared and showed a real understanding of their chosen discipline.
- Some production candidates presented succinct, detailed and interesting presentations to the examiner, clearly outlining their role with well-prepared notes and visual aids, including PowerPoint, to communicate their ideas.

## Points for Consideration:

- Every performance should have a director. This should be the teacher unless there is a directing candidate in the group. The directing candidate also requires guidance.
- Candidates must present a range of skills in their chosen discipline and should refer to page 8 of the specification which highlights content and learning outcomes.
- Candidates lost marks where vocal skills; in particular accent, clarity and projection, were lost in moments of the performance.
- Production candidates must rehearse their presentation and receive guidance on this process.
- Please consider how the examiner will identify the candidates. In ensemble work especially, some thought is needed as to how each candidate is discernible from another.
- The practice of allowing a number of directors, for sections of the same play, disadvantaged candidates as their concept for the chosen play had obvious limitations.
- The sharing of one role between two or more performers is also to be greatly discouraged as full character development is not possible.

## Principal Moderator's Report

### Assessment Unit A2 1 Planning for Employment

#### Overview

This unit gives candidates the opportunity to develop their understanding of how to find work in their chosen discipline. Candidates work individually to explore the range and scope of employment opportunities in the performing arts industry. They develop materials that will assist them in gaining employment in their chosen discipline.

Candidates will acquire knowledge and understanding of how to gain work in the performing arts industry by investigating:

- the training required;
- jobs available; and
- the role of unions, agents and recruitment agencies in securing work locally and nationally.

They also consider the importance of planning for the future. They should compile their research in a written report. Candidates create an employment plan that reflects the knowledge gained through their research. In this plan they outline:

- three potential job opportunities in their discipline;
- the qualifications and experience required; and
- potential salary and contractual obligations, and how these impact on future employability.

Candidates, for example, might first investigate working on a film, then working on the stage and finally working as a workshop facilitator in their chosen discipline.

Candidates apply their understanding of industry practice by producing a CV and a promotional portfolio to market themselves. The portfolio should reflect their experience in their chosen discipline and emphasise their employability. Candidates should be given opportunities to build and develop their CV by participating in a range of activities appropriate to their discipline, for example short performances, workshops or coaching.

Performance candidates apply their skills through preparing for and participating in an audition and interview. Production candidates apply their skills through preparing for and participating in a presentation and interview. The audition and interview, or presentation and interview, should be recorded, following industry practice and last between 10 and 15 minutes per candidate. Performance candidates must prepare two contrasting performance pieces (not already explored in AS) for audition.

Production candidates must prepare a presentation that reflects the application of their discipline in two contrasting productions (not already explored in AS). Each candidate participates in a teacher-led interview that focuses, for example, on their choice of material, interpretation, production ideas and style of delivery. Feedback is an intrinsic part of the process and will help inform candidates of the areas they need to develop in order to gain employment in their chosen discipline. Candidates then evaluate the process, reflecting on feedback given on their promotional portfolio, and their audition or presentation and interview. They set targets to enhance their employability in the performing arts industry.

## Administration

Drama was the most common discipline followed by Dance, with few candidates taking on production roles or Music. Most candidates kept to the page limits, used the correct font and then a separate page for their footnotes to allow for more space within the limits. Centres are reminded of the importance of labelling recordings with Candidate Number and the candidate's full name. Some candidates set their text to very narrow line-spacing and this made reading the work difficult. Centres are reminded that Promotional Portfolios should be presented as an individual portfolio that could be handed to an agent, and therefore should not be uploaded on a USB drive for the whole centre.

The detail of teachers' annotations varied. Those who used the suggested annotation code, referenced the assessment objectives and made detailed comments on the eCRs, reflected best practice. Some centres simply ticked the candidates' work and quoted the Assessment Criteria on the eCRs, making it hard to determine the justification of marks awarded. There were only a few recording issues this year. All centres clearly identified the candidates at the start of the recordings. Candidates were clearly seen and heard.

Points to consider:

- label recordings clearly;
- avoid narrow margins; and
- use the suggested annotation code and ensure work is appropriately annotated.

## AO1: A Written Report

### Comments

Section 1 showed improved connection to skills developed through courses. Top candidates showed understanding of the different routes available to them, not just different courses, focusing on how each training route would enhance their skills and employment opportunities. New centres this year sometimes did not have three distinct pathways or examples of courses, which was reflected in the marks awarded. In some cases, not all of the pathways were suitable for post-18 study. Centres are encouraged to broaden the research into experienced based pathways. Candidates who focused on their knowledge and understanding of the training route e.g. the cost, its location, the grades required, struggled to secure marks in the top bands as their work failed to show comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the skills required to work professionally. Centres should be encouraged to include reference to professional practice in this section.

In Section 2, it was pleasing to see that candidates were looking at organisations like Theatre NI and ACNI, and how these can support employment. There was some excellent and realistic research which acknowledged the impact of funding cuts on the sector. An increasing trend to include America agents and unions was not always applied or relevant to the plans outlined by the candidates in Section 1 and 3. Some candidates referenced professional actors in this section which gave detailed insight into the pros and cons of the agents, unions and organisations explored. The best candidates linked their research to their own requirements and employment opportunities. Candidates in the top bands were able to research organisations in addition to agents, unions and organisations. This gave their work focus, linked closely to the chosen discipline and thus helping to demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding.

In Section 3 candidates demonstrated a greater connection to real jobs, and more performance work was evident, but greater depth and more research beyond Entertainments industry is needed. Nearly all candidates found an advertised job to discuss for each of their three plans. The best examples of work was those where the employment

opportunities discovered linked closely to their chosen discipline. In some centres, most candidates all discussed the same, or similar, employment opportunities and this prevented candidates having a fully holistic written report as the employment plans didn't link to the training routes identified. Several candidates explored the role of a teacher, therapist and a performance role. Candidates should be encouraged to explore a range of performance opportunities available. Performance roles in different areas of the industry would be more relevant and would link more closely with the other sections, and the aims and objectives of this unit.

It was evident that some centres struggled to offer relevant guidance to those candidates following the director discipline, as there was a lack of focused research into the Post Graduate pathway, which replicates professional practice. This was also evident in Section 3, with director's employment plans focusing on theatre manager roles and artistic director, rather than practical applied theatrical direction.

Those centres that had researched/interviewed professionals had a more holistic approach to the written report.

Points to Consider:

- Continue to encourage candidates to broaden the depth and range of research to include other representative bodies like Theatre NI and Dance Resource Base as they can provide networking opportunities for employment.
- Ensure all research is footnoted.
- All pathways should be suitable to post-18 study.
- Cross-referencing research between sections provides a more meaningful response from the candidates.

## **A02: A Promotional Portfolio**

### **Comments**

Most centres now successfully produce the three required items for the portfolio to a standard that reflects industry practice. However, there continues to be a variation on the quality of work submitted for this assessment objective, ranging from top quality professional standard portfolios, to disorganised materials lacking consideration of the promotional intention of the assessment evidence.

Despite very clear guidance at Agreement Trial exemplifying best practice and giving a suggested teaching approach to delivering this aspect of the Unit, with some centres there was a lack of consideration of the overall 'marketing' and promotional nature of this Assessment Objective.

Whilst there were some excellent and well-presented portfolios that promoted the candidates skill level, others lacked attention to detail and research into professional practice. Centres are reminded that each candidate's portfolio should be submitted as a stand-alone piece of work and a discrete element for assessment including their CV, Showreel/demo and headshot as one pack per candidate.

Some production candidates submitted their portfolios which added to the promotional aspect of the portfolio and reflected professional practice.

Points to consider:

- Presentation should 'market' and promote the candidate's skill level in their discipline.
- If including a web line ensure it works and is not just 'imagined'.
- Ensure all show reels/demo reels are fully functioning prior to submission.

## **A03: A Performance/Presentation and Interview**

### **Comments**

Auditions and presentations were mostly excellent. There was a lot of top band work, with very few candidates gaining marks below Mark Band 3. There was an interesting range of repertoire presented with the classics becoming increasingly popular. In the top bands, there was evidence of thorough research, which was used effectively to inform outcomes, both in performance/presentation and in interview. There was greater development of the production candidates' work, and some interesting approaches, giving directors real contexts to develop their work and making their presentations more meaningful. It is clear that those candidates that have access to extra-curricular opportunities have used their experience to enhance and enrich their auditions/presentations and interviews.

A range of material was explored, and most work was challenging and enabled pupils to display contrasting skills and application of research.

Questions for the interview were generally appropriate and allowed for candidates to display their understanding. Some questions were not fit for purpose in that they didn't ask the candidates about application of research and rehearsal processes. Candidates should be given the opportunity to explain how their research impacted their performance in the audition, and candidates who grasped this achieved highly. Some centres continued to ask all candidates the same questions. An issue across the cohort was that the interviews were at times over prepared. For most centres, it was obvious that the candidates had the questions in advance, as at times it sounded like they were reciting a learnt-by-rote monologue.

Production presentations have improved with most candidates hitting all of the required skills on pages 8 -10, and largely showing the required supporting materials. However, greater use of PowerPoint and holding documentation to camera effectively is needed to enable candidates to evidence the supporting materials created.

Points to consider:

- Balance between questions and answers during interview, ensuring teacher - assessor asks a range of questions.
- Depth of questions should enable candidates to address all aspects of the assessment criteria.
- Stretch and challenge is provided though the choice of repertoire for the audition/presentation.

## **A04: An Evaluation**

### **Comments**

There is a general improvement in the standard, with a clear consideration of feedback embedded in the responses for evaluating the portfolio. Some centres provided opportunities for candidates' portfolios to be reviewed by a range of people, in some cases professionals, which made their feedback meaningful.

However, the evaluation of the auditions/presentations tended to include reflection on the process, and were at times descriptive rather than evaluative. There was also a tendency to focus more on feedback from others, rather than the candidate's personal reflection on the strengths of the audition/interview. The target setting needs to be developed in more depth.

Points to consider:

- Relate feedback to the portfolio rather than audition/presentation.
- Focus on evaluating the strengths of audition/presentation from candidates' own perspective, with supporting examples.

## Chief Examiner's Report

### Assessment Unit A2 2

### Performing to a Commission Brief - Record of Work

#### Overview

This unit gives candidates the opportunity to form a production company to realise a performing arts event, from an externally set Commission Brief. The candidates research, promote, plan and perform the event.

The candidates demonstrate their skills in their chosen discipline by realising the Commission Brief practically for an audience and the external examiner. Although candidates prepare the work and present it as a group, the external examiner assesses them as individuals. There must be a minimum of one performer per group. No more than one candidate can undertake a particular production discipline or administrative role per group. Groups should be between two and six. Performances should last between 15 and 40 minutes, depending on the size of the group. Larger groups should not exceed the maximum time limit. Candidates focus on performing or producing original material in response to the brief. While planning the event, candidates also consider the factors that influence their choices and how feasible their ideas are, as they realise the event.

The Commission Brief, which we set and release each September, offers candidates a choice from:

- a cultural theme, historical topic or social issue;
- the performance style of a playwright/practitioner, composer/musician or dancer/choreographer; or
- a published poem or song, a theme, a quotation or an image.

Candidates work in groups to make planning decisions and agree the type of event and the performance concept for the event. They work to an agreed production schedule to meet deadlines. Candidates decide on a suitable venue for the performance and take account of production costs and budgetary constraints. Candidates also consider their target audience and how to market the event.

Also, as production company members, candidates research the financing and marketing practices at two professional venues. They use their findings to carry out one of the following administrative roles:

- front of house;
- health and safety officer;
- budget and finance;
- education officer;
- press officer; or
- publicity officer.

No more than one candidate per group can undertake a particular administrative role.

**Performance** candidates learn how to perform their chosen discipline in the Commission Brief to the external examiner.

**Production** candidates learn how to present production ideas to the external examiner.

As production company members, all candidates also investigate professional practice and learn how to carry out an administrative role in their group performance. They learn how to use existing professional practice to inform their personal practice by:

- Analysing the financing and marketing practices of two professional venues.
- Summarising their research findings.
- Using their summary of findings to inform their approach to carrying out their chosen administrative role.

They present their findings in a **Record of Work** which is examined.

### **A01 Research Report**

A summary of individual research on the social, cultural and historical context of their chosen Commission Brief.

- The research reports were generally well linked to the commission statements.
- There were some candidates who did not explicitly outline what their chosen commission brief was and that made it difficult to see links between research, the chosen commission and the intended practical outcomes.
- A wide range of commission briefs were outlined and clearly engaged the candidates.
- Most candidates outlined how this research generated ideas for their commission production.
- Some of the research highlighted a breadth of knowledge and extended research: considering books, information from current podcasts and online research.
- Some candidates focused equally on the social, cultural and historical context and made links to where this research could be evidenced in their production.

#### Points for Consideration

- Candidates should state which Commission Brief they are focusing on explicitly at the start of the document and should consider the whole brief;
- With commission brief one, “An event which is based on a current topic of interest aimed at a target audience of younger candidates” many candidates failed to address the outlined target audience of this commission. Ideas should be discussed in terms of whether they would be appropriate for a younger audience.
- More direct links were needed between the contextual research and how this research informed and influenced practical ideas.
- A balance between focus on thematic contextual research and research into the form and genre worked better than a one sided approach.
- Much of the research was not referenced with footnotes or with an attached bibliography. This should be completed as it is good practice and clearly exemplifies that thorough research has been completed.
- Too much of the word count was used up on budget, group skills and working together which are not assessed in this section.

## **An analysis of the financing and marketing practices of two professional venues**

- Some candidates used the same two venues for the research. Many centres took on a personalised approach, with pupils choosing two contexts and conducting personal research. This was a positive approach and ensured that there were a range of contexts with varied information being presented.
- Candidates who clearly divided their work into income and expenditure within the finance section were able to clearly display their detailed research.
- Most candidates used screen shots effectively to exemplify marketing practices.
- Responses were mostly well-balanced between marketing and finance.

### Points for Consideration

- Marketing research was generally focused on the context's website or social media, and a full range of marketing strategies should be highlighted. Information could identify a vast range of media outlets, including social media and other types of print media.
- A range of candidates used background information on the two theatres by means of introduction. This is not necessary and uses up a vast amount of the work count.
- A number of candidates generally discussed income and expenditure but no specific figures were used to support detailed research.

## **A02 Summary of Findings**

- Most candidates focused acutely on their chosen administrative role and outlined it clearly at the outset.
- The best candidates provided a short overview of the chosen administrative role and then focused on how the contexts carried out the three tasks, and how this information influenced them in carrying out their role.
- Some candidates were able to make detailed links as to how they would emulate professional conduct within their own tasks by discussing the intended impact on the consumer.
- Candidates who structured their response using the outlined tasks as headings were able to focus their research on industry practice, and make links as to how they would practically carry out the administrative role.

### Points for Consideration

- Some candidates provided an overview of what the administrative role entailed which was too general. This limited the candidates from making links between professional conduct and personally carrying out the administrative tasks.
- Some candidates spoke generally about the role and then briefly finished by describing what they were going to do in their tasks. Detailed links must be made throughout as to how the task is carried out within the industry and how this will inform their practical approach.
- Some candidates did not consider all three tasks and instead focused on one task in detail.
- A few candidates used inappropriate venues which meant that their research was not thorough enough. If the chosen venue does not have someone who carries out the role that the candidate is researching, the depth of research required cannot be accessed.

- Some candidates carried out general research on the administrative role but did not outline any professional contexts.

### **A03 Evidence of Tasks**

- Most candidates completed all three tasks to a high standard which reflected consideration of professional practice.
- Some candidates were very creative and were able to confidently present tasks which reflected professional conduct and originality.
- Some excellent links to professional practice were demonstrated through the use of personalised logos for the company and reference to support groups if linked to a serious topic.
- Candidates who used the full six pages generally reflected professional conduct within the tasks.

#### Points for Consideration

- Candidates who labelled the three tasks clearly made it obvious to the examiner that all three tasks had been completed. This prevented confusion between similar tasks.
- Some candidates submitted a range of drafts but did not clearly outline which was the final product.
- Many candidates did not include the Briefing to Staff within the Front of House section; this should be paired with the Projected Staffing List.
- Programmes which were fully realised provided a better insight into the style of the production.
- Many candidates did not take a personalised approach to the Budget and Finance role, with limited creative ideas on additional revenue. Funding applications should include questions which are suited to the company and vision.

### **A04 Evaluation**

- Most candidates used the bullet points within the mark scheme to structure their response which ensured that they covered all parts of the commission process.
- There was some excellent analysis of how groups negotiated and worked together to agree the brief.
- Some candidates were evaluative and focused on strengths, weaknesses and challenges, and how they were overcome.
- Candidates who included feedback and how they acted on this were generally able to be more reflective.

#### Points for Consideration

- Some candidates were much too descriptive and summarised what they did in their performance as opposed to evaluating the impact of group negotiations and the overall impact of the administrative role.
- Many evaluations were over the word count.

## Assessment Unit A2 2      Performing to a Commission Brief – Performance/ Production

### Overview

Candidates demonstrate their skills in their chosen discipline by realising the Commission Brief practically for an audience and the external examiner. Although candidates prepare the work and present it as a group, the external examiner assesses them as individuals. There must be a minimum of one performer per group. No more than one candidate can undertake a particular production discipline or administrative role per group. Groups should be between two and six. Performances should last between 15 and 40 minutes, depending on the size of the group. Larger groups should not exceed the maximum time limit. Candidates focus on performing or producing original material in response to the brief. While planning the event, candidates also consider the factors that influence their choices and how feasible their ideas are, as they realise the event.

Candidates also apply the skills of their chosen discipline in rehearsal and performance, building on those developed during the AS course.

Through their work as a production company, candidates respond in performance or production to the Commission Brief and learn how to:

- select a suitable option from the externally set Commission Brief;
- research and explore the social, cultural and historical aspects of the chosen option from the brief;
- decide on a target audience;
- devise an agreed concept for the performance;
- create and select material appropriate to the chosen brief;
- agree a production schedule;
- work within the financial constraints of their particular circumstances to ensure the feasibility of their ideas;
- market the performance;
- apply health and safety practices;
- agree a contingency plan;
- rehearse the event; and
- perform the event for examination.

### Comments

The Pre-Release Stimulus Material presented a challenging range of alternatives this year with the most popular choices being CB3, an event which takes as its starting point the words of a published song, and CB1, an event which is based on a current topic of interest aimed at a target audience of younger candidates. Examiners reported that the candidates embraced the challenges but stated there were some issues with interpretation and connection to the brief as well as conveying overall meaning.

CB1 was interpreted in a number of ways, however, the aspect of the brief which addressed a target audience of younger candidates could have been further developed for some centres. Several centres had used issues that were overly complex and at times not entirely suitable to a younger audience. In total 13 groups performed CB1.

CB3 proved most popular with 23 groups choosing to perform this brief. Within the brief, there was a wide range of songs used as starting points. The candidates with a more concrete connection fared better overall, as the work was more fully connected to the brief throughout.

Overall, the choice of a distinct style of performance was generally in evidence this year and there were a range of approaches including influences from the practitioners, Beckett, Stanislavski and Brecht. There was also evidence of Physical Theatre, Theatre of the Absurd and Musical Theatre at some centres which worked well for the attending audiences.

Candidates were mostly well prepared with the correct paperwork and camera in place. Venues varied considerably, but were all appropriate and candidates made the best use of the available facilities.

It was felt in some centres that candidates need to dress safely with proper footwear in performances, which should be appropriate shoe wear or bare feet. Some complex costume changes resulted in clothing which was not properly fastened, again a health and safety issue.

There were also a number of centres who contacted examiners to discuss concerns with regards to candidate attendance or well-being. Centres should be reminded that contact with CCEA must be made if there are any exceptional circumstances; examiners are required to assess what they see on the day regardless of issues. It was also noted that there were a small number of candidates choosing not to partake on the day of examination and centres should be cautious of this.

The work presented was predominantly in the Mark Band 3 range, with evidence of original work from some really impressive candidates whose attainment represented the very top end of Mark Band 4. The standard of the work overall seemed to have been largely maintained from last year.

It was clear that the more authentic the approach taken to the event, the better the quality of outcome. Audiences added a great deal to the atmosphere and gave a real sense of occasion. It was satisfying to see some of the administration tasks in evidence at the performances; this created the sense of a holistic approach to the carrying out of the requirements of the overall unit. There was a sense of occasion in some centres, however, there still needs to be more sense of a production company having been formed.

There were some issues with performances which were under or over the time limit. Work which is under the required amount of time was not able to access Mark Band 4, and performances which were too long were often self-penalising.

### **A03 Engagement with the Commission Brief**

- The options within the Pre-Release Stimulus Material allowed candidates to devise a variety of interpretations, giving them the opportunity to perform or produce to their particular strengths.
- The majority of the candidates chose to explore CB1, or CB3.
- Some work was very engaged with the brief and truly conveyed the intended meaning to the audience.

- Some very strong production candidates delivered engaging connections in their presentations to the Commission Brief, but this was not always pulled through into the performance.
- With CB3, there were several strong performances which resulted in outcomes which were very thought provoking.
- There was clear evidence of a professional quality of devised material coming from a few of the top achieving candidates.

#### Points for Consideration:

- Candidates need to spend quality time investigating the Commission Brief to ensure the performance has a clear vision and objective.
- Pieces should be refined and edited to make clear links to the brief which in turn will result in more effective communication of meaning.
- Centres should be reminded that performances do not need to be overly complicated and that quite often the most effective outcome is where the idea is simple and fully realised.
- With CB1, many candidates missed the opportunity to relate to a much younger audience, instead tackling complex issues which proved very challenging to deliver effectively.
- There were several observations made by examiners regarding inappropriate and overly dramatic performances.
- In some centres there was little connection between music, dance and acting candidates. This resulted in performances where some candidates were not fully integrated in the final piece.

### **Level of Skills Development**

- Candidates generally rose to the challenge and demonstrated their skills with personal style and meaning to good effect.
- The production candidates showed a competent ability, for the most part, indicating engagement with their chosen production field. Use of a stylised, symbolic approach to design worked very well for some strong candidates.
- Some production candidates were very well prepared in their presentations, however, the evidence of their work in performance proved less successful.
- There were some very strong drama performances with a clear sense of characterisation evident and moments of great impact for the audience.
- There were some strong performances this year from singers, musicians and dancers who developed work with an original outcome.

#### Points for Consideration:

- It was felt in some centres that candidates need to dress safely; socks only should not be the chosen footwear in performances (shoes or bare feet). Costumes or costume changes should enhance the performance rather than distract from the overall intention.
- At times, performers presented an overly dramatic interpretation which lacked the necessary variation and range of skills.
- At times the performers demonstrated a good level of skill development but did not have the level of content in the material to access the highest mark range.

- There were occasions when stage managers were not seen to be undertaking their role, for example, at the beginning of performance for set up, and backstage, or in the wings during performance to manage the event.

### **Quality of Final Performance**

- Appropriate performance spaces at nearly all centres helped set the tone and mood of the event, giving a very professional overall impression.
- For the most part, the themes and plots that candidates developed for performances were original, engaging and entertaining.
- Production candidates, in the main, enhanced the work of performers.
- Once again there were clear influences from professional practitioners including the work of Brecht, Stanislavski and Artaud. This resulted in performances that had depth of meaning and which were varied and textured.
- Performances were often topical, contemporary and relevant for the attending audiences.

#### Points for Consideration:

- Again, examiners reported some very episodic work which lacked the required impact through a loss of momentum. Continuity needs to be improved and changing the set or costumes in silence and blackout can break the flow and concentration of a performance.
- Overly complex pieces that could not fully deliver in mood and meaning should be avoided.
- Some pieces felt somewhat improvised and required more preparation time.
- A clearer focus on intent and communication of meaning would sharpen the work at some centres. At times the intended meaning did not correlate with the outcome and pieces lacked finesse.
- In a few of the performances work was clichéd, and there was overreliance on poorly drafted dialogue and production values to create mood and atmosphere.
- Production candidates, especially directors and stage managers, should make sure that their visions are realised through performance and if there are challenges, then this should be reflected in their presentations.

## Contact details

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