

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCE Drama and Theatre Studies
(6DR01)
Exploration of Drama and Theatre

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6 DR01 Exploration of Drama and Theatre

Introduction

Candidates are required to explore two dramatic texts from a practical perspective; these should be whole, formally published and substantial plays written for the theatre. Practical exploration is the backbone of this unit and the results of this exploration provide candidates with the knowledge and understanding necessary for them to write a set of Exploration Notes. There is a word limit of 3,000. Candidates are asked to explore the plays through a series of elements:

- Language
- Non-verbal-communication
- Vocal awareness
- Characterisation
- The social, cultural, historical and political context
- The visual, aural and spatial elements of production
- The response to a practitioner- for one or both of the texts
- Interpretation

Practical exploration of the texts is the most heavily weighted assessment area for Unit 1. This assessment is carried out by the teacher assessor, through a series of structured workshops, and requires the application of the assessment criteria against the candidate's response to the practical exercises. This is not a performance unit in any way; the marks should reflect the application and creativity shown in the exploration workshops.

Exploration Notes must be illustrated with examples of how specific practical explorations allowed candidates to develop their knowledge and understanding of the texts. These examples should be embedded within the notes so it is clear how candidates arrived at the understanding they have gained over the course of the unit. The notes may refer to the exploration elements separately, for each play, they may be written as continuous prose or include sketches, diagrams and designs. It is not necessary to compare the two texts in any way, although candidates may do so if they

wish. Assessment of these notes is carried out holistically, across both texts and notes must be balanced so that each text receives, as far as possible, equal attention.

Centres are asked to send a recording of an active practical drama session where candidates can be clearly seen exploring one of the chosen texts. This must not be a performance, preparation for a performance or a rehearsal; rather it is an exemplification of the type of practical drama exploration that is carried out in the centre. Centres assess the relative success of their candidates in this workshop, providing marks and justifications for the highest, middle and lowest attaining candidates in that session.

The final aspect of the unit is the candidate's response to a live production. Candidates produce a written evaluation of a live theatre production, of no more than 1,000 words, in which they address the elements of both performance and production, analysing and evaluating what they saw. This is an opportunity for candidates to put what they have learned during the unit into effect, by calling on knowledge and understanding of plays, the ideas of practitioners, dramatic devices and structures, appropriate vocabulary and critical awareness developed through evaluating their own and others' practical drama.

Centres are asked to supply a Record of Work that details how each of the texts was explored.

Marks for this unit are awarded as follows:

- Exploration Notes 20
- Practical Exploration 25
- Evaluation of Live Theatre 15

There is essential guidance for centre's in the ICE document. This document includes the requisite forms and instructions for Unit 1. It is required for all units as it includes information about procedures for Unit 2 and it is updated annually with forms and deadlines for the A2 year. Centre's should download it from the website as soon as it is available in November.

The web address is: www.edexcel.com

There now follows some specific observations from the moderation team, based on centre responses to this specification in the 2011 series.

The Unit Elements

Centres are free to choose their texts and most are appropriate to the age of the candidates. In reality, the range of texts chosen is small, the most popular being *Metamorphosis*, *A Doll's House*, *Our Country's Good*, *Miss Julie*, *The Crucible*, *Blood Wedding*, *A Streetcar Named desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *A View From The Bridge*.

Moderators reported that centres did not always choose plays with a level of challenge commensurate with the abilities of their students. Where centres chose texts that suitably stimulated the interest of their students, candidates generally showed enthusiasm and enjoyment of the work. Where texts were too difficult for the particular needs of the group, candidates struggled to write in enough depth, or could not move beyond what the play's stage directions told them about how scenes or characters might be interpreted. The recommendation is that there should be at least 10 years between the two texts and the majority of centres chose texts from distinct time periods of theatrical development.

Most centres appear to have adhered to the guidelines concerning breadth and depth of chosen texts but occasionally candidates explored texts that were similar in terms of drama movements or styles.

The Practical Exploration of Texts

This element of the work is assessed by the teacher assessor in the centre. It was felt that most centres delivered a good range of practical activities in workshops and that candidates had been given opportunities to access the full range of marks available for this unit. The elements of exploration were tackled via a broad range of dramatic techniques. The most successful candidates had clearly been given the advantage of practice that engendered confidence and risk taking. The weakest elements, again, as reflected in the written work, were language and the social, cultural

historical and political context. These two elements seemed to be a challenge for candidates to explore practically and then to reflect successfully on in the exploration notes, often resulting in them writing in the abstract. Where, candidates did find ways of discovering and exploring how language works in performance or how the context of a play can inform its interpretation, their notes were more successful.

Interpretation also proves to be tricky for some candidates and they frequently wrote long wish lists of how their own version of the play might be staged, without showing how any of it would work through practical examples based on their own exploration.

More able candidates found that comparisons between the texts can be fruitful and clearly these candidates gained a great deal from the process. This is definitely not a requirement, however, and is often an exercise without a clear focus. The key is in the correspondence of text with candidate ability, experience, and interest.

Where practical exploration was structured with the written elements in mind, it was clear that candidates were much more able to offer reflective responses within the body of the exploration notes, based upon their own practical experiences.

Exploration Notes

Candidates' notes fall commonly into the category of continuous prose, rather than diagrammatic, under the headings of the exploration elements. The strongest answers tended to take this format. Some candidates included extracts of texts, but many did not grasp that annotations must take the important role, if this approach is to be successful. Some included extensive text extracts, by the side of which candidates wrote ideas for interpretation or characterisation, or what they would be doing when they said the lines, failing to make the link between the text and the annotation or to draw any substantial conclusions. Exploration Notes awarded marks in the higher levels must clearly exemplify the connection between text and the act of practical exploration. Some candidates provided designs and drawings that were referred to in their notes. Centres have generally accepted that the notes are the final point of a process of honing ideas and understanding, and are not a working logbook.

The range of theatre practitioners, whose ideas informed explorations, was relatively small. Most candidates used the theories of Stanislavski and Brecht, with Artaud, Berkoff and *Frantic* also being popular choices. Successful centres had clearly chosen texts and combinations of texts with practitioners in mind and, while there is no requirement for both texts to be explored in the light of the work of a practitioner, many centres did so. This often allowed some interesting comparisons to take place.

Overall, candidates' notes fulfilled the needs of the unit and many produced work that was highly informative, giving a genuine feel for how the practical explorations had taken place. Successful candidates showed how they had fully applied practical drama exploration to build their knowledge and understanding of drama. Weaker responses were overly descriptive of practical activities, did not relate to practical activities, or were the result of research carried out in libraries or on the internet.

The majority of responses kept more closely to the word limit this year. Centres are reminded that work that exceeds the word limit in the final version of the notes should not receive any marks and it is the responsibility of the teacher-assessor to reflect this, if appropriate, in the marks awarded and indicate it to the moderator. Candidates need to be fully aware of the word limit for this and other units within the specification. There are no exceptions to this.

There were several cases of plagiarised work this year. Candidates who passed the writing of other authors as their own received a range of penalties, ranging from no marks being awarded for the unit to complete disqualification from the whole examination. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to identify what is often very obvious plagiarism and to rectify it. Several centres failed to do this, or in some cases had identified it and did not adjust the candidates' marks accordingly. This will not be tolerated, since plagiarism represents a serious infringement of copyright law.

Language

This element is used to demonstrate how the language of a play might be practically explored in workshop activities. However, moderators reported that the majority of candidates wrote about the nature and style of the language of the playwright, with limited reference made to how they had come to this understanding through practical activity. The most successful examples of this element showed how a candidate had explored a section or comparative sections of the play using several approaches, coming to conclusions that were rooted in their practical exploration.

Non-verbal communication

Successful candidates wrote about their practical work, as an actor or director and how to develop meaning from a text, using a range of strategies. They then connected this towards bringing a text to life. Other candidates appeared to limit their work to writing about how they might physically express themselves whilst delivering lines.

Characterisation

Moderators reported that, overall, candidates showed good understanding of how characters can be explored to develop how they might be portrayed in performance. Some candidates chose to write about their impressions or thoughts about characters, based on close textual analysis. This was far less successful as it does not show connection to the way understanding is developed through practical exploration.

The social, historical, cultural, and political context

Candidates did not appear to pursue ways to relate this element to their practical explorations. There was a limited range of examples where candidates gave a clear indication of how they had used their understanding of what they knew about the play's context to help them discover how it might be explored or interpreted. A large proportion of candidates wrote, often at length, about the context of the play, usually closely rooted in theoretical research. Weaker ones sometimes failed to interpret their research, and a few merely copied texts from internet sources.

Many candidates failed to make the most of this element and centres are reminded that research that has not been used practically in exploration is generally worth very few marks.

The visual, aural, spatial elements of a production

Some candidates made good use of sketches and designs for this section. However, others failed to annotate their work sufficiently. Centres are reminded that sketches and designs themselves are worth few marks; it is what is said about the sketch or diagram or, increasingly, photograph, that earns the candidate marks. Very few candidates adequately put their designs to the test through practically researching their effectiveness.

Interpretation

The most successful responses to this element were those that showed how ideas had developed in the studio through experimentation, what had worked, and what had not. Weaker responses were lengthy wish lists for whole productions, many of which had little to do with the candidate's experience, geared towards making theatre. The least successful appeared to be where candidates had been asked to write a short section detailing what they would do if they were mounting a production of their chosen text. More effective responses concerned the adaptation of the methods of recognised theatre practitioners, such as *Frantic*, used in the practical exploration of their text.

The response to a practitioner

Candidates wrote about, and experimented with, practitioner ideas whilst exploring one of their texts. However, a minority still limited their responses to the ideas themselves, without referring to how they had used them during their drama explorations. Frequently these candidates appeared to have tackled this section through a quite separate workshop, unrelated to text exploration. Several instances where rather unsuitable practitioner ideas were used in the workshop were still written about in detail, but failed to have any relevance exemplified. As already mentioned, some centres looked at a practitioner for each text. Whilst this is not a requirement, it

was interesting to note where candidates had been able to make some valid comparisons between methodologies.

The Evaluation of Live Theatre

Live productions seen followed a similar pattern to play choices, in being specific to those shown by the professional theatre throughout the year. The vast majority of candidates wrote about performances of plays, rather than any other form of production. More successful responses showed a good mix of analysis and evaluation and frequently provided a lively and engaging critical view of what had been seen. Weaker responses fell back on description or overly subjective and unjustified evaluation. More successful candidates used the vocabulary and experience of drama they had mastered during work for the unit, to illustrate their writing. Much of this work was well-focused and effectively presented, perhaps indicating the level of teacher input into this contained area of experience within the unit. Some centres encouraged candidates to write about a production of one of the texts studied within the unit. There was no evidence that this element of assessment was any more or less successful than those who did not. The theatre experience, however, may have had more of an impact on the exploration notes. Weaker responses showed candidates had become confused between what they had seen and their own explorations.

Records of work

Most centres complied with the requirement to send a single record of work for both texts. These helped moderators determine the level of work delivered to candidates. It is not necessary for centres to send highly detailed accounts of what went on over the course of the unit; these should be general accounts of the workshops delivered on both texts. The most helpful records of work were those that were closely aligned to the assessment objectives.

Sample Practical Session

The practical activities carried out for the Sample Session ranged from the highly imaginative and directly applied to the exploration of the text in

question, to extensive discussion. Moderators favourably reported that this year most centres did not record register taking and preliminary conversations. Sessions were still sometimes over-directed by teachers or did not clearly show candidates working together on a text. Many candidates were very difficult to make out or identify, either because teachers did not ensure clear identification of group members, or the lighting in the location was very poor. The most effective sessions were still those where candidates were clearly identified at the start, their names frequently used throughout and the camera focused on areas where candidate work was going on apace.

Centres are requested to explore how well they can capture practical sessions in their studio space, **before recording their final version**, to ensure lighting and sound elements are sufficient to the task. Centres with larger groups might consider splitting the group to enable the moderator to see a recorded session with, for example 9 of the 18 candidates in the group taking part in the workshop so identification becomes much easier. There is no requirement for all of the candidates in the centre to be seen in this recorded session so centres might consider how to construct the session with the moderator in mind. It is a sample session, so it is good to see a range of candidates with the top, middle and bottom evident within that range. A studio with 18 to 20 seventeen year olds in it may not provide the most conducive environment for moderation.

Teachers' assessments, comments, and annotations

Centres' marking of the Evaluations of Live Theatre was again more accurate than for the Exploration Notes. This was noted last year by the moderation team. There was a more realistic view taken of work here and most candidates' work was accurately assessed against the published criteria.

The assessment of the Exploration Notes was still problematic in some areas, however, with moderators applying the standard of this unit and adjusting candidates' marks accordingly.

Occasionally, centre rank orders had to be modified where teacher-assessors had incorrectly rewarded work that had clearly taken effort, but was not always related to the criteria. Teachers' comments did not always

reflect the marks awarded. Teacher annotations are vital to the process of moderation and, where usefully applied, can help show their thinking and assessment processes. Where plagiarism has been detected by the teacher this must be brought to the attention of all concerned. It must be stressed that this is not allowed, since all work must be that of the candidate alone. Similarly, over long work should be weeded out at the first draft stage. If this is not effectively done, then the teacher-assessor needs to ask the candidate to locate the 3,000 words to be marked against the assessment criteria. If this process is not clear to the moderator, they are instructed to moderate the first 3,000 words and to ignore anything that then follows. This will result in a change of marks, particularly where all elements are not covered in the first 3,000 words.

Moderators reported examples of helpful practice where teacher-assessors had drawn a line across the page of work that reached the word limit to indicate to the moderator where the centre had stopped marking.

Many centres annotated their candidates' coursework with a clear view of the purpose of the undertaking, so that the moderator's task was eased considerably. It is a requirement that work from candidates is annotated. In some centres, there was evidence of genuine department standardisation and cross moderation of work, something that is essential for the security of marks awarded to candidates.

Practical Exploration

Marks given for the Sample Session were significantly lenient, though less so than in previous years. The assessment of the practical element was often inaccurate, against the assessment criteria. While there may be an imbalance in the marks awarded for both elements of the unit, it is expected that candidates' practical marks should bear some correlation to that given for the written elements. Attention of centres is drawn to the report from the first series of this unit in 2009.

Administration

Most centres ensured their work arrived on time and in good order. However, centres did not always include all of the asterisked candidates

from their OPTEMS sheets. It was again common for centres to omit their highest and lowest attaining candidates. The ICE indicates what must be sent to the moderator and the examination board deadline for this process. Centres occasionally felt they could request that their moderator take a more relaxed attitude to moderation because there had been some mitigating event or situation for candidates. This is not an appropriate course of action since formal requests for special consideration would be more advisable, and these should be made through the examinations' officer, not through the moderator.

Centres did not always check that their Sample Session recordings were visible, could be heard, or had been copied on to regular, standard size discs, playable on any domestic player. Some did not package up materials safely and DVDs were damaged in transit. Centres that used large numbers of plastic envelopes for work and papers or cardboard folders did so unnecessarily and wasted much time for their moderator. Centres are reminded that work should be presented stapled together for each candidate and DVDs packed in protective envelopes. Centres are reminded to ensure that candidate's names appear on **all** of the pages of the exploration notes and evaluations, in case they become separated.

Moderators again reported the trend for some centres to authenticate the word counts of candidate's notes and evaluations that were very clearly over the published and stated limit.

Centres are reminded once again, that any work over the word limit must not be assessed.

High scoring work was felt to show some of these features:

- Candidates had been well taught and given the opportunity to practically explore two substantial plays that had been well chosen
- Candidate's practical explorations were embedded in their writing about the plays, across all of the elements
- Candidates had clearly been given the advantage of practice that engendered confidence and risk taking.
- Candidate's written Exploration Notes were the end product of a process of summarising and honing ideas gleaned from practical exploration. They were not their logbooks.
- Exploration Notes were balanced across both texts

- Candidates referred to their own work, not just that of their group
- Exploration notes were concise and made full use of the available number of words but did not exceed them
- Diagrams and sketches were annotated
- Key lessons were delivered that allowed the candidates to focus on each of the elements
- Candidates found ways of discovering how language works in performance or how the context of a play can inform its interpretation
- The Sample Session was well focused and showed a range of practical workshop activities with the emphasis on the candidates working on the text, rather than the teacher
- The Evaluation Of Live Theatre made clear distinctions between the play and the production and provided evidence of considered objective analysis of the production
- Responses showed a good mix of analysis and evaluation and frequently provided a lively and engaging critical view of what they had seen
- Teacher comments were detailed and specific, allowing the moderator to see examples of how and why marks had been awarded

Middle scoring work was felt to show some of these features:

- Texts did not fully meet the needs of the candidates
- Practical activities were not sufficiently explorative
- Exploration Notes were imbalanced across the two texts
- Writing for some of the elements of exploration was not sufficiently rooted in practical work
- Evaluations of Live Theatre were descriptive, rather than evaluative and analytical
- Teacher comments were brief and did not help the moderator see why marks had been awarded

Low scoring work was felt to show some of these features:

- Texts were poorly chosen, were not clearly understood by candidates, or were too simplistic

- Practical activities were teacher dominated
- Exploration Notes exceeded the word limit and failed to meet the criteria in terms of being concise and rooted in practical exploration
- Candidates carried out elaborate comparisons between texts that were sometimes Inappropriate, fruitless or too difficult
- Practical insights were not used to inform the Exploration Notes
- Candidates included extracts of texts, but did not grasp that annotations must take an important role. There were extensive text extracts, by the side of which they wrote ideas for interpretation or characterisation, or what they would be doing when they said the lines, failing to make the link between the two sides or any substantial conclusions
- Elements of the notes were reproduced from other sources and were not related to candidate work, or were missing
- Candidates wrote long wish lists of how their own version of a play might be interpreted or staged, without showing how any of it would work through practical examples
- The play's contexts were approached too theoretically, without practical exploration
- Evaluations of Live Theatre were too descriptive and lacked analysis and evaluation, or were missing
- Centre's were poorly organized, had lost coursework, had not carried out centre standardisation or did not have sufficient specialist drama staff to deliver the unit

In general, however, the majority of centres again proved they had a firm understanding of the purpose of this unit and this was evident in all of the material presented for moderation. Teachers who were clearly well prepared and focused on the demands of the unit had effectively served their candidates.

Grade Boundaries

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