

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE Drama and Theatre Studies
(6DR02)
Theatre Text in Performance

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Publications Code UA032028

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6DR02 Text in Performance

Introduction

This is the fourth year of examination of the AS performance unit. In previous years a detailed report has covered all aspects of Unit 2. As examiners report that many of the issues regarding the administration of this unit remain the same as in previous reports this report will focus on the issues and performance of the 2012 candidates.

Some information from the 2011 report is also included as it applies to the 2012 series.

Overall the achievement of candidates was very much in line with those in 2011. However the achievement of those towards the lower mark range showed some improvement.

Section A

The monologue/duologue performances are worth 30% of the total AS mark. All criteria are equally weighted.

Candidates can be examined as a single performer in a monologue, with one other performance candidate in a duologue or as a designer working on the same text as performance candidates. Design candidates' work must be seen in a performance by performance candidates within the time limit in a Section A performance.

For all candidates independent research into the complete text is a requirement. All candidates are required to complete under supervised conditions a written concept to support their practical work. This must be sent to the examiner to arrive least 7 working days in advance of the Section A examination.

Maximum time limits of 2 minutes for monologues and 5 minutes for duologues are also set in line with the time limits set by most tertiary institutions which require a demonstration of practical ability as part of the selection process.

Section B

The group performance is worth 30% of the AS marks and all criteria are equally weighted.

Candidates can be examined as a performer or designer in a performance chosen, cast and directed by a teacher/tutor.

Unit 2 is an externally examined unit but one in which the assessment objectives and criteria do not change from those printed in the specification. The work presented for examination is selected by the centre so this report does not need to reflect the individual demands of the questions in a written examination. It is the responsibility of each centre to select the play texts, options taken by candidates and audience.

This remains a unique externally examined unit that has elements of both an examined and coursework unit.

Section A

Examiners report that overall candidates had shown understanding of the requirements of Section A. In 2012 a new form DTS2B/D was introduced to support all candidates in clarifying the requirements of this part of the examination.

The completion of this form is a student task not a teacher/tutor one. Where centres had enabled candidates to complete this correctly, examiners reported it had a correlation to the quality of the work seen for Section A. All centres are advised to ensure that enough time is given in the preparation of candidates for the examination in order for all parts of this form to be completed in full and accurately.

The most common weakness was not entering the word count for the Written Concept/Annotation.

Many were either left blank or just had 500 entered despite the fact it was clear to examiners that the WPC was either well in excess of this or in some cases well under.

Marks were awarded in all mark bands as in previous series. The majority of candidates performed monologues again this year. There was a small increase in design candidates. There was no evidence that candidates did better in any of the design options.

However again this year there was a minority of centres which did not put in place the requirements of this section and this did disadvantage those candidates.

Overall examiners report that centres had prepared candidates better for Section A.

Where candidates produced work marked in the lower mark bands examiners reported that this may have been because insufficient time had been spent in preparation for this section or that candidates had not been taught the skills to achieve at a higher level.

Performance Candidates

Preparation and choice of text

Examiners reported that this year stronger guidance and support had been given to candidates in selecting material. Very few examiners reported that they felt candidates had been left to prepare for the examination on their own.

There was a small amount of work that was not a positive choice for examination work usually because of the content of the text or the level of challenge for AS achievement.

This was often felt to apply to Shakespearean and other classical texts. Examiners report that candidates struggled with the delivery of the text in relation to the demands of the language and also in communicating the meaning.

There were also some concerns that the content of the material chosen was inappropriate for examination work at AS level that could be viewed by an audience.

It was often clear from the WPCs that the complete text had not been read and researched by the individual candidate. This definitely disadvantaged candidates. It is positive to report that there was a definite decrease in short, often comedy, sketches or monologues that had been found on the internet that did not present enough challenge or meet the requirements of having a being a published theatre text.

Although there was evidence that some candidates had made their choice by reference to one of the many monologue/duologue anthologies available, overall there was an improvement this year in evidence that candidates had subsequently read and researched their chosen text.

Centres are reminded again this year that they must be aware that some of these publications for other examinations have both monologues and duologues that are not from complete published play texts but are adaptations from novels or other material. Also screenplays, radio and television scripts do not meet the requirements of Section A.

It is positive to report that unlike in 2011 the vast majority of candidates had the complete texts available for the examiner prior to the examination session. Only a very few examiners had to request that copies of the text were sent to them after the examination session to confirm the candidates had had access to the text.

Centres are reminded that for both sections of this unit Edexcel has no issues with either accent or gender in performance. There were very few examples of cross gender playing this year.

Some examiners did report that there seemed to be an increase in the number of candidates who had chosen to perform in the appropriate accent. This could be very successful but centres are reminded that this is centre choice and the effectiveness and sustaining of the accent will be taken into account in marking vocal skills.

Some centres selected a single play text and all candidates chose monologues or duologues from this text. This was felt to support design candidates and some performance candidates. However there was evidence that this did not always support all performance candidates.

Some centres chose an author or genre and this did give greater flexibility to all candidates. This was often reflected in the reporting of preparation work in the Written Performance Concepts by referring to class or group activities/workshops often in relation to specific practitioners.

However centres are reminded that all candidates must also undertake some individual research in preparation for the examination.

This must be reflected in the Written Performance Concepts.

Timings

Examiners will only award marks within the time limits for Section A.

The maximum time is stated in the specification and the Administrative Support Guide.

It is very disappointing that despite this being clear on the DTS2B forms that are signed by each candidate many candidates performed well in excess of the maximum time limit.

As with the word limits in Units 1 and 3 there is no tolerance on this. For candidates who exceeded the time limit some did gain their marks within the time limit but most examiners report that often the strongest work was after the time limit and could not be awarded marks.

Candidates' performances that were under the time limit were seen to be self penalising.

As in every previous report centres are strongly advised to ensure that in the preparation for this section much more emphasis is placed on this requirement.

All work for Section A must be prepared as it would be seen in a complete performance of the text.

There were fewer instances of 'mini productions' using music/projection this year.

There were examples of performances being directed straight to the examiner where this would not be appropriate in a complete performance.

Examiners will start marking as soon as the candidate(s) performance begins. This can be either the first speaking of the text or some non verbal aspect of the performance.

Centres are advised to put in place a system of clearly sign posting to the examiner when each performance begins. There was concern that this had not been made clear to all candidates.

There were a very few examples of candidates losing focus and forgetting their lines completely. This was very stressful for those candidates. Centres understood that the examiner cannot intervene and that there are no 'second chances' in Section A.

Centres are reminded that all examiners are instructed to make and record accurate timings of each performance. This information must also be entered on the DTS2E form when the DVD is checked prior to sending to the examiner. When work was reviewed on DVD as part of the monitoring process it was noted that many of these timings by centres were inaccurate and often gave either no time or 2/5 minutes.

Non Examination Students

It is disappointing to report again this year that there were examples of other performers being present in Section A. When this was seen at the start of the examination performance examiners requested that they did not take part. There were some examples of a non exam performer entering during the performance. In these cases the examiner did not stop the performance but all centres are reminded this does not meet the requirements of Section A.

Edexcel will accept that in a centre there may be 1 candidate who wishes to perform a duologue but due to the numbers in the group has no one to work with. In this case, another student can be used otherwise all duologues must be 2 examination candidates.

Centres must ensure that in duologues both candidates have equal opportunity within the time limit.

Candidates may be disadvantaged if these requirements are not met.

Examination Conditions

The vast majority of examiners were provided with the facilities as detailed in the Administrative Support Guide. This needs to be clarified and agreed with the examiner before the exam session(s). The majority of exam sessions enabled examiners to remain in the exam space for an agreed number of candidates and then leave for a period of time to consider their marks in a private space. However there was an increase in examiners reporting that they felt under pressure to view too many candidates in too short a time. This was often because centres had large audiences present.

Most centres chose an audience of other AS drama students or invited peers. This was felt by the majority of examiners to provide the best conditions to support the examination performances.

All Section A performances must be completed with at least a one chair space on either side of and behind the examiner and this same space between the performer and the examiner.

It is good to report that the vast majority of centres did this in 2012.

Performance Candidates

Vocal Skills

Centres must ensure that all candidates have the opportunity to meet the criteria as listed. Again this year examiners report that many candidates had not considered the importance of projection. There was often a lack of pace and pause seen in performance. Examiners reported they felt this could be due to nervousness as candidates may not have been well prepared by performing the pieces to others in preparation for the examination.

Movement Skills

Some examiners report that very static performances did not support candidates in achieving in the criteria as listed. Both gesture and facial expression are considered by examiners in awarding marks for movement. However there were also many reports of candidates' ability to use stillness at times to great effect. There were examples of where inappropriate movement had been 'bolted on' and this disadvantaged candidates.

It is positive to report that the majority of candidates had considered the importance of creating by effective use of 'eye line' and focus the other character(s) that would be present in a performance of the chosen extract.

Characterisation

The performance must reflect an understanding of the role in the context of the complete text. Within the time constraints many examiners reported seeing very powerful and convincing work that reflected a high level of understanding of the text, context of the play and its contemporary relevance.

Again this year there were also many performances that lacked any or very little understanding of the role.

Often this lack of knowledge was also evidenced in the Written Performance Concept.

Examiners report that some of the roles chosen by candidates were extremely challenging for the understanding and skill level of Year 12 students. This in many cases did limit achievement.

Many candidates had based some or much of their characterisation on watching performances of the role either on DVD or YouTube. This did not enable them to have a creative experience in finding their own characterisation.

Style and interpretation in performance must be considered in the preparation process and this must be clearly indicated in the Written Performance Concept.

Written Performance Concept

There has been a steady improvement in the standard of the Written Performance Concepts.

However it remains the area where candidates seem least well prepared and therefore are not achieving at the same standard as the 3 practical elements. Examiners report that this is reflected in the overall achievement in individual centres. It was felt that there was an increase in centres clearly building into the AS year preparatory work for the final Written Performance Concept that is submitted for examination.

It is the most disappointing aspect of this report that most examiners again report that far too many candidates ignored the 500 word limit.

Examiners only mark the first 500 words beginning with the rationale. If this met or exceeded in the word limit any annotation on the text was not marked. This was often the section where candidates detailed their intended interpretation.

All 3 areas need to be covered in balance in the rationale and many examiners report again having to complete 'best fit' marking as at least one of the 3 requirements as detailed in the criteria was not covered or covered outside the word limit.

The challenge for candidates in the 500 word limit is to organise their knowledge and understanding succinctly and to cover all 3 areas. As the work sent to the examiner must be completed under supervised conditions it must be a personal response that reflects each individual's response to their chosen role. Centres must ensure that each page of the Written Performance Concept and the text are clearly identified with candidate name, number and running order and all are attached firmly to the DTS2B/D.

Social, historical, cultural and political context

Candidates often copied or downloaded basic information about the text, author, plot and/or role chosen. This could be awarded no marks and as much of this information is now given on the DTS2B/D form, this wasted words that could have been used to meet the requirements of the other elements of the concept.

The key word is to show understanding of this in the light of their individual interpretation rather than just state factual information regarding the context.

Candidates did best where there was evidence of individual understanding of these factors.

In some cases there were too many direct quotes from the introductions of frequently used editions. Candidates who achieved in this section captured how their knowledge and understanding of these factors had impacted on their performance. Not all four need to be covered but candidates should make a choice of those that are most relevant to their individual performance. There needs to be a balance in covering these elements.

Preparation process

There was a clearer focus on what each individual candidate actually did rather than general statements such as 'I did some physical theatre exercises'. Choosing significant moments was most successful in communicating the preparation process. Where there had been group activities led by the teacher, candidates needed to detail their own individual involvement.

There were many instances where just a list of preparation or rehearsal tasks/techniques was listed with no reference to what the individual candidate actually did. These lists did not meet the requirements of this section.

Intended interpretation

Where candidates had annotated the text to be performed this could be an effective way of indicating intentions for performance rather than including it in the rationale. Examiners report that often annotation alone did not clarify the intended interpretation but stated what could be seen in performance and further detail of why this was done was needed to achieve in the higher mark bands.

It has been stated in previous reports that a considerable number of candidates either state what they will be wearing and using as a set or what they would like to wear and have as a set. Within the constraints of the 500 word limit this information does not support the requirements of the criteria. Centres are strongly advised not to include this in the Written Performance Concepts.

Centres are reminded that the final Written Performance Concept submitted to the examiner must be completed under supervised conditions in line with Unit 1. Duologue candidates must ensure that their rationale is individual with the focus on their character in the performance. Examiners report that although duologue candidates had worked together the centre must ensure that the response is personal and individual. It must focus on their individual role.

The majority of rationales were received 7 working days in advance of the examination. Examiners are required to read and mark all the Written Performance Concepts before the examination sessions. No marks are awarded or adjusted after the performances. Teachers are not required to mark the WPCs or make any comments on them before sending to the examiner.

Examination Conditions

Section A has a different focus and demand on candidates from Section B the group performance.

It is centre choice for the size and composition of any chosen audience but examiners report that most centres ensured the examination process ran smoothly.

The most supportive audiences were those of other GCE drama candidates and/or invited peers.

Centres are strongly advised to allow approximately 5 minutes per monologue and 10 minutes per duologue when planning the examination session. This was detailed in The Administrative Support Guide 2012. The vast majority of centres had supported the examination by ensuring that both the examiner and candidates were working under appropriate examination conditions.

Design Candidates

There was an increase in design candidates. All skills were seen but costume seemed to be the most popular.

It was felt that again this year both lighting and sound were the most challenging for candidates. This was due to the time constraints of Section A and the need for the designs chosen to work within the context of the complete text.

There was a concern that for some candidates the centre had been unable to provide the support needed at AS level both in providing the equipment and having the necessary level of teaching expertise. Examiners report that some candidates were disadvantaged by this.

In general candidates responded well to the 500 word design concept. Candidates awarded marks in the higher mark bands had detailed and thoughtful documentation. There was an increase in candidates using power point presentations as well as the requirements as detailed in the specification. The 10 minute presentations were felt to be stronger this year as candidates talked about their written design concept and documentation and did not just read them to the examiner.

As in previous series many presentations were longer than 10 minutes, usually due to the enthusiasm of the candidates.

The presentations need to be made to the camera. Some examiners report that candidates sat down at the examiner table so the presentation could not be caught effectively on the recording. Most centres did ensure that all the documentation could clearly be seen in the recording, although some needed reminding of this by the examiner.

Section B

Overall it was felt that the standard of work seen in previous series of Section B performances was maintained in this year.

There was good level of understanding of the requirements of group performance and the majority of candidates were very well prepared. Disappointingly this year examiners report that there were some candidates being poorly prepared by centres for this unit and producing work that did not meet the AS standard. There was evidence of candidates not making the individual effort needed to achieve at a higher level. This was usually evidenced by lack of security with the text and the overall interpretation.

Centres must meet the requirements of the specification in terms of group size and length of performance. These were clearly stated in both the specification and The Administrative Support Guide 2012.

Examiners reported again this year that they could not understand why centres had disadvantaged their candidates by not ensuring that the requirements were adhered to for group performance.

Examiners will not view the same interpretation twice with some candidates being substituted in a second performance.

Non examination students can only take part when a candidate that has been entered for the exam and completed Unit 1 cannot take part in the performance. This is defined as 'extreme circumstances' in the ASG.

No performance must be cast and rehearsed with non exam students as this does not meet the requirements of Section B.

Whatever the group size examiners felt candidates achieved by performing towards the lower time limit as it enabled performances to have sustained energy and focus. This was particularly true of small groups of 3 or 4.

Centres must understand that all examiners are instructed to stop examining at the maximum time limit as stated in the ASG. This is also true for any monitoring of performances by the senior team using the recorded evidence before marks are entered and for any review as part of EAR procedures.

The Text as Performed

The examining team reported that the choice of texts presented in previous series was seen again this year. There is a body of texts that work well for AS examination and as they will be new to each cohort of AS students, examiners report that this is supportive to candidates.

Some examiners report seeing new contemporary texts but there is no evidence that these support candidates in achieving over more established texts.

The narrative arc of the complete text must be seen in the examination performance. It does not meet the requirements of the group performance for candidates to perform in an extract of the complete text. There were still a few centres which performed a complete text with different performance groups taking on an Act or Section. Centres must understand that this disadvantages candidates.

Many examiners report very positively on the skill and creativity of teachers/tutors in editing and adapting scripts. There were reports where it was felt the original text had been 'improved' by this process. This was particularly true where the chosen focus of the interpretation was clarified by the edited text.

Examiners also report on the requirement that if a text has been adapted and in particular if an interpretation involves the division of roles/multi roles / chorus work then the script sent to the examiner must indicate this clearly. This frequently was not completed this year.

This section below is reprinted from the 2011 report as examiners reported this remains an area of concern.

It is a requirement to provide a copy of the text as performed. It is perfectly acceptable to send the published text with cuts clearly indicated. Some centres sent the text within a collection and this is also acceptable. A few centres requested the return of the text from the examiner. This is not possible as the texts must be enclosed with all other material for this section to be sent to Edexcel to support any subsequent senior examiner who may need to view the work. In addition with the wide range of texts being offered for this section it is important that examiners are well prepared by checking the text as performed in advance.

It is disappointing to report again this year that there were performances that did not meet the requirements of Section B. There were cases where a copy of the text as performed was sent in advance to the examiner but it was not the text as published but some included extra dialogue including scenes and roles that were not in the original text.

Of considerably greater concern was when in performance there was devised work that the examiner had not expected. This was in some cases 'pre shows', some of considerable length or devised sections within the complete performance.

This created considerable extra work for examiners and members of the senior team in monitoring these performances to disregard this extraneous material.

Audiences

Examiners reported that the majority of audiences understood that this was an examination and responded appropriately and supported the candidates. In part this was due to the fact that although 'it is an examination that happens to be a performance' teacher/tutor directors had enabled the candidates to gain a great deal of enjoyment from the process of creating live theatre and this was communicated to audience members. The response of the audiences in many cases clearly enhanced the whole experience.

The section below is reprinted from the 2011 report as examiners reported this was an area of concern.

Centres must ensure that an audience that will support the group performance is present as all candidates are awarded 25% of the marks on communication with other cast and audience members. Again this year there were some examples of audience members using mobile phones, calling out inappropriate remarks, moving about the performance space or not understanding the nature of the performance. Some audience members were sat too close to examiners and when this occurred it was usually because the audience numbers were greater than expected.

Centres are reminded that this is an examination and that the candidates and examination process must be the focus of the Section B performance. Some examiners report that the needs of the audience took precedence over the examination and this did not support candidates.

Choice of Texts

Examiners felt that there was nothing new to report on the choice of texts in 2012 as the vast majority of centres have a very high level of understanding of the importance of this. Centres are reminded that Edexcel has a policy of not approving or recommending texts for Unit 2. This has to be a centre responsibility as in order to support candidates it is the teacher/tutor who has

the knowledge of both the skills and interests of their students in order to make this choice.

Some centres will select new texts every year, others will use the same text in subsequent years but adapt and interpret to match the cohort. Edexcel does not keep any records of centre texts year on year but it was felt that neither approach had any advantage for candidate achievement.

This section is reprinted from the 2011 report.

Many examiners reported very positively about the variety and suitability of texts. The choice of text to enable candidates to meet the requirements of the examination and their skills and interests is the foundation for achievement in this section. It is clear there are a number of texts that work very well and centres are using them again but giving them new and unique interpretations. Plays that have the episodic form worked particularly well giving the teacher director the flexibility to choose episodes that supported all candidates. Examiners report that stylised and physical approaches to performance work was felt to advantage candidates at this level. More naturalistic performances often started well but could lack pace and dynamism. This may be due to candidates not rising to the challenge of this style of performance within a live theatre context.

There are some texts, often those written with no designated roles that did not always support candidates in achieving in the examination.

They could be effective productions enjoyed and appreciated by the audiences but in terms of identifying each candidate's individual contribution for examination marking challenging.

Centres must ensure that all candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate in performance their skills of characterisation.

Centres are reminded that the choice of text is their responsibility. Centres must consider very carefully the suitability of the content or the language of the text.

There were some examples of a full length text being divided into 2 or more performance groups. Examiners who saw this work report that this does disadvantage candidates.

There were still a very few centres that had candidates performing a full-length play but designate in which section candidates must be awarded marks. This does not meet the requirements of the specification. It presented an enormous challenge for examiners to have the correct focus on the examined candidates. It makes too great a demand on candidates to be involved in performance work for which they cannot be awarded marks. These performances often included non examination candidates.

The Teacher Director's Interpretation Notes

Most examiners report that the majority of centres understand that along with the choice of text this is an important aspect of success in this unit. Centres are reminded that in the group performance candidates are not marked on their understanding of the director's concept but on their individual characterisation in performance.

It was stated in the 2011 report that the most supportive notes had a focus on the individual roles and an explanation of the overall performance style/form.

Many centres used this format this year and it was felt that it was very supportive to candidates' preparation for the examination.

Examiners commented that this was very helpful in their preparation for the examination.

The most successful performances demonstrated that candidates had been engaged in the overall director's interpretation and their roles within it. Less successful performances often seemed not to go much beyond cutting the text and candidates learning the lines and delivering them.

There is not the same requirement of the text being at least 60 minutes in performance length that is a requirement of Section A. It must meet all other requirements of being professionally published, substantial and written for theatre performance. Smaller groups often chose shorter texts.

Screenplays and radio/television scripts do not meet the requirements of Section B.

Performance Candidates

This was the option taken by the majority of candidates. Work was seen across the complete mark range. There were again this year candidates who work with such skill, enthusiasm and commitment that performances were seen that fully deserved marks in the top bands.

It was clear that most centres had given the majority of candidates a well-structured preparation period and a final examination that had a real sense of both occasion and theatre.

Centres are reminded that examiners can only award marks for the criteria printed in the specification. Performances that enabled examiners to concentrate on these were most suitable for examination success. The use of costume, make up and effects whether there were design candidates or not often enhanced the group performances. In other centres it was felt there was too high a reliance on these and it detracted from the candidates' focus on their performance.

After an improvement in this last year it is very disappointing to report there was an increase in candidates all wearing very similar costumes. These were most frequently 'theatre blacks'.

It was most often observed in texts where there were undefined roles or candidates playing more than one role.

If examiners cannot clearly identify what candidates do and say in performance then candidates are disadvantaged. This is particularly true with large groups. Another concern was when candidates had many costume changes. Sometimes these were explained to the examiner prior to the performance. At other times this did not happen and it was at best a 'surprise' and in some cases a 'shock' to the examiner who could then lose focus on the complete performance in attempting to identify these candidates.

Design Candidates

There were slightly more design candidates again this year. The vast majority of centres had none. In most centres there was only one. In larger centres often with Performing Arts status and/or the input of theatre technicians there was

evidence that candidates had had the opportunity to work creatively with individual groups.

Examiners reported that it had been a positive choice for some candidates. There was some excellent work which clearly demonstrated that the candidates had been given opportunities to have a real creative input working with the director on realising the production ideas. Some candidates took on more than one skill and showed an understanding of the whole production values of the performance. Many were very good examples of how to achieve a great deal on a limited budget.

There were other candidates for whom this had not been a positive choice and they had not understood the requirements of this option and produced poorly considered and executed work that failed to add anything to the overall performance.

There were also design candidates who chose a single skill. It was felt that there was no advantage in either approach.

Performance groups with more than one design candidate usually demonstrated they had worked creatively together and with the director and performers. There were some centres where examiners felt the candidates were the director's technicians rather than having the opportunity to design the work for their chosen skill(s). This disadvantaged these candidates.

The presentations to the examiner varied in quality. Some candidates gave poor presentations but their work was effective in performance. Some gave confident presentations but the ideas were not seen in performance.

Centres had the option of pre-recording the presentations which the examiner must view prior to the performance. This may also advantage candidates who are actively involved with the performance e.g. lighting or costume. Some presentations took place in the performance space prior to the audience coming in, others in another room. This is entirely centre choice but examiners reported that it was less stressful for 'live' presentations to be made just to the examiner and possibly any students being used in the presentation.

All options are fairly equally represented with the exception of masks/makeup. Many candidates used technology to provide often very impressive projection and sound work.

Administration of 6DR02

Requirements

Centres must ensure they put in place the requirements for this unit as detailed in the Administrative Support Guide. This essential document is only available on the Edexcel website. This is revised each year in the light of both examiners' and teachers' suggestions to ensure that the administration of the unit is clear to all centres. It also includes all the documentation needed for this unit.

Centres are reminded that it is wholly the centre's responsibility to ensure that any Edexcel representatives are accompanied at all times when with candidates.

Many of the concerns expressed by examiners would not exist if all centres read and put in place the requirements of this examination.

Timing of the Examination

Centres that had entries in 2011 were contacted by their examiners at the beginning of the spring term. Most dates and times were swiftly and efficiently arranged. Some centres failed to respond quickly to examiners contacting them and this often led to the first choice of date or time for the centre not being possible. Edexcel cannot give out examiner details to centres.

Centres must have some flexibility in arranging the examination date and time. Edexcel cannot find alternative examiners for centres who insist on rigid times and dates.

Centres must not contact Edexcel directly as it results in unnecessary work for the examiners and the Edexcel Deployment Team.

The examination period is stated in the Administrative Support Guide. No extensions are allowed and individual examiners cannot give this permission.

In previous series, in the main, Section A was the first to be examined. Examiners report that there was an increase in centres doing Section B first this year.

It was reported in previous years that the timing of the exam sessions is entirely a centre issue. It was felt that there was no advantage in when centres completed each section. However this year several examiners reported that candidates having engaged in the group performance first seemed to be better prepared for Section A.

Again the vast majority of performances took place in the evenings giving a sense of occasion and enabling an appropriate audience to attend.

When arrangements are made with the examiner the timings of performances and time to identify candidates and consider marks must be agreed in advance and adhered to on the visit.

It is disappointing that again this year some examiners report being kept waiting due to late arrival of audience members or being rushed by centres between performances. This must be addressed by centres.

Centre Administration

The efficiency with which this is completed by centres each year, like the performances seen runs the full range from 'outstanding' to 'limited'

The centres which completed the documentation were often exemplary and understood this cannot be done in a rush at the last minute.

Again a great deal of the required paperwork was incomplete, inaccurate, late or non-existent until the examiner's arrival in the centre. Examiners are required to come well prepared for the examination and cannot do so without this vital information. This was particularly true for Section A.

Examiners are now instructed to arrive approximately 30 minutes prior to the first performance/presentation.

Centres can support the examination by ensuring that examiners have all the information needed to locate the examination venue when the centre may well

be closed. A mobile contact number for the teacher/tutor in charge of the examination proved very useful on several occasions.

There is flexibility in how centres organise the sessions but the total number of sessions as detailed in the Administrative Support Guide must be adhered to and cannot be extended. Overlong performances and late running again meant that some examiners and candidates were completing an examination very late in the evening.

Having agreed timings with the examiner prior to the visit these must be adhered to by both the centre and the examiner.

It is acknowledged that at times a few examiners are unable to do this by arriving late or taking longer than agreed between performances.

All examiners are instructed to inform Edexcel as soon as possible of any concerns regarding the administration of the examination. If centres also have any concerns they can contact Edexcel in writing as soon as possible after the examination.

The majority of centres completed all administration very well and the examination was run with professionalism throughout.

The Monitoring of the Examination

Edexcel has in place a rigorous monitoring system that has both accompanied visits by more senior examiners and the reviewing of performances and marks awarded by using the recordings. This is in line with procedures for written examinations.

All examiners had an accompanied visit with their Team Leader. Some centres also had visits from members of the senior team. Centres are reminded that this is an important part of the ongoing monitoring of examiners for the practical performance units.

The choice of centres for these visits is dictated by the availability of dates and times not by the centres themselves.

This requirement was dealt with by most centres with understanding and a high level of professionalism. Although these visits should not have effected the running time of the examination in some cases it did occur and Edexcel apologises for this.

The Importance of the Recording of the Performances/Presentations

It is a requirement that recordings with an unobstructed view of both section A and B performances are made. The recording needs as far as possible to capture the experience of the examiner. The focus must be the performances and not include the back of the heads of the examiner and audience. It is disappointing that this was not done in the recordings from many centres. There was also an increase in the number of recordings made from the side of the performance space. This also often resulted in a recording which failed to capture the complete performance.

Section A recordings were of a better standard this year. Fewer centres had close up shots of candidates faces.

Section B was more challenging for centres in making a recording of the complete performance. Frequently the camera was not placed close to the examiner and was so far back from the performance that the candidates could not be clearly identified. If there is a large performance space and scenes are performed in different areas the camera can pan in order to record the complete performance.

If the person operating the camera knew the piece some judicious use of reasonable close ups were useful in capturing individual performances. It is vital that the camera operator monitors the complete performances as there were examples where some of the performances were not captured in the recordings.

For both Section A and B design presentations must be made to the camera and the examiner will sit next to it. Examiners looked at this evidence after the presentation but did not question candidates. Design presentations could be pre recorded and will be viewed by the examiner prior to the performance along with the documentation. Very few centres took this option. All documentation must also be recorded. This can be done before or after the presentation to the examiner.

The recording sent to Edexcel via the examiner is the basis of any Enquiries after Results procedures and is used in the monitoring of all examiners' marking. First line examiners did not check any recordings as this is a centre responsibility.

Centres must check all performances/presentations in their entirety for the correct timings and the quality of the recording. This was clearly not done again this year by many centres. Missing or poor quality recordings of performances mean that work cannot be checked prior to marks being entered or reviewed as part of the Post Results service. A minority of centres did report that recordings were of poor quality or had missing candidates or sections of the performances.

Centres must ensure that the DVD can be played on a standard domestic player.

When DVDs would not play it was often due to the fact that the DVD had not been finalised correctly. Centres must ensure each presentation/performance is given a chapter. However the time sheet must also be completed to document the actual timings on the recordings.

It is a requirement that all DVDs must be sent in a hard protective case. This was frequently not done so a considerable number of DVDs were damaged in transit. Some arrived with examiners in just a thin plastic cover in a paper envelope and often in these cases had become cracked or broken in the post. Edexcel will not send for replacement DVDs.

Many centres sent each group performance on a separate DVD. This was seen as good practice.

Having extended the time for the recordings to be received by examiners it was noted that even more centres failed to do this. Many arrived between 4 and 6 weeks after the examination sessions.

Some did not arrive at all although some centres informed the examiner that there had been problems and that the DVD was not being sent.

Examiners are not required to chase up recordings so many centres' work was despatched to Edexcel without the recordings as examiners also have deadlines to return materials.

Where recordings were not received within the time limit Edexcel was informed that an EAR or monitoring check will not be possible.

However many centres sent excellent recordings and these often were produced either by professional companies or highly skilled operators within centres. Again this year it was disappointing when examiners reported seeing exciting and interesting performances of high quality where the quality of the recording failed to capture the performance.

All centres should consider the value of having a permanent record of this work and ensure that the best quality recording is made.

Identification of Candidates on the Recordings

The details of how to complete this is clear in the Administrative Support Guide.

It is very disappointing to report again this year this was done badly by many centres.

This must be done in front of the examiner immediately before both Section A and B performances.

Pre recorded introductions were usually of little use and were often just fleeting and frequently gabbled introductions one by one and tended to be just a head and shoulder shot not in the costume being used in performance. This did not support the monitoring process or any EAR review.

The examiner will not need to speak with any Section A candidates so the formal introduction to camera is also the identification for the examiner.

The examiner for Section B may also wish to identify candidates informally just before the performance.

The performance group shot must be held for enough time for someone watching the recording to clearly identify them all.

Centres are strongly encouraged to provide the visiting examiner with a group colour photograph for each performance on arrival prior to the examination. The majority of examiners reported that on the DTS2A forms (examiner comment sheets) candidates did not give detailed written descriptions of how they will appear in the performance, both physical appearance and costume. This is a requirement for both Section A and B.

Small individual head and shoulder shots must not be attached to the form as they have proved to be of limited use in aiding identification and can be time consuming and expensive for centres.

Consortium Centres

Again this year there were some difficulties with centres, which had not completed the Consortium Information Forms available in the Administrative Support Guide. The completed forms must be sent to Edexcel as early as possible in the academic year. Centres must provide separate documentation and DVDs for each centre in the consortium.

Conclusion

Most examiners reported back that the same issues are still in evidence and are not being addressed by some centres as in previous series. This report has to reflect this.

Centres are reminded of the importance of following the specification and also The Administrative Support Guide.

Training from Edexcel

There will be face to face INSET meetings to support Unit 2 again this year. Edexcel can also provide customised inset for individual centres or groups of centres.

Ask the Expert

This service has proved to be very busy and popular with queries regarding many aspects of the specification.

Subject Advisor

Both GCSE and GCE Drama are now supported by Paul Webster and centres will be aware of him through the email newsletters.

Enquiries About Results (EAR) Service

This is completed by members of the senior examining team using all materials available from the examiners and centres as sent to Edexcel shortly after the examination. It is requested and completed on a single candidate by candidate basis. There is a charge for this service. Centres are reminded that marks can be adjusted down as well as up so candidate permission must be gained before requesting this service.

Copies of examiner mark sheets can also be requested. There is also a charge for this service.

Examinations officers will have all the details.

It is very positive to report that that the large and experienced examining team confirm that the standard seen in Unit 2 was much in line with that of both 2010 and 2011.

In Section B it was felt that the standard has been maintained in the group performances. Examiners felt it still achieved a great deal beyond its requirements as the AS Text in Performance.

In Section A it was felt too that the achievement by candidates in the higher mark bands had been consolidated this year. Candidates seemed well prepared and confident in both their chosen material and performance skills. It seemed these candidates had made positive and teacher guided choices in the texts and roles chosen.

In the lower mark bands there was seen to be an improvement in candidates' overall achievement. However some examiners felt that in marking the Written Performance Concepts there was evidence that they were struggling with the demands of a GCE course. Individual research had been challenging and preparation/rehearsal techniques not fully understood. Many had made choices of text and role that were not supportive to their skill level or seem to have caught their interest and imagination.

The important change this year was that many more centres had a better balance in their achievement across the complete unit. In previous series many more candidates did considerably better in Section B.

It is very positive to report that examiners report on the pleasure and education that they have gained from the very wide range of work seen again this year.

The commitment and understanding of this unit by the teachers/tutors in their centres must be acknowledged. The range of GCE Drama and Theatre Studies students demonstrated in a wide range of performances a very real sense of achievement in creating vibrant and stimulating theatre for the twenty first century. These teachers/tutors have also equipped their students with many of the 'soft skills' that both employers and higher education establishments report are required for future success.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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Order Code UA032028 Summer 2012

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