

# Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE  
in Performing Arts  
(Single Award: 8781)

Edexcel Advanced GCE in  
Performing Arts  
(Single Award: 9781)

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## General comments on the 2011 series

Many comments from last year's report are repeated as the points raised remain an issue for some centres.

This was the second year for the revised specification involving assessment of all units against the four band mark scheme rather than the former three band model. It was noted that most centre assessors had applied the grading criteria more realistically this year and moderator adjustments were not as significant as last year.

The enthusiasm for the specification continues in centres and the content free nature of the specification has resulted in a very wide range of course programmes offered across the country. There are, however, a few centres that have still not recognised that the specification is not a syllabus but an assessment structure for the essential skills required in the performing arts industry.

## Some Key Messages

The following are repeated problems that continue to occur and need addressing in some centres.

1. Candidates should **not** create portfolios in any other format than A4 (unless they are offering design skills) and **not** decorate their work (this type of approach is not indicative of AS/A level study – it is **only** the content that matters).
2. Top copies of the OPTeM forms should be completed for all Portfolio units (1, 2, 4, 5, & 6) and sent off to Edexcel at least one week prior to the moderation visit; the yellow copies should be retained with the work for the moderator.
3. The **written** components for units 3 and 7 should be marked prior to the moderation visit and all candidate work available for moderators.

4. Practical performances (3, 5 & 7) **must** be recorded and candidates **must** be identified at the start of performances.
5. The unit 5 recording, in the correct format, **must** be available for the moderator at the centre and sent to the Principal Moderator for the unit immediately after the visit.
6. Recordings of units 3 and 7, in the correct format, must be sent to the centre's allocated moderator no later than **one week** after the visit.
7. Centres assessors should not apply only the grading criteria within the grid but also refer to the assessment guidance following each grid. Annotation on candidate work should indicate where marks have been credited against the criteria.
8. For units 3 & 7 centres should adhere to the rubric concerning the running time of the performances.
9. When more than one teacher in a centre marks candidates it is important to carry out internal standardisation/cross marking.
10. Moderation visit dates **must** be negotiated with centres.
11. Moderators must be provided with a private space in which to sample candidate work.
12. Candidates should **avoid** web downloads unless they are absolutely essential to illustrate specific points they wish to discuss.

## Moderation Arrangements

The moderation process was again straightforward this year with the moderation window between April 1<sup>st</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> June with the majority of centres opting for late May early June. Very few centres had organised dates without consultation with moderators but it is worth re-iterating that the moderation date is to be agreed with their moderator through **negotiation** and that centres should **not** decide on dates and assume that the moderator will be available. Similarly when dates and times have been agreed they **must not** be altered unless the moderator agrees.

It should also be noted that whilst it is very beneficial to have an audience for the practical work units three and seven are examinations and the requirements of the specification **must** take precedence over audience considerations.

## OPTEM Forms

Most centres understood the OPTEM forms this year apart from the continued failure by many to include the yellow copies for units 3 and 7 with the recording of the practical work.

The procedure remains as follows: Centres must complete OPTEM forms for units 1, 2, 4 and 5/6 prior to the moderation visit and send the top copy to Edexcel at least a week before the agreed visit date. The yellow copies of the OPTEM forms should be with the candidates' portfolios to enable the moderator to select an appropriate sample. Yellow copies of the completed OPTEM forms for units three and seven must be sent with the recording of the practical work to the moderator within seven days of the candidates' final performance.

Please note that in future series the recordings of performances for units three and seven must be sent to the moderator allocated to each centre.

## Recording of Practical Units

After the practical examination centres must send a copy of the recording for units 3 and 7 to their moderator together with their marked yellow copy of the OPTeM for each unit within seven working days. The recording of unit 5 performances must be sent to the Principal Moderator for the unit immediately after the moderation visit.

Many centres still failed to identify candidates at the start of the performances and one centre that submitted candidate work on digital tape which cannot be used. Given the frequency of poor recordings it is worth repeating the key factors that must be adhered to.

Firstly the recording must be in an **appropriate format**. The most suitable is on DVD in a Windows Media Player format. If centres only have access to video tape recorders then standard VHS format is essential. It is important that candidates are wearing the same costume that they use in the performance and that they state their name and candidate number and preferably the role/roles that they are playing at the start. Since candidate's concentration and performance preparation could be disrupted it is advisable that the identification process is carried out prior to the actual performance but obviously at the beginning of the tape that will be used to record the work.

It is likely that in future failure to comply with this very clear instruction will be considered an infringement of the examination rubric and treated accordingly.

## Portfolios

All portfolios must be available for the visiting moderator and these must be marked by the centre's assessor(s) and internally validated where necessary. The centre marking should indicate where candidate's work has been credited against the criteria through suitable annotation. Moderators again reported that many centres had managed this very effectively using the appropriate front sheet (available on-line) and noted that the moderation process was as efficient as last year. In most centres a private area had been arranged for the portfolio moderation and it should be stressed that this is an **essential** requirement.

For units five and six it is important to remind centres that the recorded evidence of the advanced performance/production product (unit 5) must be available with the portfolios and suitable technology available to view the work. Similarly it is essential that candidates are identified clearly at the beginning of the recording.

Candidates should be discouraged from submitting work in any other format than A4 and must not use plastic envelopes. The content is the only material that moderators will consider and candidate decoration of folders and unfiltered internet down-loads add nothing to the final mark.

The only candidates who need to work outside this framework are those offering design skills where plans and/or design sketches might be larger than A4 format.

## Practical Units Three and Seven

Once again moderators reported that they had viewed a wide range and diversity of performance work both in the application of performance styles and techniques in the creative responses to the commission briefs. No style of performance was dominant and every conceivable skill appeared to be demonstrated within a very balanced choice of commission brief.

For unit seven most centres seem to now understand the focus of the unit but it is worth stating once again that this is **not a devising unit** and candidates should focus on developing their own interpretation of an existing piece from the performance repertoire.

Process documentation to accompany practical units three and seven was managed more effectively this year with centres applying the full range of marks for this component.

## **Unit Details for the 2011 Series**

### **Unit One: – Developing Skills for Performance**

The unit was presented in a wide range of formats but centres are still allowing candidates to use bulky folders, plastic covers and are not always adhering to the request that work should be submitted on A4 paper. There has also been a concern regarding the lack of organisation and cohesion in many portfolios. The unit has an obvious chronological order and it is in the centre's interest to submit work for moderation which facilitates efficient moderation; some centres had an audit placed randomly in the portfolio.

Many centres did not have candidate authentication forms with the work which made it difficult to identify portfolios. Annotation of work again varied from centre to centre. Some teacher assessors annotated work in detail making it clear how they had applied the mark scheme and where there was relevant evidence. However, some centres had no annotation or simple ticks which were not helpful.

In delivering the unit there was continued mixed practice and understanding of the unit's demands. Many centres were structuring the unit so candidates could take ownership of their own development. However, many centres were still sticking to rigid lesson plans and programmes of study which dictated what the students developed. Candidates were often writing about what they have learnt within lessons, workshops and performances, rather than what they had independently developed. Many centres also interpreted the term –wide range of skills as a range of specialist performing art forms rather than skills within one discipline. Although the specification does not discourage candidates from exploring more than one discipline it was clear that candidates who focused on one area and created their own schedule to explore specific development the process was more realistic and often more successful.

Pro-formas and writing frames were still evident to prompt responses from candidates but sometimes resulted in cursory and descriptive responses. A concern regarding this unit was the fact that many centres and therefore candidates did not relate the skills they were developing to professional practice. There was not always the sense that the candidate was an aspiring professional and the unit had encouraged them to develop a skill or skills which would enable them to progress in the art form.

Large quantities of downloaded and photocopied material were still a concern; the practice generally failed to contribute to the overall assessment.

## **AO1**

### Good audits

- Were detailed and had clear action plans.
- Candidates used their audit to identify the skills they wished to develop and related them to professional practice.
- The candidates created their own development plans.
- Regular reviews of progress were evidenced.
- Reference was made to how the development of chosen skills was relevant to professional practice.

### Poor audits

- Sometimes merely had a recording of the candidate performing with no reference to their initial skills or followed up with a later recording of evidence to show the skill had been developed.
- Were often simple tick sheets or allocated scores out of 10.
- Some candidates did not state what skill they were going to develop.
- Used extraneous material, listing examination grades and aspects of performing arts encountered during their primary years.

## **AO2 & AO3**

### Good practice

- Contained witness statements, observation statements, practice schedules.
- Candidates focused on specific skills so development was more manageable and measurable.
- Candidates clarified how any lesson or workshop had aided development of their chosen skill.
- Candidates applied their research to practice.
- Recordings were provided as evidence of regular application and reflection of individual progress.
- Candidates provided tangible evidence of their working practices, self- management, progress and ability in the skill they had developed at the end of the unit.

### Weak Practice

- Offered a lack of tangible evidence.
- Sometimes evidence was a recording which was not referenced in the portfolio
- Presented descriptions of lessons and workshops attended and little else.
- Too many skills were addressed
- An approach that was too theoretical rather than practical.
- Recordings provided of lessons containing large groups of students where the candidate could not be identified.
- Health and safety often generic documentation which did not apply to the candidate's individual skill development.

## **AO4**

### Good evaluations

- A summative document explaining and comparing how the level of skill had developed in relation to the initial audit.
- There is a final audit as well as evaluation throughout the portfolio that assessed the process and how it might be applied in future.

Weak evaluations

- Made unjustified assertions and were often descriptive.
- Lacked examples of when skills related to working practices.
- Evaluations of projects rather than personal development.

The paragraph below is repeated from earlier reports but still requires inclusion.

**This is a process unit and not about what candidates do in their particular course of study.**

There was again an increased use of video recording by candidates to evidence their practical application but again it must be emphasised that these should not be 'snapshots' of ability or of candidates in performances but evidence of regular specific application, reflection and development. The most effective recordings remained those in which candidates spoke directly to the camera to explain what they were attempting and then demonstrated practical application.

Many of the strongest audits again resulted from a diagnostic phase implemented by the centre during the induction period at the start of the course which allowed them to set personal targets for the candidates. Weaker audits relied on tick boxes or focused on previous performance experience without identifying the related skills.

Candidates with marks in the top band demonstrated excellent working practices and rigorous self management often including witness statements as supportive evidence. Weaker candidates still described lesson content revealing very limited self management.

Within the evaluations weaker candidates discussed performances, lessons or workshops they had been involved in, often evaluating learning outcomes, rather than how skills had been developed. Stronger candidates developed highly personal evaluations showing independent thought and analysis of the process which referred back to the initial audit and revealing

an understanding of the process and how it could extend to other skill areas.

## **Unit Two: – Planning for a Creative Event**

The E10 reports received reported that all Unit 2 evidence was available in centres. Most centres had completed and submitted OPTEMs in-line with the board's guidelines. Portfolios were laid out well and easy to navigate, with accompanying authentication sheets.

There was a slight tendency for centres to be lenient in their awarding of marks against the assessment criteria, but less so than last year which suggests a greater understanding of the revised specification.

AO1 evidence was not always presented explicitly but was implicit in the report, action plans and evaluation.

Candidates had clearly engaged in the planning and realisation of a wide range of appropriate events. The strongest candidates had a thorough understanding of industry roles and responsibilities together with the demands of professional practice and produced formal structured and coherent work of a high standard.

The AO2 evidence is still the main area of concern; the Action Plan carries 50% of the marks for this unit and this was often not fully reflected in candidates' work. However, stronger responses included detailed individual and group planning documents together with comprehensive agendas and minutes.

There was a tendency for candidates to plan well as the process progressed, but to not always evidence this as an action plan. Many learners described the planning activities rather than presenting their evidence as an action plan. Retrospective accounts of what had been done were often presented as learner evidence for this assessment objective.

Most candidates appeared to have a clear focus on the planning in their evaluation (AO4) with the exception of some who became highly involved as participants in the event.

Many centres had planned performance events and there was a tendency for candidates who were involved as performers to focus on the creation of the piece to the detriment of administrative and production planning demands.

Some centres took on challenging performance work for this unit and this tended to lead to an account of rehearsals rather than planning and event management. However, overall the events selected and the planning roles undertaken were better focused than previous years.

Again, when candidates had organized the document into the three distinct sections of report, action plan and evaluation of process the portfolios were most successful.

In most portfolios candidates had made reference to the areas of performance, production and administration and where links were then made to an individual candidate's role this facilitated action planning, review and evaluation.

Few centres presented candidates' work without appropriate annotation and there was less evidence of candidates decorating folders. At this level work should be presented in an A4 format in a formal and professional manner.

### **Unit Three: – Performing to a Commission**

As with previous years moderators reported a very wide range of responses across all disciplines to the commission briefs and the corresponding diversity of ability evident. Where candidates had worked in close collaboration the integrity of the finished product was very secure and engaging for the target audience.

Responses to the commission briefs were very comparable to the previous series but centres had again benefited from previous moderation discussions, centre feedback and the Chief Examiners report. Consequently the approach adopted by centres, with a similar cohort of candidates, was again more focused and effective. Most centres ensured that the realisation of the brief was approached in a professional manner to create a polished performance targeted at a specific audience and with a clearly defined intended impact. Moderators reported some highly innovative and challenging content and performance conventions.

Most centres presented the work for an appropriate audience and this often helped candidates to raise the level of their individual performances. A few centres however did not pay sufficient attention to production values and there were again reports of some very 'dis-organised' openings to the performances, a few abrupt endings and occasionally inappropriate audiences.

Candidates that opted for commission two, the TIE style brief, were not the most common but were often very committed to the work and addressed some important issues such as 'social labelling' within society and the harm it can do. Musical theatre and dance productions were again very popular and the number of pure dance productions again continued to increase.

A small number of centres had not monitored the maximum and minimum time limits for the work and this usually was to the detriment of the candidates. In pieces that were too short candidates were not always able to demonstrate their abilities and in over long productions often failed to

maintain their concentration, focus and energy. Centres should ensure that the productions are between thirty minutes and one hour; with smaller groups of three or four adhering to the shorter time and groups above ten using the higher allocation.

Most performances were effective responses to the commissions but weaker groups frequently displayed very tenuous connections with the commission brief and sometimes presented performances that were simplistic in concept and lacked sufficient intensity or commitment to engage an audience.

The usual wide range of spaces and venues were encountered with promenade formats quite prevalent. It should be noted that this type of organisation makes very specific demands on candidates regarding the management and movement of the audience and these factors must be taken into account when planning this type of performance. Similarly once again every conceivable performance layout from 'proscenium arch' to outdoor 'site specific' spaces was again experienced by moderators.

With very few exceptions moderators were impressed with the commitment of candidates and the work they produced. They were equally complimentary about the professional approach of centre assessors and the accuracy of the marking that was achieved, in the majority of centres, through a clear focus on the criteria.

This was the second series in which the written log was an essential requirement and there was a general consensus that teachers now realise the purpose and value of the component and assessed the documents reasonably accurately. It is worth stating once again that the log should demonstrate clearly how the work stems from the commission, details any relevant research and conveys the creative process that the candidate engaged in. Again centres should note that down-loaded web pages without appropriate annotation and explanation are not valid at this level.

Moderator reports again confirmed that the documents were very useful in preparing them for the performances and contextualising the work.

Most centres were clear about the need to also submit the group pro-forma designed to provide the moderator with the origin of the piece, identify candidates and roles and confirm the performance style and target audience.

Identification of candidates remained an issue in some centres when candidates were part of a large group and dressed in similar costumes. Whilst it is recognised that the integrity of the performance is important centres must also remember that it is an examination and the moderator must be able to distinguish individuals within the group. Similarly though it is very valuable to have an audience for candidates any arrangements must not hinder the examination process.

Most centres responded effectively to the requirement to send a recording of the performances to the Chief Examiner but too often this was not done within the specified time frame. **Please note that next year the recordings of both practical units must be sent to the centre's allocated moderator and not the Chief Examiner.** Fewer recordings this year were of poor quality but many were often not in the correct format; it is worth repeating that it is in the interests of candidates to ensure the clearest vision and sound possible.

Fewer centres failed to identify candidates clearly at the beginning of the recordings. This identification should state the centre name and number then allow each candidate to introduce themselves in costume, if appropriate, and state their candidate number and role within the piece; centres are advised to do this prior to the performance but ensure that candidates are dressed as they are in the performance. The recording **must** be in an appropriate format, preferably DVD for Windows Media Player or standard VHS tape **not** digital tape.

Candidates who offered technical support as their role within the group often demonstrated great creativity and expertise in their technical accomplishments. The ten minute presentation to the examiner and

moderator to contextualise their work was again either excellent or very poor.

There were very few candidates who elected to work in administrative roles but when this did occur they used the presentation time to demonstrate to the moderator the range and quality of their input to marketing and promotion or front of house activities. Moderators again relied more heavily on the centre assessor's knowledge of the candidates input into these areas and despite the potential difficulties moderators were happy with the reliability of the marks awarded.

It is also important to confirm again that unit three must not be used to deliver unit two 'Planning for an Event'.

#### **Unit Four: - Employment Opportunities in the Performing Arts**

In this unit candidates must demonstrate an awareness of the range of jobs available in the industry, select a potential career route and submit a portfolio of evidence of their application to the chosen role in a form that would promote them effectively to an employer or interviewer.

Where issues remain in the unit – which has generally continued to improve in its delivery during the life of the specification – they are often related to the centre's ability to realise the vocational and applied aspects of the course. There is still a divide between those that allow candidates to have full ownership and responsibility for the evidence and those that continue to teach a prescribed and theoretical body of knowledge. The teaching of a technical, industrial and theoretical skills base is vital for context but students must own the work and place it within knowledge and understanding that has been shaped by their own art-form and vocational choices. Unit four places candidates' work within the context of the Performing Arts industries. It asks learners to provide evidence of their own research into employment contexts, jobs and roles, industry standards and conditions and progression routes and opportunities and then make

connections between what they have analysed and their own artistic practice.

The combinations of teaching, learning and research outlined above should underpin their acquisition of skills, understanding and knowledge. The demands of the unit and the way it asks candidates to develop, edit, select and present the evidence of research with the evidence of their own practice are being addressed more fully year-on-year but some pockets of misunderstanding persist especially in the resistance of some centres to fully embrace the applied and vocational nature of the specification.

The title of the unit is *Employment Opportunities in the Performing Arts*. Once an overview of the industry has been established in the report (AO1) employment opportunities must refer to the candidates' own and not to the industry as a whole. The evidence requirement on page 52 of the specification states quite clearly that candidates must submit 'a portfolio as evidence of the application of your skill in **one** job role. This should be presented in a vocationally relevant way and should demonstrate an underpinning knowledge of the skills involved.' Weaker centres in effect merely taught and listed employment opportunities together with higher level training, job conditions union representation and so forth. Better candidates understood what and where their opportunities for employment were and produced evidence of experience in the role, and reflection of how this assisted them in their campaign to position themselves in the industry job or training market.

### **A report (AO1)**

This should outline employment opportunities generally in the performing arts industry and go on to describe three jobs specifically, one each from performing, technical support and administration. Better responses gave very informed, critical accounts of the roles in great depth which had been contextualised by accounts of the creative industries as a whole. Some centres had produced discrete, stand-alone reports bound and with well-designed covers. This was not always an indication of good content but it did show an appropriate understanding of the demands and structure of the

unit. They then went on to give a brief context to their own artistic role of choice and vocational progression route which underpinned the rest of the portfolio. A few centres continue to use the portfolio to extend the report and to include a range of taught and researched generic material on the performing arts industry.

### **A Portfolio of evidence (AO2, AO3)**

As indicated some centres continue to misunderstand the context of the unit producing more of the report's contents in the portfolio section. This approach is becoming rarer but identifying a clear progression route in not an excuse to then include details of every university or conservatoire prospectus in the country that covers that route even when this is contextualised by the decision to work on an audition piece for one of the courses. Evidence of work on an audition speech by itself does not constitute sufficient evidence for AO2 and AO3. To re-iterate the portfolio of evidence needs to respond to the vocational, practical and professional demands of the unit contextualised by the individual progression route. In short this means that the actual practical work of the candidate over the year, or indeed the whole course, inside and outside of school/college can be included in the portfolio section structured and shaped to meet the demands of a particular artistic niche or market. It needs to be structured with promotional intention to sell and market the student artist.

Researched material on training, Equity, interviews with working professionals, the programme of local theatres, all the plethora of general evidence is only useful in the report and as an appendix revealing how much the candidate has done in their research over the year. The real assessment within the portfolio section should be how any research is internalised, fluently articulated and used in the presentation of the candidate's artistic and creative processes.

Again some centres are beginning to submit evidence in highly produced, attractive and promotional portfolios. These have included show-reels, well-annotated photographs and websites with links to you-tube. Good candidates had obviously subjected their work to constant review and

thought very carefully at the end of the process about how they wanted to present the portfolio section to give the maximum effect of their development and skills to the reader. These candidates had a good concept of the audience for the portfolio – casting directors, promoters, artistic directors or agents. Conversely some candidates produced very slim portfolios consisting of CVs and photos only. Centres that did encourage a rigorous editing and shaping of material included full appendices, the use of which is becoming increasingly common. Appendices of this kind help to structure portfolios appropriately while allaying fears of not including some good researched and/or taught material.

### **Evaluation (A04)**

Candidates should analyse how their skills, knowledge and understanding have been developed and informed by both their own work and its vocational context. The other part of the framing of the portfolio section evidence is the evaluation. These generally were not problematic in terms of the demands of the unit since their use and format had precedent and centres and candidates had experience in producing them. They mostly responded to the report and portfolio section evidence and provided good differentiation of marking criteria. In contrast to the report the length and scope of the evaluation was almost entirely commensurate with the amount of the marks awarded for it.

With the appendices the evaluation can give crucial indications of how fluent the candidate is in performing arts terminology and the extent of their knowledge and understanding. It should be honest and clear and reveal a depth of critical analysis that clarifies why some more general material on the industry has been understood, but left out.

Moderation of the work was again very straightforward with all material available on the day and centres clear about their part in the examination process. A few moderators however still noted that they were sometimes obliged to mark work because of the lack of annotation and assessment direction provided by centre assessors. Similarly a few centres continued to

allow candidates to present their work in an inappropriate format such as huge A3 folders.

## **Unit Five: – Advanced Performance Practice**

This unit prepares candidates for unit seven as they must demonstrate that they can investigate existing material, research the appropriate performance style(s) and apply advanced skills as a performer to create a viable performance.

E10 reports were consistent in the key factors they identified. Moderators in some centres were given practical work to watch that clearly identified candidates' and was a 'fit for purpose' recording of the work, in other centres this had to be asked for and then candidate identification had to be provided by the teacher. Generally moderators confirmed that portfolio evidence was more readily available in most centres.

A small number of the recordings were presented in an out of date format such as VHS tapes and the recorded quality of work presented for moderation varied greatly. Where individual candidates were easily identifiable and the sound and picture quality good the moderation process was greatly aided. Centres should note the importance of the DVD evidence as it constitutes 50% of the marks for the unit.

Most moderator adjustments occurred in relation to the research that candidates had presented; this was often unfiltered printed internet downloads with little or no evidence of how this had been applied to the practical work.

The most effective candidate research into the performance included not only academic research into the chosen piece, but also an exploration of the chosen style and genre of the candidates' interpretation of their source material and a clear reference to the advanced skills that were being explored.

Candidates were best supported by their centres when their assessed performance was supported by appropriate production values and performed in front of the intended target audience. Also where the work selected for performance facilitated the required stretch and challenge of A2 work.

Where large scale school productions were being used to facilitate candidates Unit 5 work, the learners were not always able to access all the marks available as they were being too directed, and had little scope to shape their performance with their own research and skills development. This often led to AO4 evidence being a general and bland account of the production. Similarly in large cast productions identification was also often problematic.

The other key area where work presented was often a weaker response to the unit was where candidates had devised work, rather than interpreting existing repertoire. Centres should note that devised material inhibits candidates' ability to engage in effective research and should be avoided.

Centre assessment sometimes rewarded candidate effort rather than recognise that assessment objective weightings demanded that marks against AO3 were for the application of skills at an A2 standard.

The comment below is from last year's report but is worth repeating:

*The selection of the material to be performed is critical; it should be sufficiently challenging for A2 level candidates and allow for the exploration and application of skills at an advanced level. The working notebook should document in a very organic manner how the production was developed in the creative and rehearsal stage and what advanced skills were employed. The unit is about demonstrating that candidates can work creatively and in a professional manner on material that demands the application of new and/or advanced techniques.*

Candidate evaluations of the work were often the strongest aspect of the portfolios but did not always focus on the effectiveness of the selection, application and refining of the skills employed. The best evaluations demonstrated effective response to feedback and revealed an ability to interpret the material and evaluate their own practice.

### **Unit Six: - Advanced Production Practice**

As an optional unit the demands of unit six were commensurate with unit five and the criteria were very similar. The only distinction was that the candidates who selected this option were required to demonstrate an advanced application of technical skills rather than performance.

As in previous years, a very small number of candidates took this unit (less than 80 nationally) and consequently some moderators did not see any unit six work and there appeared to be little or no change to the range or quality of responses.

Stronger candidates had the technical vocabulary required, whereas weaker candidates did not appear to have the underpinning knowledge required to successfully realise their production role such as the ability to create an industry standard lighting plan, create set designs or maintain the stage manager's prompt copy, rehearsal notebook or post show reports.

In some cases, the production role tended to dominate initial research and technical candidates should be encouraged to consider the significance of their role in realising the overall creative interpretation of the piece.

A02 evidence was lacking or very limited in some cases. Candidates appeared to be able to realise their role very effectively in performance, but did not always adequately document the process leading to production. Similarly explicit evidence for A03 was often limited by the fact the poor quality of the recording, for example, to appreciate the lighting effects in performance.

Moderators in some centres were given practical work to watch that clearly identified candidates' roles and was a 'fit for purpose' recording of the work, in other centres clarification had to be requested.

It appears to be a unit that is either undertaken by learners who have strong technical skills and motivation or by the small number of candidates who did not always have ownership of the task and were sometimes candidates that could not work supportively in an ensemble and were therefore allocated a technical role.

Once again costume design was often a weak area where the realization in performance and many key aspects of stage costuming were ignored in preference to design sketches.

Again most centres provided clear annotation in the candidate portfolios which facilitated the moderation process.

### **Unit Seven: – Production Delivery**

Unit seven allowed candidates to engage with the subject in a totally practical manner but demanded a very sophisticated and polished level of performance. To score highly candidates needed to be completely secure in the skills they employed and demonstrate them through a fully developed and polished performance.

Most centres appeared to have finally recognised that the unit is about candidates developing their own interpretation of existing material from the performance repertoire rather than the creation of new work. As a result there were some very interesting versions of a wide range of material involving many styles and genres within the performing arts. Similarly there were fewer candidates who spent time on devising new dialogue to the detriment of their performances.

The most successful candidates presented their work with a clearly defined focus on either performance style or dramatic intention to convey a message to the audience.

Most groups showed an excellent understanding of their material in both their logs and performance and a wide range of skills and techniques were explored. There was a broad use of the creative space with varying amounts of set and often the application of multimedia techniques, particularly where centres had technical candidates.

In most cases moderators confirmed that candidates were well focused and committed to their work, often demonstrating individual flair and imagination, and that the performances were well rehearsed to a high standard.

Most centres clearly understood the need to develop their own interpretation of the chosen material with the most successful presenting their interpretation of an existing play. It is however worth stressing again that interpretation of **film** is **not acceptable**. In a minority of centres, the requirement to interpret the production brief had not been fully understood and skill development rather than interpretation seemed to be the focus

Working logs were too often lacking in depth and evaluative detail and tended to be descriptive rather than analytical with some clearly having been submitted at the very last minute. It is important that the candidates clarify their interpretation of the source material, show any relevant research and detail the creative rehearsal process. The document is the candidate's individual response and in some centres there was evidence of generic content; this should only apply to the group rehearsal schedule. At the A2 level pro-forma sheets are not really indicative of 'assured ability' (A02 Band 4 descriptor). In general centre assessors had differentiated between candidates very effectively but had rewarded the component too highly. Very few assessors this year included A01 within their marks for this element. Moderators confirmed that where this component was effective it

enabled the moderation process and clarified the interpretation and intended impact of the work.

The most effective responses to the commission had a clearly outlined creative intent and interrogated original sources as varied as 'Spring Awakening', 'Stepping Out', a very effective version of 'The Skriker', musical theatre dance as well as the usual range of contemporary dance works.

There was again considerable evidence of a professional approach and full commitment to the performances and attempts to reflect industry demands and standards. There was also evidence of understanding and appreciation of the creative decisions made at the advanced level. Much of the work displayed the professional sophistication that the specification required with excellent levels of concentration, imagination and accuracy that revealed a thorough understanding of techniques and an excellent sense of pace and delivery.

In most cases the work was performed in front of the intended target audience and proved to be a suitable platform for a range of skills to be demonstrated. In the strongest work communication between the cast and audience was clearly evident and in the best performances there was clarity of intent where relevance and meaning were conveyed with assurance.

The strongest candidates produced consistently accomplished performances, demonstrating full mastery of a range of performance styles and techniques. Moderators noted a real development in candidates' work and secure progression from AS to A2 standard.

Many candidates scored highly in this part of the specification but centre assessors were sometimes inclined to reward effort and enthusiasm rather than award marks against the criteria.

The majority of candidates elected to be assessed on performance skills as actors, dancers and musicians but there was the usual range of design and technical support candidates. Presentations by stage managers or designers

were usually very informative and clarified their contribution to the realisation of the group's creative interpretation in performance.

## **Grading information**

The grading, awarding and certification of this qualification follows the processes outlined in the current GCSE/GCE Code of Practice, which is published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

The criteria for assessing each assignment have been written so that a learner working at the lower end of the GCE ability range should be capable of meeting approximately 80 per cent of the band 1 criteria. This equates to approximately 40 per cent of the total credit available for the assignment.

The overall grade for:

- Advanced Subsidiary (Single Award) qualifications will be graded on a five-grade scale from A to E where A is the highest grade.
- Advanced GCE (Single Award) will be graded on a six-grade scale from A\* to E where A\* is the highest grade.

The mark bands used for internal assessment do not relate to pre-determined grade boundaries. Following each examination and moderation series, Edexcel will set the grade boundaries for internally and externally assessed units at an awarding meeting.

The raw mark boundaries will be converted to uniform marks on a scale of 0-100. The final grade for the qualification will be determined by aggregating the uniform marks for the units.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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