

Examiners' Report/  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

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

Advanced GCE in Performing Arts  
(Single Award: 9781)

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Publications Code UA031704

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## General comments on the 2012 series

This revised specification involving assessment of all units against the four band mark scheme rather than the former three band model is now well established. It was noted that most centre assessors had applied the assessment criteria more realistically again this year and moderator adjustments were not as significant as in previous years.

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. The full range of disciplines is being offered, however, Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre remain the most popular routes.

### 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).
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 should be available for moderators. This should be marked using the Assessment Objective 2 criteria only.

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.
6. Recordings of units 3 and 7, in the correct format, must be available if requested by the moderator no later than one week after the visit.
7. Centres assessors should not only apply 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 and group size.
9. When more than one teacher in a centre marks work it is important to carry out internal standardisation.
10. Moderation visit dates must be agreed through negotiation between moderator and centre.
11. Moderators must be provided with a private space in which to sample candidate work.
12. Candidates should avoid web downloads unless they are 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 and the majority of centres opting for dates later in the window. 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

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 any requested recordings of the practical work.

For centres submitting marks for these units through EDI or Edexcel Online, the marks must be submitted 3 days prior to the agreed moderation visit date.

## Recording of Practical Units

Please note that recordings of unit three and seven performances must be available if the moderator requests them. If this is the case, they must be sent to the moderator within seven days of the visit together with their marked yellow copy of the OPTEM for each unit.

Many centres still failed to identify candidates at the start of the performances. Given the fact that some centres are still producing 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. 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.

Appeals procedures such as Enquiry After Results (EAR3) or any other remoderation of performance units are carried out using the recording of the original performance. If identification of candidates is not present on the recording, any remoderation or appeals requests could be invalidated due to insufficient evidence.

## Portfolios

All portfolios must be available for the visiting moderator and these must be marked by the centre's assessor(s) and internally standardised 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 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 5 and 6 it is important to remind centres that the recorded evidence of the production must be available with the portfolios and suitable technology available to view the work. Likewise, 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 wallets. The content is the only material that moderators will consider and candidate decoration of folders and unfiltered internet downloads add nothing to the candidate evidence.

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 variety of performance work both in the application of performance styles and techniques and in the creative responses to the commission briefs. No style of performance was overriding and a broad range of skills appeared to be demonstrated.

For unit 7 most centres now appear to 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. It is important to read carefully the instructions given in the Production Brief for the relevant assessment window.

Process documentation to accompany practical units 3 and 7 was managed more effectively this year with centres applying the full range of marks for this component.

## **Unit Details for the 2012 Series**

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

There was a wide range of areas developed and different means of acquiring and applying skills were explored and applied, with mostly effective evaluation of the development process.

#### **The Audit (AO1)**

There was a tendency to create detailed CV's which documented experience rather than the level of a specific skill at the beginning of the unit. Often the experience that was documented was not appropriate for this unit.

Candidates that are more able were guided by the centre to produce thorough and detailed audits, written independently. These candidates were then able to identify a personal skills development programme because of the audit. At the other end of the mark range candidates tended to use writing frames provided by the centre or a series of questions, which prompted brief, and under developed responses. These candidates did not then use the audit to identify the skills they wished to develop. Some centres guided candidates into writing about too wide a range of specialism e.g. acting, dancing, technical production etc. As an applied subject, candidates are encouraged to act as latent professionals and it would not necessarily be realistic to explore and develop skills in such a wide range of areas.

However, there was good and impressive practice where candidates clearly understood how to assess their initial skills level, and then flagged up an area they were going to develop with an action plan of individual and independent intentions.

#### **The Reports AO2 & AO3**

It appeared again this year that centres are still delivering a programme of study for this unit rather than facilitating candidate's individual and personal development. This has resulted in candidates producing diaries of what they learnt and what they did in every lesson often including trips to the theatre,

interviews with professionals etc. Too many candidates again wrote about development through specific lessons and used writing frames. This resulted in the portfolios all being the same in content within a centre and lacked a clear focus on the skill that an individual candidate wanted to develop. However, there was evidence of candidates taking responsibility for their own development and these candidates often clearly communicated the process of their development and the impact it had on their own practice. There was some evidence of candidates using video diaries to support their written responses but these are still in the minority. Many centres produced recordings of candidates performing without the recording being referenced clearly in the portfolio. Best practice produced recordings to demonstrate tangible development of skills throughout the process and candidates could clearly be identified. Photographic evidence was often used and this was valuable when accompanied by a written explanation of exercises, practice material and technique development.

Many reports were too descriptive and included everything a candidate had done during the unit rather than the candidate selecting the appropriate and relevant materials for inclusion. Some candidates explored too wide a range of skills.

Stronger candidates in centres who had a secure understanding of the unit produced evidence that communicated to the moderator the process they had gone through and constantly applied their development to professional practice and provided clear evidence of development through photographs, witness statements from centre assessors and their peers.

Many centres guided candidates into developing a skill for a specific performance and then the performance became the focus of their development. Tangible evidence of candidate's working practices was not always easy to locate and when witness statements from the centre and external agencies were included, they aided the moderation process. There was a sense that candidates had different degrees of self-management and control and mastery of skills but tangible evidence was not always evident. Health and safety issues were often successfully addressed within the context of the candidate's chosen skill development. Less successful health and safety documentation tended to be generic and did not have a genuine context.

## **Evaluation (AO4)**

Fully reflective evaluations were in the minority this year. Stronger candidates tended to evaluate throughout the portfolio and had a separate evaluation that reflected on and evaluated development, relating back to the initial skills audit and demonstrated a realistic understanding of the demands of the performing arts sector. In the latter, the correct terminology was used and spelling, punctuation and grammar was secure. Less able candidates tended to describe their enjoyment of the activities, they had followed rather than evaluating the methods they had used to develop their skills. There were many centres where candidates produced impressive evaluations fulfilling all the requirements of this assessment objective.

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

This year more centres avoided candidates being in the event but some centres were still allowing this to happen and then the event itself was often the focus of the report, action plan and evaluation. Some centres allowed candidates to plan creative events that were outside the Performing Arts area, which makes it difficult to meet the requirements of the specification. Many centres obviously had an event already planned that they involved the candidates in and other centres gave the candidates complete freedom to choose their event. The latter tended to give candidates more ownership of the event.

It was felt that if a school event takes place every year and is formulaic in its structure it affords little opportunity to deviate from tried and tested practice. Some candidates made it very clear how the group was organised and jobs allocated. However, many candidates did not make this clear, they instead appeared to multi-role, and this often led to difficulties in differentiating individual ability for assessment. Some candidates were fortunate in being able to interview a professional whose job related to the role they were taking on or did the relevant research into their job role and they applied their new knowledge in the planning process. It is appreciated that not all candidates can access the former but there are many resources

available for all candidates to research professional practice in their chosen job role.

### **Report (AO1)**

Many were not fit for purpose in content and style. Some reports did not begin by communicating what the event was or detail clear creative intentions. The presentation and organisation of many portfolios was not indicative of AS work. Many candidates were confused about the difference between the report and an action plan. Many candidates did not write a report of the process that had occurred but wrote about future intentions. The best reports were reflective and retrospective documents written after the event had taken place and presented in a formal structured way. Often candidates wrote an overview of how to plan an event rather than a report on a specific creative event. Weaker responses spent a great deal of time writing about company names and logos and the details of events they did not eventually plan. Stronger responses had a clear understanding of the planning process and submitted reports describing the key factors that had been considered.

### **Action Plans (AO2)**

Sometimes caused concern in that many candidates offered generic action plans (not annotated or personalised), often without deadlines as evidence of secure or even comprehensive planning. Action plans also included a lot of bulky material such as minutes of meetings, scripts, rehearsal schedules etc that should be placed in a separate appendix at the end of the portfolio. Strong candidates produced detailed individual plans with realistic aims and deadlines.

It is crucial centres recognise that this assessment objective carries 50% of the marks available. In order for candidates to access the full range of marks the action planning evidence must be of sufficient detail and evidence sufficient skills acquisition relating to planning an event.

### **Evaluation (AO4)**

Many candidates were able to document the process effectively but need to be more critical in their observations. Stronger candidates were able to

evaluate the planning and execution of the event rather than the event itself. The latter candidates commented on all aspects of individual and group responsibilities for the planning process. The evaluation should cover all the key stages of the planning process from initial idea to post event findings. The strengths and weaknesses of the planning processes should be understood in relation to the relevant decisions and actions undertaken. Critical analysis rather than description of tasks is required.

### **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. Where candidates had responded to the demands of the selected commission, the finished product was more secure and engaging for the target audience.

Responses to the commission briefs **(AO1)** were very comparable to the previous series but centres had again benefited from previous moderation reports, 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 refined performance targeted at a specific audience and with a clearly defined intended impression. 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.

It was noted this series, that more centres were presenting work to no target audience, with only the centre assessor and moderator present. It was felt that in such cases, an audience may have benefitted the candidates.

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 they 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 used. Likewise, moderators again experienced every conceivable performance layout from proscenium arch to site-specific spaces.

With very few exceptions, moderators were impressed with the commitment of candidates and the work they produced. **(AO3)** They were equally complimentary about the professional approach of centre assessors and the approach to the marking that was achieved, in the majority of centres, through a clear focus on the criteria.

The written log is an essential requirement and there was a 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 downloaded web pages without appropriate annotation and explanation are not valid at this level. The written log should be assessed prior to the moderation visit against the **(AO2)** criteria only.

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 submit the group pro-forma designed to provide the moderator with the context for the piece, identify candidates and roles, 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.

Most centres responded effectively to the requirement to send a recording if requested to do so. 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.

Some centres still 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 him or herself in costume, if appropriate, and state their name, 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.

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 centre assessor and moderator to contextualise their work was again either excellent or very general.

There were very few candidates who elected to work in administrative roles but when this did occur they used the presentation time to demonstrate 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

Unit 4 places candidates work within the context of the Performing Arts industries. It asks learners to 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. This combination should inform their acquisition of skills, understanding and knowledge.

The summary below gives a brief outline that is expanded on in the report:

A report detailing three roles in the performing arts industry (AO1)

- This should include general contextualisation in the form of an introduction
- A conclusion should identify the candidate's vocational/progression route, this is generally into employment but can include HE or pre-professional training
- Case Studies can provide additional evidence but should not form the only basis of the report

A portfolio of evidence of their own experience of practical work organised with promotional intention and linked to their chosen vocational/progression route (AO2/3)

- Underpinned with knowledge and understanding of the practice and industry conditions of their chosen vocational area
- Evidence of their experience, expertise and skill set profiled with promotional intention
- Rigorous editing and selection
- Less emphasis on skills development, more on skills promotion
- Avoid included unedited, generic taught material on industry
- Work experience is useful but not the whole story

An evaluation (AO4)

- Evidence that there has been a considered analysis of the work from the report through to choice of promotional material in portfolio

- Accounts of how the portfolio has been focused and structured
- Grammar, punctuation and spelling is checked
- Use of appropriate technical performing arts terminology

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 should refer to the candidates' own and not to opportunities in the industry as a whole. Weaker centres in effect merely taught and listed employment opportunities (along with higher courses, job conditions etc). Better candidates understood what and where their opportunities for employment were and produced evidence in their campaign to position themselves in the industry job market. It should be strongly noted that this is not a skills development unit; the candidate should assume that they are already at an appropriately developed stage in their artistic and creative careers and progressions. Replications of audits in the style of Unit 1 tend to give accounts of deficits in skills and techniques and are therefore already reducing promotional intention.

### **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. There should be a range (ie not two actors). Better responses gave very informed, critical accounts of the roles in great depth that 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 a good indication of contents 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 that 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.

Reports were mostly structured appropriately with an overview of the performing arts industry and links to the three job roles. Credit should go to candidates who endeavoured to undertake primary research, as it gave a clear vocational relevance to the report. Some candidates had clearly gone to great lengths to obtain interviews with working professionals, although it should be noted that case studies by themselves could reduce the range of evidence of the industry and specific jobs as a whole. The best reports evidencing effective primary research (including interviews with practitioners), the worst consisted of mostly secondary research culled from the Internet (usually Prospects or Connexions).

Reports would benefit from an introductory 'overview' of the performing arts industry prior to detailing the research into three job roles.

### **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; identifying a progression route in not an excuse to include details of every university or conservatoire prospectus in the country that covers that route. There is some value in contextualisation especially when there is a decision to work on an audition piece for one of the courses.

However, 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. Many candidates assumed 'progression route' merely to be an account of audition pieces for HE or pre-professional schools or an opportunity to stuff the portfolio with prospectuses. In more developed portfolios the progression route indicated the extent to which the candidates skills and experience was edited, selected and presented to give maximum promotional intention and thus increase opportunities for employment. In short this means that the actual practical work of the candidate over the year (or 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 artiste.

Candidates need to be encouraged to provide more examples of practical work to support accomplishment in the higher mark bands. Although observation records are helpful they are not always supportive of the depth and comprehensive account of the learners work, for example the accomplished committed personal style for band 4. Some centres focussed on employment rather than solely on higher education and training and this resulted in materials and portfolios that had much more promotional intent.

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

Some centres are beginning to submit evidence in highly produced and promotional portfolios. These have included show reels, well-annotated photographs and websites with links to YouTube. 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 have had a good concept of the audience for the portfolio – casters, 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 or taught material.

#### **Evaluation (AO4)**

Candidates should analyse how their skills, knowledge and understanding have been developed and informed by both their own work and the vocational context of that work. 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 has precedent and centres and candidates have 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.

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

This unit is based on building a balanced relationship between documentation of processes and the application of skills and techniques in a production. A working notebook logs the acquisition through research of knowledge and understanding of a specific performance role and the application of that knowledge and understanding through appropriate skills and techniques in a production. Candidate evidence should include:

Written documentation of the processes

- a working notebook showing research which focuses and contextualises the chosen performance material
- a rehearsal and preparation programme which reveals professional practice and commitment
- evidence of regular practice including scheduling and organisation
- an evaluation with use of specialist terms

A recording of the performance of existing repertoire (not devised) to an audience where candidates are clearly identified.

**AO1, AO2** and **AO4** are evidenced through the working notebook and **AO3** through the performance recording. There is equal weighting between the working notebook and the performance.

Centres generally encouraged candidates to make choices of roles and production that provided sufficient evidence to meet the full range of assessment criteria. Good choices of topic are those that generally represent repertoire where there is a substantial body of theoretical and practical context for research to be meaningful and at depth. These repertoire choices combine historical, cultural and social contexts with the need to research contemporary professional practice which underpins AO1 assessment. They also provide the systematic and planning necessary to meet AO2 that should see evidence of advance scheduling as well as retrospective accounts of rehearsals.

Candidates must be guided to make appropriate choices to meet the full criteria for this unit. A few centres choose to work on devising their own texts or pieces that may have historical contexts such as variety shows and pantomime, but little opportunity for character development and a development of an accomplished personal style. These productions may also inhibit responses to contemporary artistic and creative conditions.

Candidates' portfolios were generally well presented and clearly signposted, with detailed and supportive feedback. They utilised the 'working notebook' required in the specification and there was a clear sense of progression as the process was documented. The better portfolios include working notebooks that showed contemporaneous logs with a strong sense of an individual and committed personal style as well as detailed research of the material. There was clear recognition that the unit is a synoptic unit and there was some excellent linking of theory and practice. Candidates tended to be honest and perceptive in documenting the process.

As with other A2 units editing and selection is a key skill and candidates should make use of appendices for including researched work that does not specifically relate to their chosen material or performance. This should avoid the inclusion of generic, taught or replicated notes. The inclusion of material on practitioners is useful if it informs the work of the candidate. At this level it is expected that any internet researched material is fully used and annotated.

More detail in terms of rehearsal programme and performance/production preparation would be beneficial. Most of the scheduling documentation seen tended to be retrospective and 'written up' after the event. Although there should be evidence of regular practice there also needs to be advanced scheduling that reveals a clear and robust understanding of the creative and logistical needs of the chosen material. In some centres, everything was a bit too 'tidy' in terms of presentation: it needs to be a 'working notebook' with all kinds of rough work within it, rather than a sanitised document. The best notebooks were an engaging insight into the performance process underpinned with good knowledge of the techniques and genre.

Evaluations could be more detailed and focus more on individual and group performance rather than the production realisation. Many evaluations remain descriptive especially where, as indicated above, candidates find it difficult to access the scope and range of content sufficient to show analytical prowess. Some assessors for AO4 credited description as analysis in their annotation. Candidates need to be more critical in terms of their evaluation of their own and the group's performance and to make links with professional practice.

The strongest candidates embedded evaluation in their working logs and provided a summative document with good quality of written communication. Weaker responses were written in everyday language and were a descriptive report of the performance.

Performance standards in AO3 were often high and demonstrated commitment to stylistic and professional practice considerations. Communication with the audience was consistently good in centres as was the demonstration of a secure understanding of the creative process. In some cases the production was very short and did not enable candidates performing to showcase the extent of their skills application effectively. AO3 has a wide range of descriptors relating to performance and assessors should avoid crediting it all rather than carefully applying those aspects that best fit candidate evidence from across the bands.

There is sometimes a misunderstanding of the levelness of A2 within the context of the demands of this unit, which is predicated on *advanced* performance practice, *advanced* skills and techniques and critical and analytical research.

In AO1 there is a tendency to credit breadth of research material rather than depth. AO2 can lack accuracy in the crediting of contextualised research and the extent to which candidates provide advanced schedules and plans rather than descriptive diaries.

Technical quality of recordings was generally very good, with few difficulties experienced in viewing candidates' work. However, in some centres there is the issue of poor candidate identification and in a very small number of cases, not providing the recording at all.

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

As the optional unit sitting alongside unit five, unit six shares much of the demands and assessment criteria but relates more specifically to technical areas. This report should therefore be read in conjunction with the one for unit five. Because of the wide range of skills applied and the limited size of the national cohort limited definitive conclusions can be drawn, however a number of generalised issues arise and these are detailed below.

As with unit five the unit is based on building a balanced and fluent relationship between acquisition through research, knowledge and understanding of a specific production role (eg, lighting, sound, set or costume design, make up, or across a number of roles in a small company) and the application of that knowledge and understanding through appropriate skills and operations during a production.

Candidates should produce

- a working notebook showing evidence of research into style and technical requirements
- plans of the design and/or management ideas
- documentation and DVD of the realisation of the ideas
- an evaluation

**AO1, AO2 and AO4** are evidenced through the working notebook and **AO3** through the performance recording or documentation. There is equal weighting between the working notebook and the performance documentation but there may be some replication of materials and some evidence may be seen that cuts across AOs.

Again, choice of material is crucial in this unit and must not only provide the range and depth necessary to meet the assessment criteria but also provide sufficient technical and logistical needs to satisfy *advanced* practice. This can be difficult in centres that may have enthusiastic candidates but basic equipment and limited access to replications of professional standards.

Some candidates did produce work of a high standard although the balance between practical skills and technical documentation remains problematic. Often the technical and practical demands dominated the process and this is to be expected in some of the large scale productions seen but candidates need to be provided with the capabilities to be able to produce the same documentation as unit five candidates. There should be fully contextualised research, scheduling and planning and evaluative statements but with the

added demands of the particular technical skill base and a recorded presentation as additional evidence.

Some candidates provided work that was far too wide, effectively taking on full production management roles which made evidence thin and difficult to pin down, although they were often assessed internally on how 'hard' they had worked. Centres should ensure clarity of evidence in these cases. In contrast, there were candidates who as part of a larger set design group, produced very specific accounts of particular design elements of a production. Again, this can spread evidence too thinly and reduces the ownership of production material.

Centres should ensure very careful selection of skills that accurately reflect the level and depth of work expected, the resources of the centre, the demands of the production and the likely replication of professional standards and documentation.

## **Unit Seven: Production Delivery**

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

Most centres appeared to have acknowledged 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. For the same reason, fewer candidates spent time on devising new discourse to the detriment of their performances.

The response to the specific demand and challenge of the production brief **(AO1)** is essential.

The most successful candidates presented their work with a clearly defined focus on either performance style or dramatic intention to convey a particular message or achieve a particular effect message for an identified target audience.

Most groups showed an excellent understanding of their material in both their logs **(AO2)** and performance **(AO3)** 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 or choreography. 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 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 suggestive of 'assured ability' (A02 Band 4

descriptor). In general, centre assessors had differentiated between candidates very effectively but had rewarded the component too highly.

The most effective responses to the commission had a clearly outlined creative intent and thoroughly and imaginatively interrogated original sources.

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 methods and an excellent aptitude to communicate with an audience.

In most cases, the work was performed in front of the intended target audience and proved a suitable platform for a range of skills to be demonstrated. In the strongest work, communication between the performers and audience was 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. 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 work overall.

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