

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE

## GCE Performing Arts (8781/ 9781)

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Summer 2009

Publications Code UA021571

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## General Comments

In this fourth year of the specification the number of centres is comparable with most candidates from last year's AS cohort progressing to take the A2 components. Enthusiasm for the specification continues to grow particularly with centres that deliver through a dance pathway. The content free nature of the specification has resulted in a very wide range of course programmes being offered across the country. As the specification has been re-accredited by QCA **all candidates will follow the revised specification from September 2009 [AS and A2 cohorts]**. The basic demands of each unit remain essentially the same but the assessment grids are very different and consequently some of the observations on this year's performance will not be as relevant.

There are still some centres that have not recognised that the specification is not a syllabus but an assessment structure for the essential skills required in the performing arts industry. Given this fact I have outlined the purpose of each unit and how they link together to form a coherent model.

*(Observations in italics indicate changes in the new specification).*

### Unit 1: Exploring Skills for Performance [*Developing Skills for Performance*]

Unit one requires candidates to demonstrate that they can develop the skills necessary for performance. The evidence they produce must demonstrate that they can create a relevant programme for learning specific skills, apply themselves through regular application, monitor their own progress and determine the next stages in the process. Given that candidates will have different needs, revealed by the initial audit, it is expected that they will be working independently of whatever teaching programme is being delivered; this will necessitate a degree of time allocated to monitor candidate's progress through tutorial time.

### Unit 2: Planning for an Event [*Planning for a Creative Event*]

This unit requires candidates to demonstrate that they can plan for performance as part of a team. The event is not important in terms of the evidence submitted as the criteria relate to the process not the product.

It is advised that the project should be manageable in scale and that the candidates are given autonomy of decision making in order for the task to be realistic.

### Unit 3: Performing to a Commission

Having shown the ability to develop essential skills and that they understand the planning process the next unit requires candidate to use this awareness to create a performance in response to a brief. [*In the revised specification candidates will also have to maintain a working log of their involvement in the creative process.*]

### Unit 4: 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 the revised specification candidates now only*

*report on three jobs in the industry one from each area of performance, administration and technical support]*

### **Units 5 and 6: Advanced Performance/Production Practice**

This unit prepares candidates for unit seven as they are required to demonstrate that they can investigate existing material, research the appropriate performance style[s] and apply advanced skills as a performer or technician to create a viable performance. 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.

### **Unit 7: Production Delivery**

Having considered the demands of existing material candidates must finally select an existing work and create their own interpretation of it for a selected audience. [*In the revised specification candidates must document their research, exploration and creative process*]. Candidates must understand the style of the material and the conventions that they employ in performance.

## REPORT ON THE 2009 SERIES

### MODERATION ARRANGEMENTS

The moderation process was again straightforward this year with only a few centres confused about which assessment grids to use as the revised version had been put onto the web site. The moderation window was again April 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> June with the majority of centres opting for late May early June. 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 Chief Examiner **within seven days** of the candidates' final performance.

### MARKING CRITERIA

The statement below from last year's report was again followed by many centre assessors and ensured a much more focused application of the criteria and few large moderator adjustments.

Centres are advised that when assessing candidate evidence they should not apply only the grading criteria within the grid but also refer to the assessment guidance following each grid. For example for unit one the grid is on page 10 in the specification and the expanded interpretation of the criteria follows on pages 11 to 14. Centre assessors should also refer to the Assessment Objectives descriptors in Appendix D. Ensuring familiarity with the full implications of the criteria will enable centre assessors to apply them effectively and minimize moderation adjustments.

*[The same advice applies to the revised specification but the new grids are much more focused on the evidence requirement and assessment objectives. Clearly page numbers will be different.]*

## RECORDING OF PRACTICAL UNITS

After the practical examination centres **MUST** send within seven working days a copy of the recording for units 3 and 7 to the Chief Examiner together with their marked yellow copy of the OPTEM for each unit.

As in last year's series all centres were required to send **recordings** of the candidates' practical work for units 3 and 7 to the Chief Examiner within **one week** of the practical moderation visit. This requirement was met by most centres but a few were still not sent within the specified time limit. Most centres identified candidates clearly but there were a significant number of DVD's that were not in the correct format and could not be played plus a few that had no centre number and one that had the centre number written on the recorded side making the disc inoperable! There were also still a number of centres submitting 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 on an **appropriate format**. The most suitable is on DVD in a **Windows Media Player** format. If centres only have access to video 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 centres 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 must be available with the portfolios and suitable technology available to view the work. This is becoming increasingly necessary for unit one where strong candidates have been recording their application to skill development.

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

Moderators reported that they had viewed a wide range and diversity of performance work both in the application of performance styles and techniques and the creative responses to the commission briefs. No style of performance was dominant and every conceivable skill appeared to be demonstrated. Similarly the choice of Commission Brief for unit three appeared very even with perhaps again slight preference for commissions one and three [An image and 'Winners and Losers'].

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 re-interpreting an existing piece from the performance repertoire.

## UNIT DETAILS FOR THE 2009 SERIES

### UNIT ONE: - EXPLORING SKILLS FOR PERFORMANCE

This is the fourth year that this unit has been delivered and most centres had a secure understanding of the requirements. The majority of centres had marked accurately with many of the adjustments that were made within tolerance. In centres where there had been more than one teacher delivering the unit it was obvious that standardisation and cross marking had taken place.

In this unit moderators noted many portfolios that revealed secure programmes created to develop specific skills. Candidates needed to approach the unit as potential professionals with appropriate behaviour and attitudes; these should then have been related to their own working practice within the programme of development. Throughout this unit candidates needed to assess the improvement of their skills and enhance their awareness of the process.

The majority of centres appreciated that individual candidates must take ownership of the development of skills and moderators reported fewer portfolios containing detailed accounts of lessons or workshops that candidates had experienced. The strongest work was when the skills being developed were specific and clearly articulated. For example a candidate who stated 'I want to develop my acting skills' often failed to define a clear focus whereas another who identified that s/he wanted to develop their vocal quality through working on breath capacity, control and tone was more likely to define actual practical application and document it accordingly.

Moderators again noted a wide range of approaches to the delivery of this unit and also the diversity of skills that candidates chose to explore. There was an increased use of video recording by candidates to evidence their practical application. The strongest submissions were those in which candidates spoke directly to the camera to explain what they were attempting and then demonstrated practical application. A few weaker attempts submitted recordings of performance as evidence and in a few cases involvement in productions from several years prior to their course of study! It is important therefore to re-iterate that any recording must be of the candidate working on the skills rather than a series of 'snapshots' of ability as these merely confirmed progress not the process.

There was more evidence of individual and personal focus from each learner along with a sense of ownership again where the skills had been clearly defined and a realistic programme devised. The strongest candidates linked their understanding of the process to professional practice and discussed how the procedure could extend to other skill areas.

The strongest candidates demonstrated how research had been used to inform their practical development programme but weaker candidates still submitted masses of unfiltered downloads and, often inappropriate, theoretical facts. These candidates included reference to personal health and safety as well as risk assessment in the work place that demonstrated the relevant professional approach.

Most centres appreciated the essential requirement to produce an initial skills audit and these often revealed the skills deficit that the candidate intended to explore.

Some audits were still presented as simplistic tick boxes that were of very limited value, to those that required candidates to examine in detail how good they were in specific areas and by definition what they needed to improve. Many of the strongest audits were created showing examples of 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.

In the weaker portfolios there was still a tendency to produce evidence that focused on knowledge of the industry or practitioners, accompanied by academic research, rather than the documentation of individual candidate's acquisition and application of skills. Candidates with marks in the top band showed excellent working practices and rigorous self management often including witness statements as supportive evidence. Weaker candidates also still described lesson content revealing very limited self management.

Within the evaluations weaker candidates focused on performances, lessons or workshops they had been involved in and not 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 as well as ongoing evaluation throughout the portfolio.

Once again it is valuable to repeat the recommendation from the previous three reports:

There needed to be a stronger focus on specific skills, the methods by which individuals intended to develop them and a series of audit points through which they tracked their progress and defined the next stages. The process must be:

- this is where I am at the beginning [clearly evidenced]

- these are the skills I hope to develop

- these are the methods/techniques/people and resources I will use [in detail]

- this is evidence of my application

- this is how I know I am progressing [or not]

- these are the proposed next stages.

The methodology for tracking and ensuring clear evidence to support this programme can be as varied as the number of centres delivering the specification. Similarly the approaches adopted can include normal teaching sessions or entirely individualised processes but whatever format is adopted the individual candidate must ensure that the above content is securely evidenced.

## **UNIT TWO: - PLANNING FOR AN EVENT [Planning for a Creative Event]**

It was noted this year that more centres had given their candidates guidance on how to write reports and structure action plans resulting in more businesslike reports with professional looking agendas, minutes and action plans. Once again moderators reported some very imaginative internal and external events planned which made the project a real and relevant learning experience for candidates whilst creating opportunities to map the delivery against the demands of the specification. On the down side far too many centres still allowed their candidates to appear in their own event on the basis that they preferred to be in their own show, even though this generated no marks, and may have had a negative effect in diverting the focus from the planning.

One centre allowed their learners to organise a sale of buns as their event and clearly this goes against the spirit of the unit! This will not be possible in the revised specification as the requirement demands a creative event.

The strongest responses were once again those where candidates had been given a clearly defined event that required planning and were able to focus on the demands of the process and subsequently report effectively on their work. The choice of event remains crucial in terms of engaging candidates and providing the range of planning opportunities and relevant roles.

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. It is worth repeating the comments from the last three years concerning the format for the report and action plan as there were still too many candidates who did not understand how these should have been structured.

**Essentially the format for the report should be reflective and provide a coherent, detailed account of what was done by the group throughout the process in an objective and business-like manner.**

The strongest reports were those where candidates understood the need to distill information and describe the main outcomes; for example, rather than reproduce all the detail of a SWOT analysis only the principle concerns needed to be stated.

**Action plans are central to the process and should indicate clearly the roles and responsibilities within the team, realistic timelines and intervals when progress would be assessed. Interim monitoring of the action plan throughout the project should also be an essential part of the process.**

The strongest action plans were those in which individual projections were based on the over-arching group plan. There were still a significant number of candidates who failed to define clearly their projected timescales for the task they had been allocated.

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.

The evaluation element of the unit was more focused this year by many candidates and there were fewer that discussed the success of the event rather than the effectiveness of the planning process.

Many portfolios were more effectively structured this year often with a contents page and supporting material placed in the appendix. In weaker submissions however moderators reported having to search for material and often finding action plans in the appendix and other material that should have been in the report.

The stronger centres again incorporated a fully realised vocational context including reference to health and safety legislation and sound professional practice.

Moderators confirmed that there had been a greater awareness of the requirements of the unit and it that most assessment criteria were able to be applied and differentiated effectively but there were instances where authorisation sheets and marking grids were missing and there was little or no annotation on the document making it very difficult to moderate.

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**

This is the unit that most candidates enjoy and there was again a wide range of performance work presented across all disciplines. Moderators reported a few performances that were totally absorbing displaying skills beyond those expected at the AS level. Where candidates had worked closely in an ensemble and had approached the commission in an imaginative and inventive manner the quality of the product was often very powerful.

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 more focused and effective this year. The two most popular choices were commission one, an image and commission three 'Winners and Losers'. The strongest groups were very adventurous in their selection of source material and the manner in which they responded to it. Fewer centres opted for the TIE style brief but those that did were very often highly effective and understood the principles involved. Musical theatre and dance productions were again very popular and there was an increased number of pure dance productions. There was again evidence of centres adopting a 'house style' but this was perfectly acceptable and enabled them to work to their strengths. The 'content free' nature of the specification and the breadth of interpretation possible in unit three is the real asset of the specification.

There were a significant number of centres that had not monitored the maximum and minimum time limits for the work and this sometimes resulted in candidates not being able to demonstrate fully their abilities in short pieces whilst over long productions worked against groups who failed to edit effectively to create a structure that engaged the audience throughout. Centres should ensure that the productions are

between 15 minutes and one hour; with smaller groups [three and four] adhering to the shorter time and groups above ten using the full sixty minutes.

There was little evidence of candidates being left to their own devices but weaker groups again attempted to create performances based on a very narrow range of skills and techniques. It is anticipated that candidates at this stage will require considerable support and timely interventions by teaching staff remains the principal resource. As in the previous series weaker work was often naturalistic in nature and depended on the abilities of the candidates as script writers rather than performers. It was also noted that less successful candidates often attempted to create realistic characters outside their playing range and this should be discouraged in all but the most talented performers.

One of the key messages in previous reports was for centres to ensure that the productions were presented with 'a sense of occasion' and it was apparent that this had been assimilated. Most centres ensured that the realisation of the brief was considered in terms of the overall performance quality and focused on the desired impact for the audience. Fewer centres presented the work without appropriate audiences 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 reports of some very 'messy' starts to the performance and some inappropriate audiences.

As in previous years the work was presented in a very wide range of spaces and venues depending upon the style or purpose of the performance. Venues ranged from centres' own studios to site specific performances; the use of local theatres, performances in primary schools and outdoor spaces were also seen. Similarly every conceivable performance layout from 'promenade' to 'space staging' was again experienced by moderators and candidates' creative use of resources was very impressive.

Where centres used the 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 there was often a stronger sense of ownership by the group of the work and it was obvious that they were clear about their intentions for the piece. With very few exceptions moderators were impressed with the commitment of candidates and the work they produced. They were equally pleased with the professionalism of centre assessors and the accuracy of the marking that was achieved through a clear focus on the expanded criteria.

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. Many recordings this year were once again of poor quality and centres should note that it is in the interests of candidates to ensure the clearest vision and sound possible. Many centres also failed to identify candidates clearly at the

beginning of the recordings and are reminded that this is essential. 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 either excellent or very poor. The strongest candidates were confident and well prepared often using power-point presentations and in at least one case a lap top computer for the moderator linked to the candidate's giving the presentation.

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.

There were very few instances of rubric infringements and with the advent of 'Ask the Expert' centres can no longer claim to have been given advice or approval from 'anonymous' individuals at Edexcel.

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**

Most centres now understand that the bulk of the unit must focus on the candidate pursuing experience for a selected job role in the industry through practical application and reflection. There were fewer portfolios this year where the bulk of the material was generic information about the selected role or masses of downloads covering every training institution in the UK.

Moderators reported some very effective portfolios that evidenced candidates' research into employment opportunities, jobs and roles, industry standards and conditions and their application to a range of activities appropriately analysed to place their own artistic practice within the context of a defined career route. Again the strongest work was carefully selected and edited, and then presented in an appropriate form. The best portfolios were thoroughly focused on the chosen role and often evidenced innovative and exciting practical accounts clearly related to potential progression. The best work presented highly organised and marketable material profiling and 'selling' candidates' practical work in a very focused way. These portfolios not only included accounts and diaries of workshops but also CVs, show-reels and other creative material that sought to highlight the vocational skills of a potential employee. In these submissions the work was carefully edited and shaped using appropriate appendices for supporting evidence.

Fewer centres this year produced portfolio sections that were a straightforward collation of general research into the creative industries without using the material in relation to practical experience of the chosen progression route and the range of portfolio evidence was again very wide. Weaker candidates still produced very unbalanced or slim portfolios; the latter often consisting only of CVs, photos and a list of performance roles. The poorer work often failed to recognise the importance of relating experiences to the candidate's potential as an employee and how every example of their application should be considered in terms of what they have learned about the role. In the weaker responses candidates had often included huge amounts of downloaded material that was unfiltered and therefore failed to support any observations about the selected role.

Very few centres submitted work that had been produced for only unit five but many candidates included their involvement as part of their record of experiences.

The following statement from previous reports is not applicable to the revised specification.

**A main issue related to the imbalance in the weighting of the assessment criteria as the report section of the unit could only earn six marks and candidates' efforts were too often focused on the report to the detriment of the portfolio.**

*[In the revised specification the report on the industry requires candidates to report in detail on three jobs, one from each area (performance, technical support or administration) and will carry fifteen marks].*

For the portfolio candidates should apply skills in **one** job role. There were a few centres where the candidates had focused on more than one role and this inevitably diluted the focus and level of practical application. Similarly some centres delivered the unit through work placements but often the activities undertaken were not related to the selected role. For example a candidate working in a local theatre is unlikely to be asked to perform so for a candidate who has selected acting the work experience is of limited value, though some observations can be made about conditions and so forth.

For the evaluation candidates should analyse how their skills, knowledge and understanding have been developed and informed by both their own work and the vocational context. In one centre a candidate had attended three professional auditions and had not analysed the experiences to highlight what had been learned about the process or how this might inform future auditions.

Moderation of the work was 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. The majority of centres were accurate in their assessment of candidates against the national standards.

## UNIT FIVE: - ADVANCED PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Most centres appreciated that this unit is about candidates selecting an existing play, score or dance piece that they could research and perform to demonstrate the application of advanced skills. Half the available marks were awarded for the candidate's research and documentation of the creative process and half for their practical performance or technical application.

There was the same range of working logs presented this year from the organic versions that are often most informative to the more formalised, edited and sanitised versions that are not necessary. Portfolios, which were really used during the creative process to record candidates' experimentation and decisions about performance, were often stronger in meeting the assessment criteria as they were more personal and gave a sense of the candidate's voice.

Once again too many candidates included vast quantities of theoretical material often downloaded from the Internet, which had been included without annotation or reference to any of the candidates' own work and failed to evidence the creative process of the performer or the selection and application of performance techniques. A few centres still allowed the notebooks to address the general planning for the performance or details of practitioners without any explanation of which ideas were used. The log must record in detail the creative journey of the performer and their group. The inclusion of scripts is valid only if they are annotated to demonstrate the candidate's approach to elements of performance or production.

Candidates awarded marks in the higher ranges had produced excellent visual evidence supported by detailed and interesting portfolios. The work was presented in clear sections and contained valuable teacher comments providing detailed observations, statements and records of the students' work and progression. There was some critical analysis which was clearly the candidates' own work - identifying weaknesses, progression, improvements and evaluation.

Candidates awarded marks in the lower ranges did not demonstrate a great deal of research in developing their piece for performance. These candidates were less focused on their own contribution than on the generalities of the performance.

It is essential that the product is recorded and there were some centres this year where the candidate mark could only be awarded from 30 [half mark] as the recording was not available. Moderators also reported that many recordings failed to identify the candidates adequately and this prevented them from getting a true picture of the candidates' abilities. Similarly, some centres had provided recordings which were of poor technical quality, or recorded from too great a distance and these often failed to convey the success of the productions. Since this element constitutes half the available marks centres should try to achieve the highest quality possible. In a minority of centres the equipment provided for playback of recordings was inadequate or unsuitable.

Visiting moderators reported that the process of moderation in centres was positive with most centres complying with the requirements detailed in the Instructions for Assessment issued by Edexcel. Most centres recognised the value of witness statements and observation records in providing detailed observations, statements and of which justified the marks awarded. Nearly all centres had included the essential assessment grids and some centres had used clear annotation in the candidate

workbooks which also enhanced the moderation process. The majority of centres presented materials in an accessible manner, in an appropriate space and without disturbance.

A few centres still allowed candidates to devise material for this unit and clearly since the focus should be on the application of skills at an advanced level in response to an understanding of the source material this approach hinders the candidates' ability to address some of the essential criteria such as research [criteria AO1]. Devising new material also expends time that should be devoted to the exploration and application of skills and the essential polishing of the work.

The evaluation of the work should have focused on the effectiveness of the selection, application and refining of the skills used to create the performance together with an overview of the individual and group success. In most centres the performances took place in front of the intended target audience, and the performance skills used were appropriate. When candidates had explored character work, techniques and skills in depth and linked the processes to specific performance demands the work clearly demonstrated how skills had been applied. When evaluation was strong candidates had demonstrated how they had taken account of feedback from peers, tutors and others and had indicated their ability to evaluate their own practice together with that of the group.

## **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 and consequently some moderators did not see any unit six and many only saw work offered by one or two candidates. Impressions of standards are therefore more sporadic and unreliable. However, comments from moderators stated that candidates in the higher mark band presented detailed written documentation, which was well presented and easy to follow. Technical candidates often have a real passion for their area of expertise and once again, there was evidence that a great deal of thought and 'hands on' experimentation had gone into the creation of the work. Similarly, there was evidence of a detailed understanding of the material, the technical aesthetic and production demands of the performance and their practical application within their chosen specialism.

Visiting moderators reported that the process of moderation in centres was positive in most cases with the majority of centres complying with the requirements detailed in the Instructions for Assessment issued by Edexcel. Candidates entered work for sound, lighting, costume and set design. Lighting often included visual projections and pyrotechnic effects.

Most technical candidate supported candidates in unit five performances and, as with the previous series, moderators reported that many centres had ensured that there were high production values in front of target audiences and this ensured appropriateness and quality of performance.

Candidates awarded marks in the lower ranges did not always have ownership of the role or elected to work on material that did not allow them to demonstrate their full capabilities. Some lighting candidates for example brought the lights up to create a single state that remained throughout and then dimmed them at the end. In such circumstances, though valid for the production, the choice of material did not provide enough scope to show range and control of the equipment. Costume design was often the weakest with the ideas stage far exceeding the realization in performance and many key aspects of stage costuming not addressed.

Most centres provided clear annotation in the candidate workbooks which facilitated the moderation process and presented materials in an accessible manner, in an appropriate space and without disturbance. As with unit five, recordings that were of poor technical quality, or recorded from too great a distance failed to show the abilities of technical candidates, particularly lighting and sound submissions. In some centres the marks awarded were overly generous and this was more often the case where centres were entering candidates for this unit for the first time.

As in previous years many candidates selecting unit six were very experienced in the selected role and often carried out technical work across several specifications and productions within the centre. Similarly many were involved in theatre production outside the curriculum and often brought considerable expertise to the work. It is important to stress again that the other evidence demanded by the unit must also be submitted and practical ability alone cannot earn the highest marks. It is also important to stress that centres must ensure that candidates opting for unit six have suitable resources in order to demonstrate their skills at A2 level.

In a few centres candidates choosing this unit were very unclear about the demands of the selected role and presented work that was incomplete and/or unfit for purpose. The research section of the unit is as important as it is for performers and candidates needed to investigate the essential processes involved in their skill area; talk to practitioners and ensure that their planning and application was detailed and professional. For example, stage management candidates often submitted only the prompt copy and omitted their rehearsal notebook, and rarely completed post show reports.

## UNIT SEVEN: - PRODUCTION DELIVERY

Most centres understood that the focus of the unit was the culmination of the specification and demanded that candidates selected appropriate existing material and through a process of investigation and discussion created their own interpretation of the work.

The comment from previous reports, below, has helped centres to realise the focus of the unit and is worth repeating for the few centres that still misunderstood the context of the unit.

**Unit seven is not primarily a devising unit and though the line between devising and textual interpretation is often very indistinct the response should aim to present an existing work in an alternative manner in terms of focus, treatment, style or genre.**

The most successful centres presented their own interpretation of an existing play or dance work but with a clearly defined intention for a modern audience; for example a production of 'Equus' delivered through a very strong stylised physical theatre approach. One centre specialising in dance created their own interpretation of a work by Hofesh Shechter. The most effective responses to the commission had a clearly outlined creative intent and interrogated original sources as varied as 'Agamemnon', 'Five Kinds of Silence' and 'Rooster'. 'Alice in Wonderland' was a very popular source, with many responses adapting the original text with one highly impressive, dark, version set in an asylum and presented through a very strong physical theatre style. The most effective responses to the commission interpreted the original text with good examples including the application of Katie Mitchell's multimedia directorial style to Greek drama, in order to make the text and themes accessible to a younger audience.

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.

*[In the revised specification candidates must record their response to the selected work and their practical involvement in the interpretive/creative process.]*

Most centres presented well rehearsed, imaginative and coherent productions. There was 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. Most centres provided suitable front of house and technical support and moderators reported work that encompassed the full range of performing arts including acting, singing, dancing and playing instruments. Similarly all styles of performance were reported from an

updated version of the works of Percy French on a range of instruments to, 'We will Rock You' and many other musical theatre and dance works. Candidates again performed in a wide range of venues and there were some strong examples of promenade theatre, site-specific dance pieces as well as studio and theatre based productions. The strongest ensemble work was well-structured with characters fully integrated and developing through the piece and complete realised dance pieces revisited the existing canon, breathing new life and relevance into the choreography. Communication between the cast and audience was clearly evident and in stronger pieces there was clarity of intent and relevance and meaning were conveyed assuredly. There was a tendency for weaker cohorts to focus on devising new dialogue to the detriment of their performances.

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 also very realistic about the application of marks against the criteria.

*[In the revised specification teachers will be able to reward candidate's contributions to the rehearsal process through the mark allocated to the written documentation.]*

Some moderators commented on technical issues within this unit when candidates tried to incorporate mixed media with projected images onto screens. This device frequently failed and left actors waiting for a cue or simply carrying on regardless. The images often added little to the piece and were, at times, very distracting. Other technical issues arose from poor sound, particularly radio microphones, and often loud buzzing noises coming from speakers.

There were very few rubric infringements and in some cases very imaginative and resourceful responses to the problem of single candidates where centres had used other students within the production.

It is also worth repeating that whilst an audience is essential for this unit they must be made aware that the performance is primarily an examination and that the normal audience considerations might not apply.

All performances must be recorded clearly with good sound quality [a digital DVD format is specified] and candidates identified on the recording at the start in costume.

The majority of candidates elected to be assessed on performance skills as actors and dancers but there were the usual range of design and technical support candidates. Presentations by stage managers or designers were most effective when they told the moderator what to look out for in performance and highlighted the contribution that their input had made to the realisation of the group's creative interpretation in performance. Some very comprehensive and well-prepared power point presentations were given and centres should be reminded to ensure candidates select the most relevant material and adhere to the ten minute time limit.

## Grade Boundaries

### Unit 1 (6980/01) EXPLORING SKILLS FOR PERFORMING

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	55	48	41	35	29	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

### Unit 2 (6981/01) PLANNING FOR AN EVENT

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	55	48	41	34	28	22
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

### Unit 3 (6982/01) PERFORMING TO COMMISSION

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	55	48	42	36	30	24
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

### Unit 4 (6983/01) EMPLOYMENT OPPS IN PERFORMING ARTS

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	55	48	41	34	27	20
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

### Unit 5 (6984/01) ADVANCED PERF.PRACTICE

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	56	49	42	35	29	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

## Unit 6 (6985/01) ADVANCED PROD.PRACTICE

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	56	49	42	35	29	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

## Unit 7 (6986/01) PRODUCTION DELIVERY

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E	N
Raw boundary mark	60	56	49	42	35	29	23
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40	30

### Notes

**Maximum Mark (Raw):** the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

**Boundary mark:** the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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