

Moderators' Report/  
Principal Moderator  
Feedback



Summer 2016

GCE Drama & Theatre Studies (6DR01) Unit  
1: Exploration of Drama and Theatre

## 6DR01 Exploration of Drama and Theatre

### Introduction

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

Language

Non-verbal communication

Vocal awareness

Characterisation

The social, cultural, historical and political context

The visual, aural and spatial elements of production

The response to a practitioner- for one or both of the texts

Interpretation

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

Exploration Notes must be illustrated with examples of how specific practical explorations allowed students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the texts. These examples should be embedded within the notes so it is clear how students arrived at the understanding they have gained over the course of the unit. The notes may refer to the exploration elements separately, for each play, they may be written as continuous prose or include sketches, diagrams and designs. It is not necessary to compare the two texts in any way, although students may do so if they wish. Assessment of these notes is carried out holistically, across both texts and notes must be balanced so that each text receives, as far as possible, equal attention.

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

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

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

Marks for this unit are awarded as follows:

Exploration Notes 20

Practical Exploration 25

Evaluation of Live Theatre 15

There is essential guidance for centres in the Administrative Support Guide. This document includes the requisite forms and instructions for Unit 1. It is required for all units and includes information about procedures for Unit 2; it is updated annually with forms and deadlines that apply to the administration of all units in both AS and A2. Centres should download it from the website as soon as it is available in November.

The web address is: <https://www.edexcel.com/gcedrama>

There now follows some specific observations from the moderation team, based on centre responses to this specification in the 2014 series.

### The Unit Elements

Centres are free to choose their texts and most are appropriate to the age of the students. In reality, the range of texts chosen appears to be limited, the most popular still being *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Our Country's Good*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Blood Wedding*, *The Crucible*, *Equus*, *Metamorphosis* and *A Doll's House*. Interestingly it was noted this year that the last two texts listed, featured as the most popular of combinations. There were some choices made that broke this mould, such as *The Curious Incident of The Dog In The Night Time*, *Enron*, *Earthquakes in London* and *Pygmalion*.

Moderators reported again that centres have chosen plays that better suit the needs of their students and that where teacher examiners have achieved this effectively, students clearly have a better chance of success. Where centres choose texts that stimulate the interest of their students, they are inspired and show enthusiasm and excitement in their responses. Moderators also reported that centres that choose texts that are contrasting in terms of performance style, practitioner influence, subject matter or historical period often provide a broader and richer experience for their students.

As outlined in the Specification, there is a unit recommendation that there should be at least 10 years between the two texts and the majority of centres chose texts from distinct time periods of theatrical development and contrast. This is good practice. Where this advice was not followed, students were short changed since the social, cultural, historical and political contexts of such texts proved too similar. Even where plays appear to be very different, if they have been written too close together, there can be hidden similarities that weaken the breadth of the whole AS year.

Poor choices in terms of level of challenge, contrast, length and subject matter lead to weaker and narrower responses. In some cases, students struggled to write in depth, and many could not move beyond the plot, what the play's stage directions told them or how scene or characters might be interpreted in performance. However, it was reported by moderators that the majority of centres are in tune with the demands of the unit and work hard to prepare resources, material and practical workshops that suit the needs of their students.

The use of support structures for the Exploration Notes, such as scaffolding questions, was less of a feature in the work from this year and the most popular way to address each of the eight areas of assessment is through the use of sub-headings. However, the straightforward use of a question that poses, 'what have you learned from your practical exploration of the text that you didn't understand when you read it?' continued to help structure ideas and work effectively for some centres.

## The Practical Exploration of Texts

This element of the work is assessed by teachers in centres. Many centres continue to get this absolutely right, offering a wide range of practical activities in workshops. This means students have been afforded opportunities to access the full range of marks available for the unit.

The most successful students had again clearly been given the advantage of explorations that engendered confidence and encouraged risk taking. The weakest elements, as reflected in the written work, were again in the practical exploration of Language, Social, Cultural, Historical and Political Contexts and Response to a Practitioner. These three elements still seem to challenge centres' ability to find ways students can explore them in a practical context and then reflect on their findings in their exploration notes. As has been reported for the last few years, few students find techniques and exercises to support discovery of how language works in performance, or how the choice of language by the playwright can offer colour, theatricality and practical opportunity. In too many cases language is approached from a literary viewpoint, rather than as a practical element and as a theatrical tool to develop knowledge, experience, understanding and meaning. Other students discuss language too closely with vocal awareness and find it difficult to separate the two areas. However, some centres do approach this area in a creative and practical manner. A good example of how language was practically explored and tackled was seen in a centre's approach by the use of positive and negative language, imagery and symbolism. Candidate's applied physical gestures to key speeches and dialogue from *That Face* and considered why the playwright's use of positive and negative language was important in relation to character. Their practical exploration of this idea helped to secure their findings and develop their knowledge and understanding. Another example of how language was practically explored came from a centre that asked students to keep a diary and write in the language of their character. This was particularly effective when exploring the 'unbroken line of life' for Nora in *A Doll's House*.

Similarly, moderators commented again on the number of centres that continue to teach the context of a play as an isolated research task and fail to make connections to practical exploration. Those that do, often make perceptive links between the original context of the play and its relevance for a contemporary audience or the common ground and universality between themes and ideas that are relevant or different in various contexts. For example, centres exploring *Metamorphosis* created a news broadcast of Gregor's disfigurement and reported on the various different attitudes towards him from different sections of society. The experience of being a prisoner on a ship was another popular way of practically exploring the social and historical aspects of *Our Countries Good* and another centre chose to put Brecht and Marx on trial during the exploration of *Mother Courage*. Less successful exploration included research projects, the life of the playwright, statistics or details about when the play was written. Centres are strongly encouraged to find practical ways to explore the context of each play as this experience will broaden their understanding of the text as a whole and build important foundations.

Last year it was noted that there was a growing trend to focus too heavily on the theoretical ideas and methods of theatre practitioners. This still continues to be the case and moderators report that it is not uncommon for students to write unconnected facts about the biography of the practitioner, rather than 'respond' and make links between their own practical exploration of their chosen text and the theory of their chosen practitioner. Centres are reminded that theory and practice are inseparable and centres should continue to find practical and creative ways to explore the ideas of their chosen practitioner in a way that supports and develops the knowledge and understanding of their chosen text. For example, some centres chose to link the ideas of Artaud to the practical exploration of the Greek Chorus in 'Medea' and this allowed the students to consider the function of the Chorus within the play within the context of a specific theatrical style. Other centres chose to explore key scenes from their chosen text in a variety of different genres and often linked their interpretation of key moments to the performance style and methods of individual practitioners and companies. A particularly strong example was noted from a centre that chose to explore a range of characters from 'Blood Wedding' using the movement work of Laban.

## Exploration Notes

Students' notes continue to fall generally into distinct categories. Most students still write separately about each element of exploration across both texts. Some write about each element, combining thoughts about both texts, either closely linked or in separate paragraphs. It is positively reported by moderators that candidates who use sub-headings to structure their work are generally the clearest to follow and indeed this structure seems to encourage both clarity and precision. The strongest responses continue to come from students who choose the route of continuous prose, rather than note forms. Students who are able to detail personal observations using the language of drama often secure higher marks as the overall tone and approach is more sophisticated, personal and subject-specific. Although there is sometimes a danger that students forget to include sections in their writing that encompass all of the exploration elements, most ensure this does not happen by including headings to cover each section. Where students do not, moderators continue to report that some do not always make it clear where work has covered all of the elements. This often leads to an imbalance across texts. Centres are reminded that it is the responsibility of the candidate or the centre to ensure that all areas of assessment are clearly identified for moderation purposes. However, where students have ensured all elements have been covered, some of the best responses again came from students whose work read like essays. The key to the success of notes written in this style is that work is truly the final aspect of a long and continuous process of developing and honing ideas and demonstrating understanding.

Some students continue to include extracts of texts and once again this is only successful if supported with detailed and relevant annotation. Occasionally, students included very extensive text extracts, by the side of which they wrote ideas for interpretation, vocal exploration or characterisation. Occasionally students consider what they might physically do in between lines. This can be effective but only if securely linked to genuine practical exploration. This unit is a practical exploration of text and each of the eight elements of assessment should not be seen as a range of hypothetical exercises. A strong example was seen from one centre that encouraged students to invent new stage directions for text that was closely linked to the exploration of non-verbal communication.

It is essential that Exploration Notes awarded marks in the higher bands make a very close connection to the student's practical exploration. They must be analytical and evaluative of the work they have undertaken and the personal discoveries they have made as a result of their individual practical work. Once again, moderators reported that the best responses were consistently rooted in personal exploration and used 'I', throughout the Exploration Notes. Candidates that only use group or refer to collaborative practical experiences are less successful as it is the response of the individual that lies at the heart of this document. Where students' work is too descriptive of what they did in the workshop, higher mark bands are not reached.

Fewer students again this year developed large-scale designs and drawings, attached to their notes; and this continues to be a pleasing trend. Designs can be helpful where students have used them in exploration activities, but designs for their own sake are not successful. Several students offered hypothetical costume designs for individual characters and whilst this is an interesting and creative exercise it would have been more appropriate to document how the practical exploration of costume had helped the students to consider elements of character, performance style and visual impact. Centres have generally accepted that the Exploration Notes are the final point of a process of honing ideas and understanding, and are not a working notebook or diary.

The range of theatre practitioners, whose ideas informed explorations, remains relatively small. Most students used the theories of Stanislavski and Brecht, with Artaud, Berkoff, *Frantic* and *Kneehigh* also being popular choices. Moderators also reported that the principles of Lecoq, Boal, Grotowski and Laban frequently feature in Records of Work. Again, Centres had clearly chosen texts and combinations of texts with practitioners in mind and, while there is no requirement for both texts to be explored in the light of the work of a practitioner, many centres did. This often allowed some interesting comparisons to take place. The most popular combination of text was '*A Doll's House*' and '*Metamorphosis*'. Moderators also reported that several Centres chose texts that gave students access to more than one practitioner. For example, some students explored '*Antigone*' from both an Artaudian and Stanislavskian perspective and although this is not a requirement, in the best examples

this allowed students to consider a range of theatrical ideas and practice.

Overall, students' notes fulfilled the needs of the unit and many produced work that was highly informative, giving a real sense of what they had genuinely come to understand about their texts, through fully applied practical drama exploration. This attracted higher marks. Weaker responses were overly descriptive of practical activities, did not relate to practical activities, or were the result of theoretical research. This often meant that work that was well written and structured often fell into the lower assessment bands, because there were insufficient clear links to the results of the students' own practical work.

Where centres lacked appreciation of the requirements of the Exploration Notes this sometimes led to them being too long and moderators noted that there was still a good deal of work that had failed to observe the 3,000-word limit. As in previous years, centres are strongly reminded that work that exceeds the word limit in the final version of the notes should not receive any marks and it is the responsibility of the teacher-examiner to acknowledge this. Students need to be fully aware of the word limit for this and other units within the specification. There are no exceptions to this and work that is marked beyond the word limit is seen as a serious infringement of the specification.

## Language

This element is used to demonstrate how the language of a play might be practically explored in workshop activities. However, moderators still report that students write about the nature and style of the language of the playwright, with limited reference made to how they had come to this understanding through practical activity. It is the dramatic exploration of language that secure the higher mark bands and not the deconstruction of words that should dominate this section of the notes. A significant number of centres chose to analyse language through the form of a table and whilst this often provides a clear structure for students, it tends to lead to a literary or linguistic analysis of language rather than how practical exploration of language has informed or developed understanding. Some centres chose to explore this element through the form of creative writing and some moderators reported some highly effective creative writing from students who explore characterisation off text and then write in the style of the playwright and character. For example, an off-text diary entry from characters in *The Crucible* was particularly effective at demonstrating Miller's use of language and character speech. Other centres chose to explore language through physical action and soundscapes and this was a popular method of discovery to explore the attitudes and performance style of The Lodgers in *Metamorphosis*. Knowledge, understanding and appreciation of how the playwright uses language in a particular way is developed as a result of a hands-on approach, rather than formal exercises in textual analysis or rhetorical deconstruction. The most successful examples of this element still show how a candidate had explored a section or comparative sections of the play using several approaches, coming to conclusions that were clearly rooted in their practical exploration.

## Non-verbal Communication

The exploration of this element continues to be one of the most successful areas of the notes. Students often write effectively about their practical work on how actors and directors give a text meaning through non-verbal means. The best continue to write personally and about a range of strategies used in practical exploration, reflecting their understanding of how a text may be brought to life. Some show how exploration of the use of the body and the stage space has shown them something surprising, that they had not picked up from reading the text. Other students tended to limit the success of their work by writing about stage directions or how they might physically express themselves whilst delivering lines. Unless ideas have come about through a clearly practical route then high mark bands are not reached. Moderators reported some of the more creative and engaging exercises involved non-verbal exploration through the use of masks and reference to theatrical style that are rooted in movement. For example, exploration of characters linked to Laban or Commedia 'types' allowed students to physically explore status and characterisation. Other strong examples involved exploring stage directions and off text explorations of 'before time'. This helped students to explore character detail and to consider movement and use of space. Animal workshops were also popular exercises this year and this was often linked to the ideas of Lecoq or Grotowski. Once again,

several moderators commented on the effective use of photographic evidence in this section. Candidates that were able to annotate and support their images with direct reference to their practical discoveries were able to achieve success.

### Vocal Awareness

Students often write successfully about vocal explorations of characters but many still do not. Again, there continues to be a tendency to limit notes to showing how lines will be said in a future performance, or to describe how they were said in the workshop and what the candidate believes that showed about a character. This is not vocal exploration. Vocal awareness must be about exploring vocal possibilities within a role(s) or how the voice can be used to explore a specific dynamic. For example, several students have effectively considered how the voice can be used to show the journey of a character from the start to the end of the text. Other exercises helped to demonstrate how mood or atmosphere could be explored. For example, some students exploring Christopher from *The Curious Incident...* explored how the use of voice could be used to help show when he was 'in' and 'out' of control. The differences in vocal pattern, power, use of breath and tone were all considered and details emerged from practical exploration. With clear practical examples, this style of writing can prove worthy of higher mark bands. As reported last year, other centres chose to explore this element through the form of a 'Radio Play' and this often helped to focus on the use of voice in key scenes. However, moderators did report that several centres chose to document the exploration of this element in conjunction with language and whilst the combination of elements is one possible way of structuring the notes, centres must ensure there is a balance across all elements. There was a tendency for some students to briefly discuss language and then primarily focus on vocal awareness.

### Characterisation

Once again, this remains another highly secure element and students tend to write about their practical exploration of character with great success. Students are often well prepared to show how a range of exploratory strategies helped them find the detail of a particular character and several moderators commented on how the use of practitioner methodology was used to explore this element. For example, there were several reports of students exploring characters with reference to Stanislavski's '*Circles of Attention*' and '*Emotional Memory*' and Brecht's use of '*Gestus*' to explore the attitude and function of a character. When students were able to document their practical exploration and make connections between their own understanding and the text, marks were often highly secure. Where students do not demonstrate how they had formed their opinions about characters, but still write at length about them, their notes lack substance. Some centres still see this element as a character study. It is not. Successful work tends to deliver a clear picture of how a candidate's understanding came about through trial and error, working with others and by watching their peers. To gain high marks, work is then personalised and expressed in the first person.

### The Social, Historical, Cultural, and Political Context

In previous years, students have found it difficult to connect this important element to their practical exploration and whilst this still remains the case, there is continues to be progress in this area and good practice to celebrate. Some creative examples included putting Brecht on trial to explore the social, historical and political context of *The Good Person of Szechwan* and several centres exploring this text considered contemporary characters to take on the role of the gods. Other examples included creating soundscapes of poor living conditions in '*Our Country's Good*' and a living museum of the characters from '*The Crucible*'. News reports are still helpful examples to explore the context of a text in a modern setting and this was a popular convention. Unfortunately, it is still the norm for students to simply report their research with little or no reference to how their practical exploration has developed their understanding. Once again, some moderators reported that research tended to dominate the voice of the notes for this particular heading. This is not evidence of practical exploration. Students who are able to access the higher mark bands for this element write both practically and personally and their research is carefully balanced against their practical exploration. It is also noted that centres that successfully approach this particular element empower

their students with some of the necessary skills that are required in future units.

### The Visual, Aural, Spatial Elements of a Production

A minority of students continue to make good use of sketches and designs for this section but many continue to forget that it is the annotation of their work that offers insight in to their practical exploration. Centres are once again reminded that sketches and designs themselves are worth very few marks; it is what is said about the sketch, diagram or photograph that earns the candidate marks. It is clear that centres approach this element in a variety of ways and some of the more imaginative and creative examples from this year's work included practically exploring the entrance of the Gods in *The Good Person...* and staging the Underground Tube sequence in *Curious Incident*. This year it was also reported that it was popular to explore how the use of live or recorded music could help to enhance a scene. This was often explored in conjunction with interpretation and several moderators commented on the link that formed between highly creative and effective practical exploration and student analysis. Last year, moderators commented on the fact that there was a tendency to focus too heavily on the visual and spatial elements and ignore the impact of aural effects. This balance was restored this year. However, students still continue to offer design concepts for productions of their chosen text and inevitably this becomes a 'wish list' or hypothetical exercise. This is not practical exploration and notes that failed to make the practical leap from discussion based activities to practical exploration, often remained in the middle or lower mark ranges. Once again, higher marks were awarded to students who had been able to consistently explore all eight elements in a practical manner.

### Interpretation

The most successful responses to this element continue to be those that show how understanding developed in the studio through experimentation, what worked, and what did not. Weaker responses incorporate lengthy wish lists for whole productions, many of which have little to do with the student's experience in the exploration of how theatre is made from text. More successful responses often concern the adaptation of the methods of recognised theatre practitioners, such as working in the style of *Frantic*, *DV8* or *Berkoff*. Some centres have not yet fully embraced the way this element can be applied to short scenes and sections of the text, rather the whole play, making exploration much more the focus of the exercise. For example, one centre encouraged student directors to explore a key scene from *Blood Wedding* in a range of different performance styles. Students were then able to consider how different interpretations affect meaning and impact. Another centre explored key scenes from *Medea* and students were encouraged to explore the chorus in both a modern and traditional performance style. This comparison allowed them to think of the impact different performance styles and conventions have on a potential audience. Students achieving the higher mark bands for this element provide evidence in their Exploration Notes that they have practically explored and investigated a variety of ideas and alternative approaches.

## The Response to a Practitioner

Students are asked to write about practitioner ideas they have made use of when exploring at least one of their texts. A minority still limit their responses to the ideas themselves, without referring to how they had put them to good use and students who simply outline the key principles of their chosen practitioner do not score well. Whilst research is key to exploration the study of a theatre practitioner should not be a research task. It is an active exploration of practitioner ideas and methodology. Once again, many centres have discovered the success to this element and closely link the exploration of the practitioner with their chosen text(s). The most popular combination of study is Stanislavski and Brecht. Other popular practitioners include Artaud, Laban, Boal and Lecoq. Those that continue to look at the theory and practice of the practitioner in isolation from the text do not score well. Many students have tackled this section through a separate workshop, unrelated to text exploration at all. This is of little merit. Where centres have looked at a practitioner for each text, students are able to develop understanding and retain practical ideas for future use in Units 3 and 4. Whilst this is not a requirement, it is interesting when students are able to make some valid comparisons between methodologies.

## The Evaluation of Live Theatre

Live productions viewed are naturally specifically related to those shown by the professional theatre throughout the year. Popular pieces evaluated this year included, *The Curious Incident of The Dog In The Night Time*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase*, *The Woman in Black*, *Jane Eyre*, *Our Country's Good* and *Rebecca*. The vast majority of students wrote about performances of plays, rather than any other form of production. Theatrical productions chosen do not have to be plays; in fact it is acceptable for students to experience any form of live performance, such as a musical or circus performance. Where students wrote analytically and evaluatively about productions, encompassing both performance and production aspects, marks were awarded in higher bands. The most successful responses include an effective mix of analysis and evaluation and frequently provide a lively and engaging critical view of what was seen. Again, moderators reported that the language of drama was a strong feature of this assignment and higher band students are comfortable using the vocabulary and experience of drama they have mastered during work for the unit, to illustrate their writing. Weaker responses tended to fall back on extensive descriptions or overly subjective and unjustified evaluation. There has clearly been teacher input at the outset in developing ways of recording evaluation and analysis, over time, and this contained area of experience continues to be the strongest element of the unit. Last year, moderators reported that some students over-used quotes and words from Journalists and Theatre critics and this year, research and criticism was more carefully used from those candidates that incorporated research into their work. Again, like all other aspects of this Unit, the best responses are those that are personal.

As in previous years, some centres encourage students to write about a production of one of the texts studied within the unit. Where this is the case, there is little evidence that this element of assessment is any more or less successful than where productions were of plays not studied. The theatre experience, however, may have had more of a positive impact on the Exploration Notes.

## Records of Work

Most centres continue to comply with the requirement to send a single record of work for both texts. These help moderators considerably in determining the level and style of work delivered to students. It is not necessary for centres to send highly detailed accounts of what went on over the course of the unit; these should be general accounts of the workshops delivered on both texts. Centres are also reminded that it is not necessary to send copies of homework, research tasks or PowerPoints. The most helpful records of work were those that were closely aligned to the assessment objectives and that indicated which session was the one filmed for sampling.

## Annotations

Centres are not asked to annotate coursework but it is immensely helpful to moderators when teacher-examiners indicate where and why final marks have been awarded. Where teacher-examiners note how students' writing fulfils the needs of the elements of exploration, moderators report that they can more easily agree the marks awarded, than if they have to search for evidence. This is particularly important when work is submitted in continuous prose. Once again, centres are reminded that either the candidate or the teacher-examiner must clearly indicate where each of the elements is being covered in the writing - all elements must be covered and there must be a balance across all elements across both texts.

## Sample Practical Session

The practical activities carried out for the Sample Session generally range from the highly imaginative and directly applied to the exploration of the text in question, to extensive discussion. Preliminary conversations and warm-ups need not be filmed. Less design based projects and research presentations featured this year and this is a pleasing trend as this does not advantage the students or show them at their best. Watching students present, design or plan is not practical exploration. The Sample Session should be an active drama session which is teacher led and centres are once again reminded that it is the exploration of text that is central to this first unit and not performance.

Sessions are still sometimes over-directed by teachers or do not clearly show students working together on their exploration of text. Some centres linked the sample session to one of the eight elements and this often provided a successful focus for the session.

Many moderators again reported that students were very difficult to make out or identify. The most effective sessions are still those where students are clearly identified at the start, their names frequently used throughout and the camera focuses on areas where practical work is going on apace. Some centres chose to use coloured bibs and printed identification placards and this is considered to be the most effective way of identifying candidates on film. It is also helpful to the moderator if candidates introduce their names and numbers in a clear and slow manner.

Centres are still requested to experiment with how well they can capture practical sessions in their studio space, before recording their final version, to ensure lighting and sound elements are sufficient to the task. Some centres use a rotating strategy to ensure that all groups are seen on camera and this is particularly useful if the camera has been left in a fixed position. This simple technique was once again reported to be most helpful during the process of moderation. Centres with larger groups are asked to consider splitting the group to enable the moderator to see a recorded session with, for example, 9 of the 18 students in the group taking part in the workshop so identification becomes much easier. Centres are strongly encouraged to avoid the 'fixed' camera position for the entire session as much of the work ends up 'off screen.'

There is no requirement for all of the students in the centre to be seen in this recorded session. It is a sample session so it is good to see a range of students with the top, middle and bottom evident within that range, but a studio with 18 to 20 seventeen year olds in it may not provide the most conducive environment for moderation. Only one DVD recording is required.

## Teachers' Assessments, Comments, and Annotations

Centres' marking of the Evaluations of Live Theatre is still felt by moderators to have been more accurate than for the Exploration Notes. This has been noted for every year of the examination by the moderation team.

The assessment of the Exploration Notes remains problematic in a small number of centres, with moderators applying the standard of this unit and adjusting students' marks accordingly.

On occasion, centre rank orders have had to be modified since centres had incorrectly rewarded work that had obviously taken effort, but was not always related to the criteria. Teachers' comments and annotations did not always reflect the marks awarded and moderators report that some comments for the practical work are too focused on performance work, rather than practical exploration. Teacher annotations are vital to the process of moderation and, where usefully applied, can help show the thinking and assessment process.

Over long work should be weeded out at the first draft stage. Moderators are instructed to review the first 3,000 words and to ignore anything that follows. This may result in a change of marks if all of the elements are subsequently not covered. This is also true of footnotes and appendixes.

Moderators have once again reported examples of good practice where teacher-examiners had drawn a line across the page of work that reached the word limit to indicate to the moderator where the centre has stopped marking. Many centres helpfully annotated their students' coursework so that moderators were able to follow their thinking. The moderator's task is considerably eased when annotations show how the assessment criteria have been applied. In some centres, there was evidence of genuine department standardisation and cross-moderation of work, something that is essential for the security of marks awarded to students in centres where there is more than one teacher-examiner.

## Practical Exploration

Marks given for the Sample Session were once again, too high. Whilst it may be that there is a different mark awarded for the full period of practical exploration than that given to the three sampled candidates for the practical session on DVD, there does need to be evidence of some connection made between the viewed evidence and the final mark. Clearly there may be an imbalance in the marks awarded for each of the areas of assessment of the unit but it is expected that students' practical marks should bear some correlation to that given for the written elements. Where centres over award for the practical exploration and the written components appear to be weak in comparison moderators report difficulties in carrying out their tasks.

## Administration

Most centres ensured their work arrived on time and in good order and a few ensured it came in early to moderators. This aided the process considerably. However, there were some very common mistakes made by a large minority. Centres did not always include all of the asterisked students from their OPTEMS sheets. It was not uncommon for centres to omit their highest and lowest attaining students or documents had not been correctly signed; information in the Administrative Support Guide indicates what must be sent to the moderator and the examination board deadline for this. Where centres requested special consideration for students, or felt there were circumstances in play that meant the work of students was not as strong as it should be, they were directed to Edexcel directly. Centres are reminded that it is not the business of the moderation team and centres should not be approaching their moderator with any information regarding the work of their students. A formal request for special consideration is always advisable, and these should be made through the examinations' officer, not through the moderator.

Several centres had not ensured their Sample Session recordings were visible, could be heard, or had been copied on to regular, standard size discs, playable on any domestic player. Others did not package up materials safely and a small number of DVDs were damaged in transit. Centres are reminded that without a working DVD, marks for practical exploration cannot be evidenced or awarded marks. Centres are strongly advised to keep 'back-up' copies in centres. It cannot be overstressed that where centres use large numbers of plastic envelopes for work and papers, or cardboard folders, they do so unnecessarily and waste time for their moderator. Centres are also reminded that work should be presented on ordinary paper, not card, stapled together for each candidate and DVDs packed in protective envelopes/cases. In addition, centres are reminded to ensure that students' names are on all of the pages of the Exploration Notes in case they become separated. Centres are also reminded once again that work over the word limit must not be assessed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Based on their performance in this paper, students should:**

- Ensure they read and practically explore two contrasting plays written by different writers and at different times- ten years apart at least
- Include plenty of examples from their practical explorations to illustrate how they developed their understanding
- Ensure they write about how all of the exploration elements helped build understanding of both texts
- Only include text extracts if they are fully annotated to show how practical exploration led to knowledge and understanding
- Make sure language and social, cultural, political and historical contexts are explored practically for both plays
  
- Ensure the response to practitioner is closely related to the exploration of text
- Evaluate and analyse the live production seen and use examples from both the performance and production aspects of it
- Count the words in both parts of the written coursework- do not exceed the limits.