

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator
Feedback



Summer 2016

GCE Drama & Theatre Studies (6DR02)
Unit 2: Text in Performance

2016 6DR02

Text in Performance

This was the final year of the examination of Unit 2. Examiners confirmed that the feedback for the previous series was still very relevant to the work seen in 2016. The majority of examiners reported that overall the work was of a higher standard than in previous series, in both Section A and B.

It was clear that a very wide range of varied and interesting texts had been seen in 2016. As well as recently published and performed texts there was clear evidence of texts that have been frequently performed in past series being given a new and often exciting interpretation. These had engaged both the students who were performing and the audiences including the examiner. It was notable that many centres had returned to texts that had been chosen in previous series.

This is the externally examined unit of the AS year. The assessment objectives and criteria do not change from those printed in the specification. In this respect this unit uniquely has elements of both an examined and coursework unit. There is no externally set brief or text that changes every year as is the case with other Edexcel specifications.

Edexcel does not approve or recommend any texts for this unit. The requirement is that all texts chosen must be professionally published with an ISBN number. It is the responsibility of each centre to select the play texts, appropriate options and audiences to support student achievement.

Most of the information detailed below has been reported on in previous series.

Examiners reported again this year that many of the issues they noted that affected student performance would have been avoided if all centres read and understood the requirements of the unit. The Assessment Support Guide which is updated annually gives detailed information to support the administration of the unit. The specification and ASG are available on the GCE Drama and Theatre Studies homepage.

Centres can access previous reports on the homepage for GCE Drama and Theatre Studies. The following section summarises the requirements of the unit.

Section A

The monologue/duologue performances are worth 30% of the total AS mark.

All criteria are equally weighted.

Students can be examined as a single performer in a monologue, with one other performance student in a duologue or as a designer working on the same text as performance students. Design candidates work must be seen in a performance by examination students.

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

For all students independent research into the complete text is a requirement.

All students are required to complete under supervised conditions a written concept to support their practical work. This must be sent to the examiner to arrive at least 7 working days in advance of the Section A examination.

Section B

The group performance is worth 30% of the AS marks.

All criteria are equally weighted.

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

The text can be adapted to meet the requirements of the maximum time limits in relation to the group size but only the words of the text can be used in the examination performance.

Performance of students in 2016

Section A

Marks were awarded in all mark bands as in previous series.

Examiners reported that more work was seen that was awarded marks in the top 2 bands.

Although there remained a discrepancy between the marks for the practical work and the Written Performance Concept, overall this was less than in previous series.

Centres that did not enforce the requirements of this section disadvantaged students.

The majority of students performed monologues. In some centres nearly all students performed duologues. As in all previous series there was no evidence that students did better in either monologues or duologues.

The number of design students was very much in line with those in previous series. The evidence was that for these students it had been a positive choice.

There was no evidence that students did better in any of the design options. Costume remained the most popular choice.

Documentation was very varied in detail and content. Examiners report that there was a correlation between the detail in the documentation and the overall achievement of the student. Some of the documentation was reported to be very impressive.

There are no marks for the presentation. Examiners reported there was a correlation between the detail of information in the presentation and the marks awarded in the skill elements.

There was clear evidence that more students gave confident and often accomplished presentations which included demonstrations of what was to be seen in the performances. Many students showed considerable technical ability both in the use of materials and in the choice of presentation style. It was reported that on occasion these were as engaging as the subsequent performances.

Examiners report that the majority of students had shown understanding of the requirements of Section A and centres had prepared students well. Where students had completed the DTS2a/b correctly examiners reported it had a correlation to the quality of the work seen for Section A.

Many students had not entered the word count for the Written Concept/Annotation. These were either left blank or just had 500 entered despite the fact it was clear to examiners that the WPC and any annotations on the text were not even approximately 500 words or far in excess of this.

Again in 2016 many centres completed Section B performances first. This could support students in having experience of a range of rehearsal and preparation ideas that they could then transfer to their individual preparation in Section A. Other centres chose to complete Section B towards the end of the examination period as they felt it gave a sense of group achievement that celebrated the AS year and was a positive lead into preparation for Unit 3.

Performance Students

Choice of Text

The choice of text for each individual student is the foundation of achievement in this unit.

Examiners reported that there was a balance between traditional and contemporary texts. There was some evidence that whole centres had chosen more contemporary texts and that both 20th and 21st century texts were in the majority.

Texts that had strong and clear characters that students could engage with produced performances that achieved marks in the higher bands.

In this final year it remained a concern that in some centres the content and language of the material chosen was inappropriate for examination work at AS level. Many examiners again reported that there were performances that contained very strong language and content.

This could produce work that was powerful and successful but as this is an examination not just a performance centres need to consider carefully if the choice of these texts best supports their students. Some examiners felt that students were somewhat ill at ease with the text or did not have the emotional maturity to understand the content of the text. This at times produced reactions from the audience that did not support the performers.

There were also reports that where texts from the more established canon for example Shakespeare or the classic Greek plays had been chosen, students did not find the language and content so accessible. There are no marks for challenge only achievement in the published criteria.

There was concern that where students had put together a monologue/duologue from extracts or lines chosen throughout the chosen text that this did not produce a coherent performance.

There was evidence from the WPCs that students hoped this could show character development but this often was not clear in the time limits of 2/5 minutes.

There was concern that single voice texts, audition source books and internet downloads did not support students as they did not meet the requirements of Section A. However, there were very few reports of these being chosen in 2016.

The complete texts were available in the majority of centres. Some examiners requested that copies be sent to them if these were not available.

There were some centres choosing either a single text or several texts from a playwright and all monologues or duologues taken from this. There was a concern that this did not

always allow individuals to complete their own research or find their own interpretation of the character.

In this final year it is positive to report that there were very few examples of performances that did not meet the requirements of the Section. These have included in the past

- Extracts from novels
- Radio plays
- Screenplays
- Spoken songs from musical theatre
- Stand alone monologues/duologues sourced from the internet
- Stand alone monologues/duologues from unidentified sources
- Additional dialogue written by the student
- Complete text written by the student or an unpublished author based on a published text

Students cannot be awarded any marks if the text does not meet the requirements of Section A.

Some work had additional dialogue written by the student. This could not be awarded any marks but was included in the timing.

Exam Conditions and Timings

The vast majority of centres had supported the examination by ensuring that both the examiner and students were working under appropriate examination conditions.

It was reported as good practice by many examiners that the majority of centres had prepared students for the fact that examiners are not permitted to speak to students at any time during Section A. It was reported that best practice was to only bring the exam student(s) into the performance space in front of the examiner when the examiner indicated they were ready.

It is very disappointing to report that again in 2016 many students performed well in excess of the maximum time limit.

As has been stated every year there is no tolerance on this. Nor is there any on the number of words in the WPC.

Performances that were very short were self penalising.

All examiners stop awarding marks at the maximum time limit. Many reported that some of the strongest work was seen after this but could not be awarded any marks.

The majority of performances were performed as they would be in a complete performance of the text. It is positive to report that this has been emphasised in the reports in previous series and that most students now understood this. Both in the performance and the WPC this demonstrated the research completed on the complete text.

Examiners reported that some students had indicated in the WPC an intended interpretation that did not support the original text and this could disadvantage the student.

In this final year there were still performances directed straight to the examiner. This most often did not support the understanding of the complete text as it was unlikely that the other character(s) in the scene would be placed in the centre of the front row of the audience.

Some centres used chairs, boxes or dressmaker's dummies to support students in finding and maintaining appropriate eye line(s).

Higher achieving students had a clear understanding of where the other character(s) would be positioned in the stage space and addressed the performance appropriately to them.

Extracts that were written as audience address were best done when directed to the audience present and not directly to the examiner.

The strongest work was seen where the students had made a guided choice of text that showed their real interest in performing the extract and that the preparation process had been one of well structured individual exploration.

Performance Candidates.

Vocal Skills

Overall the majority of centres had enabled students to meet the criteria as listed. Security with the text was essential to support achievement in vocal delivery. Some WPCs detailed that preparation had included performing the pieces to others and receiving ongoing feedback or used recording and playback as part of the preparation process. Examiners reported this supported effective performances.

Where some students had annotated the text there was evidence of consideration of the importance of vocal delivery.

The standard overall was strong and there were very few students mumbling, hesitating, drying or failing to complete the extract.

Movement Skills

Overall most students had considered the importance of movement and there were fewer very static performances.

Both gesture and facial expression were frequently used to positive effect. Most centres had considered the importance of the position of the examiner to see these clearly.

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

Few students added extraneous, often abstract movement that did not support either the characterisation or interpretation of the role(s). This was taken into account in the overall timing of the performance but often did not add to students' achievement. These movement sequences did not support the realisation of the role within the context of the complete text.

Examiners considered that this could have been due to a feeling that students 'had to create some movement'. However, this was often felt to be bolted on and demonstrated little regard to the period or genre of the chosen text.

Centres are reminded that stillness is a movement skill as listed in the criteria.

Facial expression and gesture are awarded marks in the movement criteria.

Many examiners commented on the high quality of facial expression.

Characterisation

As in all previous series many examiners reported seeing very powerful and convincing work that reflected a high level of understanding of the text, context of the play and its contemporary relevance.

There were also performances that lacked any or very little understanding of the role. This was often reflected in the complete text clearly not having been researched or understood.

However, there were some concerns that texts could be chosen that presented some candidates with a considerable level of challenge. Edexcel has no issues with gender in

performance but students need to have good reasons to make a cross gender role a positive choice for Section A.

There remained a few cases where students had a very idiosyncratic personal interpretation of the role. This usually failed both to meet the playwright's intentions and the requirements of Section A. The challenge of Section A is for all students to understand any chosen role within the context of the complete play.

Written Performance Concept

It is positive to report in this final year that the standard of the WPCs improved and a considerable number of students were awarded marks in the top 2 bands. There was an increase in students gaining marks consistently across all 4 criteria.

More WPCs covered all 3 areas in balance. Many students wrote to 3 sub headings or structured paragraphs that covered all 3 areas.

Examiners commented that there were 2 approaches to the writing of the WPCs. Some centres chose to use the 3 headings from the published criteria with some WPCs even giving the word count for each section as well as the total number of words and this supported students in ensuring that all 3 areas were covered in balance.

Other centres had a more integrated approach and this produced a cohesive document that often demonstrated a high level of research and understanding of the complete process.

There was no evidence that one approach was better than another.

However, there was still a considerable amount of 'best fit' marking being completed by examiners where one of the areas had either been omitted by students or covered very briefly.

It was noticeable that very often the same area was less well done by all students in a centre.

It was often either preparation or interpretation that was not covered in any detail.

Context was not understood by some students and was often just copied information from other published sources. Some students presented a narrative of the role they were playing rather than considering the complete text.

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

However, many annotations were more stage directions in tone and did not detail why this would be done to clarify the intended interpretation.

The strongest work was a personal response that reflected an individual understanding of their chosen role and their preparation process.

There were still some students who included irrelevant information such as texts that were rejected, reasons for choosing a style, enjoying the work of an actor as a reason for the choice of role or time spent searching the internet for material. Some still detailed what the set/costume would be if they had these. Within the 500-word limit students did best when there was a focus on the criteria that can be awarded marks.

The strongest WPCs were a personal response that reflected the research and practical work undertaken that reflected the journey from page to stage.

There was less use of quotations and footnotes after this was highlighted in the 2015 report.

Section A requires a personal interpretation by the student not an attempt to mimic another actor's performance or interpretation.

Social, historical, cultural and political context

In this final year many students still merely copied or downloaded basic information about the text, author, plot and/or role chosen and this was awarded no marks.

At AS level it was disappointing that a few students wrote either largely incorrect information or showed a misunderstanding of the factual material.

It is expected that students at this level should be able to accurately spell the names of playwrights, practitioners and theatre terms.

Students are instructed not to repeat information given on the DTS2B/D form yet many did. These words could have been used to meet the requirements of the other elements of the concept.

Work in the higher bands demonstrated understanding of the context of the complete text in the light of their individual interpretation rather than just state factual information. Often this information was also irrelevant to context. This often included factual information on the playwright or details of original performances and cast members.

Students who achieved highly in this section detailed how their knowledge and understanding of the context had impacted on their performance.

Preparation process

Stronger work reflected the process individual students had completed during a structured preparation period giving examples of research and practical rehearsal techniques.

Where centres had chosen to teach either one text or playwright this often limited student achievement as it could be 'over taught' and often all students gave the same, frequently single, example of an activity.

Choosing significant moments was often successful in communicating several preparation activities within the word limit.

There were fewer examples of lists of teacher led exercises with little or no reference to the chosen text or interpretation which could gain little or no marks.

Some students still included activities that did not reflect the personal practical work that is the focus of the preparation section.

Generic lists of possible preparation activities (hot seating/the magic if) did not demonstrate understanding of how and why these contributed to the final performance.

Reading the complete text (often it was stated more than once), watching performances on DVD or the ubiquitous You Tube as well as films and even live performances were not considered suitable preparation activities.

Intended interpretation

This was strongest where students had considered the role within a context of a complete production.

Annotation of how the text was to be performed was an effective way of indicating intentions for performance rather than including it in the rationale. In many cases this alone did not always clarify the intended interpretation but stated what could be seen in performance. The reason of why this was to be done was needed to achieve in the higher mark bands.

Most duologue candidates had an individual rationale with the focus on their character in the performance. Duologue candidates will have worked together throughout the preparation process but each response must be personal, individual and related to the individual role.

The majority of rationales were received 7 working days in advance of the examination. Examiners are required to read and mark all the Written Performance Concepts before the examination sessions.

Design Candidates.

Very few design students were seen again this final year. Examiners reported that work seen was very much in line with previous. However, the presentations were overall of a higher standard.

The majority of examiners saw no design students in Section A even if they were offering this in Section B.

Materials and Equipment

It was felt that where students had been given the opportunity to work with straightforward materials and equipment this supported them in making effective design work. Students awarded marks in the higher mark bands were confident in using the materials/equipment and demonstrated a depth of understanding of the application within the performance. However, some students had access to such limited resources that they were disadvantaged. They often lacked confidence or understanding of how the chosen skill enhanced performance.

Realisation of Design

This was seen as the greatest challenge as students had to have a design concept for the complete text but then meet the demands of demonstrating the skill in a short period of time.

Those awarded marks in the higher bands had clearly spent considerable time on this aspect and worked closely with the performance student(s), the available space and materials/equipment.

Written Design Concept

In general students responded well to the 500-word design concept. Students awarded marks in the higher bands had the 'big picture' in relation to both the complete text and the extract chosen for performance.

Strong work was demonstrated where the design student had worked closely with the performer(s) to produce an integrated final performance.

Design Documentation

Students awarded marks in the higher mark bands had detailed and thoughtful documentation. Many students used power point presentations as well as the requirements as detailed in the specification.

Most students talked confidently about their written design concept and documentation and did not just read them to the examiner.

Some presentations were longer than 10 minutes, usually due to the enthusiasm of the students.

However, centres should ensure that the presentation meets the time limit as examiners do not consider any information given after this.

The overwhelming majority of centres understood that presentations must be made to the camera and most were effectively recorded.

Most centres did ensure that all the documentation could clearly be seen in the recording and most recorded the portfolios again after the presentation.

Section B

Although examiners reported that it was in Section A that stronger work was seen in 2016 many also reported that the practical performances in Section B were of a higher standard than in previous series. It may be that in this final year centres and teacher/directors 'pulled out all the stops' to end the AS specification on a high level.

Examiners saw a very wide range of varied and interesting texts from the gamut of theatre from classical Greece to those published and performed professionally for the first time recently.

Section B work was strongest where students were engaged in texts with which they demonstrated a real interest in performing and communicating to an audience.

Less effective work was as was noted in Section A where the texts demanded a level of maturity that most AS students did not possess. Examiners were concerned that it was clear in some performances that students were ill at ease with the strong language and content of some texts. This disadvantaged these students. Often these texts also produced inappropriate reactions from the audience that further disadvantaged the performers in maintaining focus.

Centres are reminded that the choice of texts for Section B is entirely their responsibility.

Much of the work seen was confident, skilled, polished and communicated real understanding of the power of theatre on an audience.

Overall there was a good level of understanding of the requirements of group performance and the majority of students were well prepared.

There were some students who had been poorly prepared by centres for this unit and produced work that did not meet the AS standard. There was evidence of students not making the individual effort needed to achieve at a higher level. This was usually evidenced by lack of security with the text and the overall interpretation. These students frequently lacked focus and commitment in performance.

In previous series it was reported that there were a number of very short performances. These can disadvantage students as there is insufficient time for examiners to clearly identify student achievement. These performances were also seen this year with for example 8 students in a performance lasting less than 30 minutes.

However, some examiners reported that the length of the performance may have reflected the level that the students could achieve and any longer performance time might not have improved their marks.

At the other end of the spectrum there were still a number of overlong performances. This was in the main where smaller groups of 3 or 4 were performing at times considerably over the maximum time for the group size. There were also many cases of groups at the lower end of the group size performing right up to the maximum time. These often disadvantaged students as the demands of sustaining a performance frequently led to loss of focus and energy.

Many examiners report that it was disappointing when effective work was seen outside the time limit as it could not be awarded any marks.

Whatever the group size examiners felt students did better by performing towards the lower time limit as it enabled performances to have sustained energy and focus.

This year there was an increase in number of centres where only one or two students were entered for the examination.

These performances were marked on DVD by members of the senior examining team.

Most centres understood that non-assessed students can only be used to make up the minimum group size of 3 and the performance is a maximum of 25 minutes. The strongest work was when a group of 3 performed for less than 25 minutes and the non-assessed students supported in minor roles. Examiners reported that many of these non-assessed

students provided excellent support by learning the text and taking part fully in the performance.

Although it is permitted for members of staff to take part in these performances there was concern that in some cases this made for a somewhat unbalanced performance and could disadvantage the examination students.

Audiences

Examiners reported that the majority of audiences understood that this was an examination and responded appropriately. The response of the audiences in many cases clearly enhanced the whole experience and supported examiners in awarding marks for communication.

There were very few centres where inappropriate audiences had a negative effect on the performance.

Several examiners expressed concern that very young children were present at performances where the subject content and interpretation were highly unsuitable.

At one end of the spectrum there were some very small audiences of just the examiner and teacher operating the camera. Some had a few pupils as audience who did not seem to appreciate why they were present.

At the other end there were again several reports of large and/or undisciplined audiences who did not appreciate they were present at an examination.

The majority of examiners report that as well as supporting the students in gaining marks for communication it was a positive experience to be part of a group that were gaining insight, understanding and pleasure from the live theatre experience. There were a number of instances when examiners were leaving the centre where they overheard audience member's very positive comments. Some would have been prepared to pay money to see the work or compared them favourably with professional performances seen. There were many examiners who shared these views.

The Text

Centres are reminded that Edexcel does not approve or recommend any texts.

Texts must meet the requirement of being professionally published, substantial and written for theatre performance. Centres must consider very carefully the suitability of the content or the language of the text. Examiners reported that the vast majority of centres made thoughtful choices.

Texts that engage the interest and match the skill level of the students were felt to be the most effective.

Again this year many examiners reported very positively about the variety and suitability of texts.

Many examiners reported on the skill and creativity of teachers in editing and adapting full length scripts. Most adaptations did preserve the narrative arc of the original text. There were very few cases of extracts being used or a single text being split between two or more performance groups

The strongest work came from well chosen and appropriate texts which had been skilfully adapted. These were often directed with sensitivity and understanding of the requirements of the exam criteria and the strengths of the students.

There were some effective comedy performances or ones having strong elements of comedy. The majority of these were very successful. Often where the work was less successful it was when the performers strayed from the written text into improvised dialogue.

Plays that have the episodic form worked particularly well giving the teacher/tutor director the flexibility to choose episodes that supported all students.

It is disappointing in this final year to report that poor centre choices did disadvantage students in achieving in the examination criteria.

Some examiners thought that often these were where the teacher/tutor director had a particular interest in a playwright or practitioner rather than selecting material that supported the students.

There was a very strong emphasis in some centres on ensemble performances often of texts with no designated roles. There were also examples of where a text had been adapted so that clearly defined roles were divided and given to all members of the performance group.

In many cases this did affect the awarding marks for characterisation and so disadvantaged students. There were again many stylised and physical performances that met skill areas but did not support student achievement in characterisation.

Current practitioners such as Pina Bausch, Katie Mitchell and DV8 were often referenced in the Director's Interpretation Notes. However, many examiners commented that all too often the techniques seemed to be 'bolted on' and students did not have the understanding or skills to assimilate their approach into a coherent performance that met the requirements of Section B. However, well thought out and prepared stylised and physical approaches to performance work did support students when used with understanding in performance.

In this final year there is no doubt that over the life of the specification the established figures of Brecht and Artaud were most often cited as influences in the interpretation of texts. Of contemporary practitioners Frantic Assembly and Berkoff led the field.

Despite the importance of clear identification being clarified in every report and clarified in the Assessment Support Guide there still remained a problem in a number of centres.

In most of these students wore 'theatre blacks'. There were examples where whole performance groups had purchased identical tops/trousers/pumps.

There were also again boiler suits and uniforms both military and school. Small differences such as coloured ribbons or length of sleeves were a challenge for the examiner.

When these groups also had identical headgear or similar hairstyles plus either bare feet or similar footwear the clear identification in performance was often nearly impossible.

Centres must understand that the failure to ensure all students can be easily identified can and did disadvantage the students throughout the series.

Centres must understand there is a great deal of monitoring of marking completed during the examining period and before results day. This has to be completed using the DVD recordings and when the students all look very similar it can be virtually impossible to complete this effectively.

Many centres provided examiners with word processed adaptations or versions of the chosen text. This can be supportive to both students and examiners. However, centres must also provide all examiners with a copy of the original published text.

Some examiners had to request these and then discovered varying amounts of 'additional text' that did not meet the requirements of the exam.

Section B is a performance of a published text that maintains the original narrative arc. Additional dialogue and scenes can not be awarded any marks.

The text as published must not be reordered for Section B. This can be done if a text is chosen for Unit 3.

The Teacher Director's Interpretation Notes

These ranged from none or a couple of brief sentences to 4 A4 sides of very small font.

Less strong notes were either very brief or merely a narrative of the plot of the complete text or details cut and pasted from the introductions to the published text or straight from Wikipedia. These gave no indication of the individual interpretation or the adaptation that the examiner was to see for the examination performance.

It is unnecessary to include personal reasons for the choice of text. The details of the choice should relate to the exam requirements and the students.

Stronger notes clearly had a focus on being accessible to the students to clarify to them as well as the examiner the overall intentions of the chosen interpretation. These most usefully referred to the overall style/form of the performance as well as brief details of individual intended characterisations

The notes should be practical and achievable within the context of the exam. Some examiners were concerned by somewhat extravagant predictions for the quality of the performance and individual performances.

'Section B is an examination that happens to be a Performance'

The focus in some centres over the life of this Unit seems to have become more of a wish to impress the audience or an opportunity to demonstrate the teacher/tutor's personal interests. In some cases, where centres had costly spaces and equipment the wish to demonstrate the use of these resources dominated the requirements of the examination.

The choice of performance space over the years has included theatre in the round, promenade, traverse and site specific locations. Outdoor performances had the added stress for students, audience and examiner of possible weather or failing light conditions.

Centres are reminded that examiners can only award marks on live work that they can clearly see and hear and must have the facilities to make notes during the performance without being overlooked.

There was also concern that there was an increased use of production values that did not support the examination students and in several cases so dominated the performances that students were disadvantaged. These included a range of special effects including dry ice and strobe lighting, shadow work, masks, puppets, pre recorded voice overs and intrusive sound effects and music.

Some centres incorporated audience interaction. This was a high risk strategy as students were disadvantaged if they did not get the expected reaction. Examiners must never be expected to have any active participation in an examination performance beyond the marking of the students.

Performance Students

This was the option taken by the majority of students. Work was seen across the complete mark range. There were again this year students who work with such skill, enthusiasm and commitment that performances were seen that fully deserved marks in the top bands. In this final year most of the students were certainly highly motivated to achieve and give of their very best.

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

Simple production values were seen to be most supportive to students and the examining process. This enabled both performers and examiners to focus on the criteria as seen in performance.

Many centres provided on the day of the examination clear full length photographs of students. Most were annotated with names, candidate numbers and the role(s) played. All examiners reported that this made the identification a much more straightforward process.

Most centres understood that examiners are only permitted to speak to students briefly to clarify student identification. Photographs of students in costume made this unnecessary and enabled all students to focus on the performance. Most students who had costume changes detailed this before the performance during the introduction to camera.

Design Candidates

More design students were seen in Section B than Section A. Those that offered design in both Sections chose the same skill or had the Section A skill as the base skill with some additional skills. The standard of work was felt to be somewhat stronger than in previous series although there were only very few students awarded marks in the lower bands.

The vast majority of centres had no design students. In most centres where there was a design student they worked alone. In larger centres often with Performing Arts status and/or the input of theatre technicians there was evidence that these students had had the opportunity to work creatively with individual groups.

Examiners reported that it had been a positive choice for most students. There was some excellent work which clearly demonstrated that the students had been given opportunities to have a real creative input working with the director on realising the production ideas.

Most design students chose a single skill. A few students took on more than one skill and showed an understanding of the whole production values of the performance. There was no evidence of an advantage in either approach.

Many were very effective examples of how to achieve a great deal on a limited budget.

There were very few students for whom this had not been a positive choice. They had not understood the requirements of this option and produced poorly considered and executed work that failed to add anything to the overall performance. Centres must ensure that they have both the teaching expertise and resources to support all design students.

There are no marks for the presentation to the examiner. There is no requirement in Section B to produce any documentation so this gives the students the opportunity to put their design work in context.

Overall the standard of the presentations has become stronger over the life of this Unit. It was positive to see that for many they were supported by their fellow students either in taking a silent part in the presentation/demonstration or providing support as a select and knowledgeable audience.

Some presentations took place in the performance space, others in another room. This is entirely centre choice. Lighting, sound and set students often used the performance space as they could use the work to be seen in performance to support their presentation. Very few centres chose to prerecord the presentations.

All options are fairly equally represented with the exception of masks/makeup. Many candidates used technology to provide often very impressive projection and sound work. Some centres now have more sophisticated lighting technology. This was used to create atmosphere and enhance the overall performance but at times it did obscure facial expression and student identification and this could disadvantage the assessment of performance students.

All centres are reminded that if strobe lighting is being used all audience members and most importantly the examiner must be told in advance.

Administration of the examination

Edexcel provides in the specification and Assessment Support Guide all the information that centres need to complete the administration of Unit 2. All that is required is that centres follow the procedures to best support their students in future series.

Edexcel understands that there is a great deal of documentation needed to support this examination but much of it should be completed by the students rather than teachers.

The majority of examiners report that the majority of centres were well organised this year and the written documentation was completed with thought and attention to detail. However even in this final year there were a number of centres where there was a 'somewhat cavalier attitude' to completing this. There seemed to be an increase in centres failing to meet the deadlines of both sending materials in advance and recordings after the exam. There were some centres who did not send recordings of either all performances or just Section A or B.

Overall it was felt that most centres had understood the importance of the recordings and the quality of these has improved over the life of this Unit. The recordings are in effect the 'scripts' of the examination.

There is still a concern that centres do not check the complete recordings of all performances and presentations. In the monitoring and EAR procedures examiners often discovered incomplete or frozen performances that could not be monitored. Centre should always make a comment on the quality of the DVD.

Recordings MUST be transferred in a format that can be played on a domestic DVD player for this unit.

Problems with Unit 2 Recordings

- Never sent to examiner/not sent within 10 working days
- Not finalised so could not be played on any DVD player
- Not recorded so could not be played on a DVD player (Examiners will not check on computers)
- Recordings made behind rows of audience
- Recordings where examiner's head obscures the action
- Recordings made at a great distance from the performance space
- Recordings that go in and out of focus
- Recordings that do not capture complete performances
- Recordings where the sound is distorted
- Recordings where the sound is overlaid by comments from the camera operator (s)
- Incomplete recordings
- Recordings that either freeze or jump
- Recordings particularly of Section A that are not chaptered
- DVD time sheets not being accurately completed
- DVDs not sent in hard protective cases so become damaged/broken in transit

However, on a more positive note there were many excellent recordings that captured the live experience of the examination with real professionalism.

Examination Arrangements

Overall it was felt that this was a more straightforward procedure than in some previous series.

All examiners had to contact all centres in their initial allocation which was based on examiner availability and location.

If it was not possible for the examiner to make the dates/times, as long as a range of dates had been given by the centre, they contacted Edexcel immediately to see if another examiner could be found. All examiners were instructed to inform the centre if they were unable to make the dates/times.

Other delays were caused by the tardiness of centres returning details after the first contact by the examiner.

All centres are reminded that if they can only offer a single day/time and if the original examiner cannot make it they will be required to record the performances.

This complex examination requires negotiation by both centres and examiners and it is very positive to report that this happened in the overwhelming number of centres.

There were circumstances where arrangements made early in the series could not be fulfilled by the examiner. These were almost always due to personal reasons beyond the control of the individual examiner.

There was an increase in the number of centres requesting changes of dates and/or times near to the agreed exam dates. It was not always possible to accommodate these last minute changes.

All centres must be prepared to make the very best recording of their performances for monitoring and possible examination if for any reason an examiner cannot be present.

Centres are reminded that all examiners are standardised every year and Edexcel expects that all examiners will attend the centres allocated to them. All examiners must give Edexcel the details of any centres with which they consider to have a possible conflict of interest.

All evening examination sessions had to be completed by 9.00 pm at the latest. Examiners are not required to remain in centres beyond 9.00 pm. The majority of exam sessions were completed before 9.00 pm.

Some examiners were frustrated by having made the effort to arrive promptly particularly for evening sessions that centres then delayed the start time of the examination.

However, examiners report that most centres were exemplary in their organisation of the arrangement and running of the exam sessions. Edexcel would also like to thank those centres who had as a vital part of the monitoring process an accompanied visit. These should not impact on the running time of the exam but in some cases this year this did occur and Edexcel apologises for this.

Post Results Procedures

Centres are reminded that as this is an examined unit any review procedures mean that marks can go down as well as increase. It is important that before requesting this that the permission of the individual students has been given.

Any DVDs that were not sent within 10 working days after the final exam session will not be eligible for an EAR.

Conclusion

The practical work students presented for examination in this final year was overall the strongest ever seen. The quality of the WPCs was better than in previous series. Overall students continue to produce stronger work in Section B.

Throughout the life of this AS unit examiners reported that they had found the examination of Unit 2 to be challenging and demanding at times but overwhelmingly highly enjoyable and frequently inspiring.

This reflects the continuing commitment of teachers to ensure their students gain a very positive and long lasting experience of creating inventive, creative and meaningful performances.

In reflecting on the work seen for this unit over the past eight series it is clear that across the country and indeed the world that there is an inspiring commitment by teachers to support a wide range of students in experiencing the magic of creating theatre. This is despite the concerns regarding the future of Drama and other creative subjects in the 16 to 18 curriculum. The senior examining team is sure these teachers will continue to ensure that their students are given a very positive and long lasting experience not only of creating inventive and even profound performances but also in gaining an insight into what it is to be a member of the human race in the twenty first century.

It is to be hoped that much of this excellent practice is taken forward into the new A level examination.

Based on the work seen for this examination:

Centres must

- Understand and act upon the information in the specification and Assessment Support Guide.
- Support all students in making positive choices in Section A
- Ensure all students can be clearly and easily identified in Section B
- Understand the importance of the DVD recording
- Ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve in the characterisation criteria

Students must

- Complete individual research for Section A over a period of time
- Ensure the WPC is a personal response
- Consider the importance of realising their character(s) in Section B
- Understand the importance of commitment to the group performance
- Be aware of the published examination criteria