

Principal Moderator's Report

Summer 2017

GCE Drama & Theatre (8DR0/01)

Component 1: Exploration and Performance

8DR0/01 Exploration and Performance

Introduction

This first component is internally assessed and externally moderated.

Candidates are required to explore the interrelationship between performance text and an influential theatre practitioner. Candidates are required to practically and theoretically explore a text and apply practitioner methodology to their own work. They will develop/research, perform/realise and analyse/evaluate their theatre-making process. Knowledge and understanding of practitioner theory and methodology will be applied in rehearsal, interpretation and performance.

Candidates will produce a **portfolio** in response to their experience of this component. The portfolio may take on a variety of forms including written/recorded or a combination of both. Time limits and word counts are clearly outlined and centres are reminded that the full details are available on page 4 of the AS specification.

The contents of the portfolio should respond to the following 5 statements:

- outline your initial response to the key extract from the performance text and track your contribution to the rehearsal process
- discuss how the chosen practitioner influenced your contribution to the rehearsal and to the performance
- connect your research material/s to key moments in the rehearsal and state the impact on the performance
- analyse and evaluate the contribution your own theatrical skill/s and ideas made to the performance
- discuss the impact of social, historical and cultural contexts on your work

In addition to the portfolio, candidates are assessed as performers/designers in a group performance/realisation of one key extract (**Section A**)

They will also perform/realise a design for a monologue/duologue performance (**Section B**). Candidates will justify their artistic aims through a statement of intention as outlined on page 13 of the specification. This document is not marked but provides important context to the teacher/assessor and external moderator.

Centres are asked to provide a recording of performance work, accompanied by accurate time sheets for both Section A and B. Teacher-assessors are also required to complete Appendix 1 (NEA Authentication Sheet) for each candidate. This evidence helps the moderator to place the work from each candidate in context and understand where and why final marks have been awarded.

Marks for this NEA component are awarded as follows:

Portfolio	48
Group Performance/Design Realisation	32
Monologue/Duologue or Design Realisation	16
Total marks for Component 1	96

There is essential guidance for centres provided in the Administrative Support Guide. This document includes the requisite forms and instructions for Component 1. It is required for all components and includes information about all assessment procedures. It is updated annually with forms and deadlines that apply to the administration of both components in this AS specification.

In addition to this, centres are reminded that there are a number of resources available to support centres delivering the 2016 specification. Online support material is available through the Edexcel website. These include portfolio examples and a detailed guide to completing Component 1.

'Ask the Expert' is another support service that provides centres with answers and information regarding common questions and issues. Centres are also advised that the FAQ page is regularly updated and this is designed to answer questions regarding the delivery of the specification. It is important that centres take the time to look at example materials as this will help gauge the expected standard and requirements of this first component. Support material is regularly updated.

The web address is:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/drama-and-theatre-2016.html#tab-1>

This report is designed to support centres in the delivery of Component 1 and address some of the issues raised in this first series. It will also report on the successes of this component and celebrate the work of candidates in this first year.

There now follows some specific observations from the moderation team, based on centre responses to this specification in 2017 - the first year of examination for this component.

Component 1: Exploration and Performance

Performance text and practitioner

Centres are free to choose their performance text and most were appropriate to the age of the students. Edexcel does not approve or recommend any texts for this component but further guidance on **choice of performance text** can be found on page 9 of the AS specification.

Popular performance texts/extracts for this component included: *4.48 Psychosis, Medea, Five Kinds of Silence, Our Countries Good, Pool (No Water), The Long Road, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Trial, Find Me and Metamorphosis*. The latter being the most popular.

Centres are also given a free choice in the selection of their **practitioner**. Popular choices for **Section A** included: *Stanislavski, Artaud, Complicite, Frantic Assembly, Kneehigh, Brecht and Berkoff*. Non-naturalism was the most common approach in this first year although moderators also reported several examples of performances that offered both subtlety and detail from naturalistic interpretations.

It was reported that a small number of centres chose a theatrical genre or movement in place of a practitioner and this was problematic. For example, centres chose Absurdism, Expressionism or Commedia dell'arte as 'practitioners' and this does not meet the requirements of the specification. For the purposes of this qualification a practitioner is defined as an individual or company. Further details can be found on page 9 of the AS specification.

Performance work

In this first year it was pleasing to note that centres offered a range of bold and adventurous performances and generally found innovative and exciting ways to explore text through a recognised form of theatre practice. A broad range of contemporary and classical texts were explored.

Moderators commented on the important **relationship between choice of text and practitioner**. Candidates who presented work in the style of their chosen practitioner, were significantly more able to respond to the demands of the portfolio. Equally, exploration of performance text was often more valid and rigorous when the choice of practitioner supported the overall style of the extract. 'Metamorphosis' and Berkoff were the popular pairing. Centres that chose performance texts that supported and complemented the ideas of their chosen practitioner generally did well. Combinations of text and practitioner that worked against one another did not always allow candidates to reach their full artistic potential. For example, exploring a Brechtian play through the methodology of Stanislavski was not the obvious combination of text and practitioner.

In this first year it is pleasing to report that there were very few examples of performances that did not meet the requirements of this specification. However, moderators did comment that some centres had included some language and

transitional sequences that did not come directly from the extract/performance text. For example, a reference to the 'Disney Channel' was observed in Wedekind's, 'Spring Awakening'. Centres are reminded that this component is Exploration and Performance – it is not an opportunity to devise original work and the candidates must use the text as printed.

Candidates are also free to choose their own performance text/extract for **Section B** and again, most candidates chose to perform in this area of assessment.

However, moderators did report a small number of candidates offering **design** and often with great success. Centres are reminded that it is a requirement to ensure that all design documentation (as outlined on page 16 of the specification) is made available to the moderator.

For Section B, popular performance extracts included: *The Woman Who Cooked Her Husband*, *4.48 Psychosis*, *Five Kinds of Silence*, *Like A Virgin*, *Find Me*, *Macbeth*, *DNA*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Our Country's Good* and *Road*.

However, it was noted that not all performances in Section B successfully honoured the **original intentions of the playwright**. For example, some candidates presenting a naturalistic extract chose to speak directly to the audience, the camera or place the focus of the other characters on stage, in the audience. This does not show a perceptive understanding or awareness of the style of performance or playwright's original intentions. Centres are encouraged to look carefully at the details of the mark criteria on page 36 of the specification for further clarification on this point.

Candidates generally showed great enthusiasm in their performance and design work and several moderators commented on how well candidates had been prepared for this aspect of the component. In most cases, marking was considered to be fair and accurate when compared to the national standard.

Moderators found that centres that chose plays to suit the needs of their students generally had a better chance of success. Where centres choose texts that stimulated the interest of their students, they were inspired and showed enthusiasm and excitement in both their performance/design and portfolio work.

Moderators also reported that candidates that explored contrasting styles of theatre had been given a broader and richer experience. No doubt this will help to better equip and develop their knowledge and understanding of theatre-making across the entire specification.

Quality of recordings, group sizes and timings:

Section A

The majority of centres provided recordings that were clear in terms of visual and audio quality. The most effective recordings began with a clear image of the group in a long shot and candidates were then introduced by name and candidate numbers. Centres that use identification placards or on screen sign systems provide the most helpful visual aid to moderators. Moderators also reported that it was effective when candidates introduced themselves by name, number, character and distinguishing feature. The use of digital file chapters is also incredibly useful to moderators.

Centres are reminded that further guidance on 'Good practice when recording' is available on page 62 of the AS specification (Appendix 4).

The recording is an essential piece of assessment evidence and teacher-assessors should do as much as possible to ensure the quality of the recording is as high as possible. The camera should have the best 'view' in order to capture the dynamics and details of the performance.

To improve the overall quality of recordings:

- avoid low-lighting levels as candidates must be clearly seen on the recording
- ensure white-light does not bleach out facial expressions
- ensure music/sound is not played too close to the camera/microphone as this sound often dominates the recording /impairs vocal clarity in performance
- ensure the camera is placed in a strong position to capture the performance
- consider using a 'zoom' effect to capture close up performance work
- consider using costume to visually distinguish each candidate.

Performance evidence for this component arrived in a variety of digital formats and centres are reminded to check all USB/DVD recordings, prior to despatch.

Centres are reminded to ensure performance times and group sizes comply with the requirements of the specification. Details are outlined on page 10 of the specification and in the ASG.

Some moderators reported examples of centres using **non-assessed candidates** without permission from Edexcel. This is an infringement of the specification and permission for non-assessed candidates must be sought through Drama Assessment. It was also noted that some centres used non-assessed candidates when it was unnecessary. Again, centres are reminded to check the conditions and rules relating to non-assessed individuals in the ASG. Failure to comply with terms as stated in the ASG is an infringement of the specification.

The majority of centres worked within the recommended time limits for Section A although moderators reported that some centres failed to meet the recommended minimum time limits. As stated on page 10 of the specification, centres should be aware that performance times that are between the regulatory minimum (5 minutes) and the recommended minimum (15 or 20 minutes) may not allow students to evidence their skills fully in order to access all levels of the assessment criteria.

Section B

Again, the majority of centres provided clear recording of monologue/duologue work and moderators reported that the best examples included the use of clear candidate identification to camera. This often took place directly before the performance or as a separate digital chapter on USB/DVD. Centres that accurately completed time-sheets for both sections helped to guide moderators through the recordings.

The major concern regarding Section B is that a number of candidates did not meet **regulatory minimum time requirements** for monologues or duologues. Where this was the case, candidates were awarded zero marks for this area of assessment.

This is particularly disappointing to note as this information is clearly stated on page 10 of the AS specification.

The regulatory minimum time limit for a monologue is 2 minutes.

The regulatory minimum time limit for a duologue is 4 minutes.

It is important that the start of the performance is clearly communicated and captured on camera. Moderators reported that some centres began performances with applause, countdowns and lighting states. There is no preference here but a system to signal the start of the performance is strongly advised. It must be clear when the performance has started as performances that fail to meet OFQUAL (regulatory) minimum time limits will seriously disadvantage candidate achievement. Equally, it is important that teacher-assessors indicate when marking has stopped for performances that exceed the maximum time limits. Examples of performance work that exceed the maximum time limit was minimal and this was pleasing to note.

The portfolio

Portfolios came in a range of acceptable formats and it was pleasing to note that all portfolio work arrived on paper. Card is not an acceptable form of presentation. Marks for the **portfolio** were generally assessed fairly and in line with the national standard. Nearly all candidates in this first year produced written portfolios. Several candidates chose to use photographs and diagrams to document key stages of their research, development and performance work and this often helped to provide insight into their theatre-making experience.

The best portfolios were those that responded directly to the 5 statements, as outlined on page 17 of the specification. Candidates that used the statements often wrote with a greater sense of clarity and structure. Those that did not, tended to fall into generalised 'reporting' or description. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure they have identified where candidates have responded to each question/statement.

A small number of centres did not take notice of the maximum **word count** and in these cases, some adjustments to marks were made. Over long work should be cut out at the first draft stage. Moderators are instructed to review the first 2,500 words and to ignore anything that follows. There is no tolerance on word counts/time limits. Centres are also reminded that footnotes are part of the final word count and therefore excessive use of this form of

documentation is to be discouraged. Moderators also commented on the unnecessary use of appendices in portfolio work. Again, centres are reminded that this contributes to the final word count and therefore are advised not to include them. Moderators reported examples of good practice where teacher-assessors had drawn a line across the page of work to indicate to the moderator that the maximum word limit had been reached by the candidate and the centre had stopped marking.

It was reported that some candidates struggled to make connections between theory and practice (AO1) or engage with the exploration and execution of their practitioner methodology, on paper. This is a requirement of the portfolio and candidates that were too biographical or literary in their response to practitioner methodology often failed to make connections with their own work. Low-scoring work also included simple description of practitioner theory without connecting to their own rehearsal or performance experiences. Some candidates struggled to offer balance between their analysis and evaluation (AO4) and this often resulted in adjustments to marks.

The best portfolios were those that were personal and responded and engaged with the demands of each statement. High-scoring work detailed the experience of the candidate within a rehearsal and performance/production context, and outlined how research, context and practitioner exploration had contributed to their knowledge and understanding of their extract/performance text.

Annotations

Many centres helpfully annotated their students' work 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 departmental 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-assessor. It is not a requirement to annotate work but it is immensely helpful to moderators when teacher-assessors indicate where and why final marks have been awarded. Where teacher-assessors note how students' writing fulfils the needs of the portfolio, 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-assessor must clearly indicate where each of the 5 statements are addressed.

Administration

The administration for this component is minimal and therefore the following guidance is designed to ensure that all administration for this component is correct. Edexcel/Pearson is aware that some forms and administration requirements have changed since the launch of this specification and centres are thanked for their cooperation and advised to regularly visit the Edexcel homepage and ASG to ensure that the documentation being used is the most current version.

The following observations were made in this first year:

- Most centres ensured their work arrived on time and in good order.

- Most teacher-assessors provided personal and pertinent comments for each area of assessment. Teacher-assessors that completed Appendix 1 (NEA Authentication Sheet) with detailed examples of where candidates had met key aspects of the mark criteria often guided the moderator through the process of awarding marks. A small number of centres copied the same generic comments for each candidate and this provided little insight into how final marks had been awarded.
- Most samples of work were correct. A small number of centres needed to be contacted regarding the work of their highest/lowest attaining students.
- In most cases, documentation had been correctly signed and this is pleasing to note. Chasing signatures is often highly problematic for both moderators and examination officers.
- Where centres requested special consideration for students, or felt there were circumstances that meant the work of students was not as strong as it should be, they were directed to Edexcel directly. Centres are reminded that a formal request for special consideration is always advisable, and these should be made through the examinations' officer to the specific department at Edexcel/Pearson and not through the moderator.
- The overall quality of recordings was satisfactory although this is clearly the most important area of administration to get right. Centres are advised to look at Appendix 4 in the specification for further guidance on ways to ensure this evidence is captured successfully.
- Centres are also advised to ensure that moderation materials are packaged carefully and securely. A small number of DVDs/USB sticks were damaged in transit and centres are reminded that without a working DVD/USB, marks for AO2 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.
- In addition, centres are reminded to ensure that students' names are on all of the pages of the portfolio and statement of intention, in case they become separated.

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

- Breadth of study across performance texts/extracts
- Students had clearly been given the advantage of practice that engendered confidence and risk taking
- Creative group performances/design realisations that were and innovative and embraced the style of the chosen practitioner
- Performance work that encouraged a range of skill in terms of character, communication, voice and physicality
- Performance work that met all required and recommended time limits
- Portfolio content was driven by the 5 statements and used the language of the questions/statements in the response
- Portfolios that used a personal voice throughout. Students referred to their own work, not just that of their group. They made use of 'I' rather than 'we'
- Portfolios that offered a balance between analysis and evaluation
- Students' practical examples were embedded in their writing, across all of the statements/questions
- Portfolio research was connected to key stages in the development / exploration / production process
- Consideration of contextual awareness and the impact on the work
- Strong use of subject-specific vocabulary used to support ideas
- Theory and practice are connected. Understanding is embedded in portfolio and performance work (Section B)
- Teacher-assessor has played a significant role in the direction of the group piece, a suitable audience is provided and considered from the start of the production process
- Section B performance/design work places the extract in context, students work independently to present their artistic aims and intentions before an audience. Ownership comes from a genuine sense of exploration and understanding
- Portfolios were concise and made full use of the available number of words but did not exceed them
- teacher-assessor comments were detailed and specific, allowing the moderator to see examples of how and why marks had been awarded.

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

- group performances/design realisations that were poorly executed in performance and did not sufficiently embrace the methodology of the chosen practitioner
- performance work used a limited range of skill in terms of character, communication, voice and physicality
- performance work did not meet the regulatory or recommended time limits
- portfolio content was unclear and often ignored the demands of the 5 statements. Some candidates failed to address all statements
- portfolios struggled to find a personal voice
- portfolios showed a lack of analysis or isolated analysis without sufficient evaluation
- students' found it difficult to offer practical examples in response to the 5 statements/questions
- portfolio research was either missing, superficial, minimal or unconnected to key stages in the development / exploration / production process
- lack of consideration towards the contextual impact on the work
- theory and practice often unconnected
- limited subject-specific vocabulary used to support ideas
- teacher-assessor has not played a significant role in the direction of the group piece.
- performance work was under prepared
- section B performance/design work did not support the original intentions of the performance text/playwright
- portfolios exceeded or struggled to meet the available number of words
- centres were poorly organised, had lost coursework, had not carried out centre standardisation or did not have sufficient specialist drama staff to deliver the component.

In conclusion, the majority of centres had served their students well in this first year and proved to have a firm understanding of the demands of this component. Based on the evidence presented for moderation, it is clear that students have engaged and enjoyed exploring the interrelationship between performance text and practitioner.

Moving forward centres should:

ensure all performances meet regulatory and recommended time limits

carefully consider the choice between text and practitioner

ensure performances in Section B support the original intention of the playwright

ensure the methodology of the practitioner is evidenced in both the performance/design realisation and portfolio

ensure all design documentation is made available to the moderator

adhere to all word count/time limits

ensure the recording captures the best possible evidence

regularly look at the ASG and support material available on Edexcel Online.