

Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

June 2014

NQF BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in
Performing Arts

Unit 1: Individual Showcase
(20512E)

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Summer 2014

Publications Code BF038220

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Introduction

This examination requires learners to respond to one of four progression opportunities. The paper is set every year and published in the autumn term (in September) prior to examination (Submission deadline in May). This Level 2 externally assessed unit is intended to be summative; in that it allows learners to showcase the skills they have developed on their BTEC Performing Arts programme.

The progression opportunities are written in the form of advertisements for employment or education programmes and learners are required to submit a letter of application as well as a recording of a practical activity.

There is full guidance published with every progression opportunity and this must be read, along with the advertisement itself. Centres must ensure that learners have read and understand the whole of the progression opportunity, and the relevant guidance. The work should be viewed as a vocational opportunity and treated as such. This implies learners should be fully prepared to present themselves individually, as for an audition or interview, wearing suitable clothing, having rehearsed and practiced their work.

No work needs to be devised by learners; published texts, scores and other people's choreography can all be used by learners as sources for their performances or presentations.

In the letter, learners are assessed on their understanding of the chosen opportunity and their ability to communicate using appropriate structure, language and tone. The letter should also be seen as an introduction to the learner's practical work providing the opportunity for learners to explain their choice of material and how it relates to the requirements of the chosen opportunity.

Practical work is marked according to its technical merit and how well it meets the requirements of the chosen opportunity and communicates the learner's creative intentions as identified in the letter.

Progression opportunity one:

This opportunity was best suited to learners interested in technical aspects of theatre and production arts. Learners were invited to apply to be lighting or sound technicians for a dance competition. They were asked to state in their letter, and show in their practical presentation, how they would respond to the challenges of the opportunity as a whole. The presentation had to include a short demonstration of technical skills.

Progression opportunity two:

Learners were invited to apply in writing and via an audition for a role in a variety show celebrating a particular region's history. They were required to demonstrate contrasting skills in two areas of performance, such as drama, dance, speciality acts, comedy or music.

Progression opportunity three:

This opportunity invited learners to become part of a Theatre in Education Company that would be touring their show, for pupils with additional needs, on the theme of 'everyone has a voice'. Learners could choose whether to offer their skills in dance,

drama, music or production. All learners were expected to demonstrate their performance skills and present workshop ideas relevant to a small Theatre in Education Company.

Progression opportunity four:

Learners were invited to apply for a course at a Performing Arts school. They could specialise in one of the following disciplines: dance, drama, music performance, musical theatre (the audition for which had to include a dance sequence), or production design. Performers were required to present two contrasting audition pieces in their chosen discipline. Those specialising in production were asked to present design ideas for a specific production of their own choosing. The theme for the auditions or presentations was 'travelling'.

Examiners found that the most popular progression opportunity this year was number 4. Progression opportunity 1 was offered in the minority of centres. The responses to progression opportunities 2 and 3 were more popular than last year and offered some creative and varied work.

There were more centres this year presenting work at the right stage of the course, and by learners who had the maturity to present themes and ideas within the selected repertoire.

Letters of Application

Again this year, some learners did not relate their knowledge, skills and experience sufficiently to the chosen progression opportunity in their letters.

Learners often struggled to make clear their intentions for the audition and only made passing reference to the work they were going to perform or present.

Stronger responses made reference to the specific demands of the chosen progression opportunity and took account of the instructions included with each one.

The best work seen met the challenges of the whole of the selected progression opportunity and gave detailed links between learners' own skills with what they were going to bring to the audition and/or presentation.

Where learners explained and justified their choices of audition pieces and/or the content of their presentation they were more likely to demonstrate a clear understanding of the demands of the particular progression opportunity. This also provided a context for the practical work and led to a more coherent response overall.

Structure and language varied greatly across centres and within centres. Some learners wrote clearly and accurately used punctuation, spelling and phrasing making the communication of ideas effective. Where learners used bullet points and lists this was not appropriate, however overall the structure, tone and language used within most letters were generally appropriate. Where learners presented handwritten letters it was often the case that the opportunity to type them may have been beneficial.

Practical Work

Progression opportunity 1

The small number of learners who responded to this progression opportunity produced appropriate work. The strongest responses showed the learners' technical expertise off to good effect, applying skills, knowledge and experience in a technical setting. The best responses corresponded closely to the focus of the opportunity and responded in particular to the technical needs of a dance competition.

Some presentations were too long with demonstrations of isolated skills showing the examiner how to set up lights or sound in a general context rather than the specific one called for in the progression opportunity.

Progression opportunity 2

A range of performance pieces were seen, some of which were more suitable than others in terms of meeting the requirements of the progression opportunity. There was often little evidence that the work presented had been selected to relate to a specific region, with some justifications being rather tenuous.

On the other hand, the selection of performance pieces showed a coherent and informed response to the progression opportunity, as learners were able to access the full range of available marks. Also some imaginative and engaging work was presented.

Some learners successfully used this progression opportunity as a showcase for their particular skills and talents.

Progression opportunity 3

Performances and presentations that explicitly and consistently linked to the theme of 'everyone has a voice', tended to achieve higher marks because the work corresponded more closely with the demands of the progression opportunity. Where there was simply a few references made to the theme and it was not embedded in the work, there was less opportunity to access the higher marks.

Presentation skills ranged from well prepared, confident and clear to simply reading from a piece of paper, and there seemed to be a lack of consideration that this aspect of the work was being assessed.

Some learners give presentations where they were mostly facing away from the camera for much of the time and simply read information from PowerPoint slides, and therefore marks were limited.

In some cases presentations lacked ideas and suggestions for the practical content of the workshop.

The audition work that was presented was mostly suitable for the stated target audience and had considered the theme of 'everyone has a voice'.

The most successful work was seen where learners had prepared a piece of performance as a result of their consideration of the target group, the theme and their skills.

Progression opportunity 4

This was again the most popular of the progression opportunities.

Many of the responses were in dance where choreography appeared to have been developed by the teacher, with learners then personalising their individual responses. Learners who had clearly explored the theme of 'travelling' in practical classes using movements and motifs before placing these within their own framework tended to produce the most successful responses.

Some learners produced music performances of genuine quality, showing that they had responded to the whole of the progression opportunity, including the theme of 'travelling'. Where learners were singing to a music track, which included vocals, it was more difficult to hear the work and generally did not support learners in demonstrating their own skills.

A small number of learners did not respond appropriately to the demands of the musical theatre pathway, as they failed to include a dance sequence as part of one of their audition pieces.

Many learners chose to present their acting skills for this opportunity and stronger responses were well rehearsed and presented as if for a professional audition. The most successful responses had taken extracts from published texts as required and were able to demonstrate their understanding of the work in its wider context, making strong links to the theme of 'travelling'.

It was however also the case that several learners had not memorised their lines and were reliant on prompts or gave up before the end of the performance. Some learners simply read their monologues from a script, thus limiting the marks available to them. Some learners performed monologues without really finding any clear creative intentions in the work, or without a clear intention of their own.

A small number of learners offered design skills for this opportunity. Some interesting ideas linked to the theme of 'travelling' were presented in relation to set, costume and make-up. Some learners clearly related these to a specific production they had chosen as was required.

Administration

Most centres presented the work as required, which is appreciated and greatly aided the examiners work. However, issues raised by examiners included the poor organisation of the work on the recordings by a small number of centres. Centres should fully adhere to the demands of both the progression opportunity, and the requirements as detailed in the Administrative Support Guide.

Centres are reminded that work must be submitted by the deadline to the examiner in the correct format in terms of recordings and pdf files. Each learner's work must be presented in its own folder, along with others in the cohort, on a new, undamaged, DVD or memory stick that will play on any commonly used laptop. Centres that did

not adhere to these rules created problems for the examining team and much time was spent requesting new, playable recordings or for further aid in the identification of individual learners. Where DVD's were sent without a protective case, it caused delays, as replacements were needed as often they had been broken or damaged in the post.

Centres are reminded that learner work, including auditions, presentations and letters are assessed as a whole, so must be submitted together as such, in a single folder for each learner. It is unhelpful if examiners are required to search for audition pieces and letters on separate DVDs. Centres are also reminded that it is not necessary to use a separate DVD for each learner.

Similarly, centres are reminded that they must complete the essential documents relating to each learner, and the centre itself as these are required by the examiner for marking and centre/learner identification.

Recordings were generally of a good quality however in some cases the quality of sound was poor, which made assessment more problematic. Where centres provided a quiet and appropriate space for the auditions/presentations to be recorded, this better supported the learners. In some centres learners appeared to be distracted by background noise and/or other learners.

Summary

Based on the performance seen during this series the following lessons should be learned:

- Centres should ensure that learners read and respond to the whole of the chosen progression opportunity including the relevant guidance, written below each advertisement.
- Learners should produce a clear and informative letter of application, telling the reader about their skills, knowledge and understanding that is appropriate to the requirements and demands of the chosen progression opportunity.
- Learners should use their letter of application to explain their choice of audition pieces and/or introduce the content of their presentations.
- Learners should not include actual personal contact details, such as personal email addresses and telephone numbers. If they wish to use this in their letters, then general centre details can be given.
- Centres should ensure learners have an appropriate, quiet space available for their auditions/presentations.
- Learners should fully prepare their audition pieces memorising choreography, lines, lyrics etc in order to perform with confidence, both in themselves and their chosen material.
- Learners offering presentations should practice their presentation skills to ensure that material is presented effectively and with clarity and confidence.
- Where a progression opportunity asks learners to perform extracts from published texts, it should be noted that if they simply perform monologues that are not extracts from existing work, they are not fully meeting the requirements of the progression opportunity.

Grade Boundaries

Unit	Max Mark	D	M	P	L1	U
20512E – Unit 1: Individual Showcase	42	35	26	18	10	0

External assessment

The suite of 'next generation' NQF BTECs include an element of external assessment. This external assessment may be through a timetabled paper-based examination, an onscreen, on demand test or a set-task conducted under controlled conditions.

What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we 'set' the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade (Distinction, Merit, Pass and Level 1 fallback).

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries - this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark should be for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries ensures that a learner who receives a 'Distinction' grade next year, will have similar ability to a learner who has received an 'Distinction' grade this year. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to make sure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in externally assessed question papers

Each exam we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries year on year because then it wouldn't take into account that a paper may be slightly easier or more difficult than the year before.

Grade boundaries for all papers can be found here:

<http://pastpapers.edexcel.com/content/edexcel/grade-boundaries.html>

Provisional qualification outcomes for BTEC First Level 1/Level 2 Award in Performing Arts

The provisional qualification outcomes for the BTEC Level 2 award can be found below.

2013 – 2014	D*	D	M	P	L1	U
Claims: 943	6.68	17.60	38.81	66.17	99.58	100.00

These outcomes reflect the cumulative percentage of learners who have received each grade for the qualification this year.

These figures are provisional because we are expecting more learners to claim their overall qualification outcome over the coming weeks. We will publish updated qualification outcomes in due course.

Outcomes explained

An aggregate qualification grade is where all unit outcomes are joined together to give a final grade for the qualification. Full details on how the qualification grade has been calculated can be found here:

http://www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/BTEC%20Firsts%20from%202012/9781446907788_BTE_%20L12_DIP_PA_SPEC_WEB.pdf.

2013 – 2014	D*	D	M	P	L1	U
Claims: 82,247	1.56	5.31	22.62	65.25	96.21	100.00

Number of claims released by August 2014

Eg: proportion of learners claimed & grades released achieving a merit or above 2014

We will be publishing full year qualification outcomes for BTEC in the autumn.

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