

**Unit 1: Individual Showcase
May 2014 Externally Set Task
NQF BTEC Firsts in Performing Arts
Frequently Asked Questions**

Do we need to provide learners with an assignment brief for this unit?

No, it is an externally assessed unit and learners have to prepare work in response to one of the four progression opportunities available in the externally set task for May 2014 published on the website.

Can I give the Progression Opportunities to my learners?

Yes. Learners will be assessed on their demonstration of relevant skills and knowledge through a letter of application and audition pieces/a presentation; they should be given the progression opportunities to look at and discuss.

Are learners allowed to all pick different Progression Opportunities or should I select one for my whole cohort?

It is up to you; you may wish to choose for them, however it would be sensible to allow them to see all the options so they understand why the opportunity they will be responding to is the most appropriate one for them. A lot will depend on the size of your cohort and how you intend to teach the unit.

Can we retake the external assessment? How many times? When can we retake it?

There will be opportunities to retake the external assessment in the following year; learners will be required to create new work using the following year's Progression Opportunities. There will be a charge for retaking the external assessment.

We have a very large cohort of learners. Do we have to send work for all of them?

Yes, as this is an externally assessed unit (as opposed to a moderated or verified unit) we will need work to be submitted for all learners. The unit does however offer some flexibility as learners can record their auditions/presentations over a number of sessions.

Is the assessment criteria for the externally assessed unit in the specification?

No, but the mark scheme from last exam session is published on the website at <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/firsts2012/performing-arts/Pages/Documents-Award.aspx> (in the externally set task section).

Where can I find the grade boundaries?

New grade boundaries are set each year. Last year's grade boundaries can be found in the Lead Examiner Report for May 2013 available on the website at <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/firsts2012/performing-arts/Pages/default.aspx> (in the externally set task section). This report also provides information on the performance of learners in May 2013 and is intended to support teachers in preparing learners for future external assessment.

Can learners doing more than one BTEC First Award in Performing Arts, for example, Acting and Dance submit the same work for both pathways?

No, learners will have to submit different work for each pathway. The work submitted for each pathway must be for different Progression Opportunities, e.g. a letter of application, a dance Audition and a 5-minute presentation (with ideas for practical dance workshop activities) for Progression Opportunity 3 for the Dance pathway and acting auditions for Progression Opportunity 4 for the Acting pathway.

We would recommend you consider registering these learners on one of the larger sizes of the qualification. If you register learners on more than one pathway for an Award, only one of the pathways will count towards headline measures.

Auditions/Presentations:**For Progression Opportunity 1, do learners have to demonstrate lighting or sound design skills?**

Learners have to show that they have the skills to safely set up and operate the sound or lighting but as the job role does not include design they need not refer to this in their presentation. Learners should demonstrate setting up and operational skills, use of cue sheets and appropriate technical language in their presentation/demonstration.

For Progression Opportunity 2, can learners select any region to base their response?

Yes, the learner can select their region or any other of their choice.

For Progression Opportunity 3, could learners include some footage of them leading a workshop activity in their presentation?

Yes, however they must fully integrate the footage into their presentation e.g. by explaining its context and purpose and they should take care not to exceed the time limit for the presentation.

For Progression Opportunity 4, can learners presenting an extract from a novel or screenplay be presented?

Extracts may be taken from a script or other published text, including screenplays or novels.

For Progression Opportunity 4, does the dance performed have to come from previously choreographed works?

No, the dance could come from works devised by choreographers, by the tutor or they may be choreographed by the learner.

Do extracts/monologues have to be continuous or can they be edited/created/collaged from different parts of the text?

A monologue can be made up from different parts of the whole text to build a cohesive piece of the required length.

Are learners required to perform using the original accent of the text?

No, Pearson has no issues with accent in performance. If learners choose to use an accent other than their own, this will form part of the assessment.

What should I do if one of my learners forgets their lines and/or stops during the recording?

If a learner dries and cannot recover you can provide a prompt for them however this will be reflected in the marks awarded. If a learner stops during the performance they may re-start from the point at which they stopped or start again from the beginning however the recording **must not** be paused or stopped i.e. the full performance including the 'false start' should be submitted to the examiner.

My learners find it difficult to perform on their own. Can they perform with a partner or as part of a small group?

No, this is not permitted.

Will Edexcel approve choices of texts or other materials prior to assessment?

No. Edexcel will not approve or recommend texts. The choice is the responsibility of the learner/centre.

Can text be adapted to change the gender of a role?

Yes, Edexcel has no issues with cross gender casting.

Can a teacher ask questions to learners during or after their presentations?

No, this is not permitted.

Can learners be accompanied in the external audition?

Yes, singers or musicians can be accompanied by a single accompanist (e.g. a pianist or guitar player) as they would in a real audition. Alternatively a backing track could be used. The backing track must not include lead vocals.

Can we do the two auditions at different times of the year?

The auditions/presentations can be undertaken by learners and recorded by the centre at any time during the academic year. Recordings and letters of application should then be safely stored e.g. in exams office, until it is time to submit the work to the examiner.

Will they be externally assessed by a subject expert?

Examiners will be trained and fully standardised across the range of performance disciplines.

Can all learners do the same pieces/extracts? Does each learner have to do a different piece? What happens if I have hundreds of learners?

There is no requirement that each learner in a cohort presents different audition pieces. In certain circumstances, teachers may feel that the needs of learners would be best served if the learner work is in response to a taught range of repertoire.

It states two minutes – what happens if they do 90 seconds?

The lengths stated in the Progression Opportunities must be followed. Performances or presentations that are substantially shorter or longer than the time stated will not attract the full range of marks.

Can we have an audience present?

Yes, an audience can be present at the recording. However, please remember that this is not meant to be a theatrical production and should be recorded in a simple manner i.e. in natural light rather than with stage lighting and/or effects. Also if an audience is present the centre must ensure that the camera is not obscured e.g. by the backs of people's heads.

Letters of Application**Do learners have to include their own address and that of the 'company' in their letter of application?**

No. They should simply submit what would be included in the main body of the letter. They may begin the letter 'To whom it may concern' or Dear Sir/Madam' if they wish.

Some of my learners have undertaken some work experience at a local theatre. Can they submit a reference as part of their response?

No, however they can make reference to skills and experience gained during work experience or other activities outside the BTEC programme in their letter of application.

Can learners invent details of past experience in their letters?

No, the letter should refer only to actual skills and experience of the learner.

What support are we allowed to give to learners with specific needs in terms of the letter of application i.e. a learner who has difficulty writing/typing words?

If you have learners with specific needs you can make an application for Access arrangements. Access arrangements are approved before an examination and are intended to allow learners to demonstrate attainment. Access arrangements request for NQF BTEC must be made on the Edexcel Online website.

If learners do really badly in their letter of application but then do a good audition can they still pass the unit?

The mark scheme for the unit is weighted in favour of the practical work i.e. the auditions/presentations. Learners submitting a poor letter of application but doing rather better in their auditions/presentation can therefore still succeed. They must however at least attempt the letter of application.

Do they have to do the letter before the audition?

The letter and the audition/presentation will be submitted to the examiner at the same time so they could be undertaken in any order. In practice however it would seem appropriate for learners to produce the letter of application before undertaking the audition/presentation as this would be what would happen when applying for a real job.