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Examiners' Report/
Lead Examiner Feedback
Summer 2017

BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Performing
Arts

Unit 3: Group Performance Workshop
(31557H)



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Grade Boundaries

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 Near Pass.

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external 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 is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in external assessments

Each external assessment 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 for each test, because then it would not take into account that a test might be slightly easier or more difficult than any other.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

31557H – Unit 3: Performance Workshop

Grade	Unclassified	Level 3			
		N	P	M	D
Boundary Mark	0	12	23	34	45

Introduction

Unit 3: Group Performance Workshop is a mandatory externally assessed task on the following qualification sizes of the BTEC Nationals in Performing Arts: Extended Certificate, Foundation Diploma, Diploma and Extended Diploma. The first assessment opportunity for this task is May/June 2017.

The Unit 3 paper is set once every year and published in January prior to the external assessment in the summer series with the submission deadline in May. This unit requires learners to respond to a set task in the form of a given stimulus, this stimulus changes each series.

Working as part of a small performance company in groups of between 3 and 7 performers, learners must respond to the stimulus provided in the set task. They need to use research and practical exploration to interpret the stimulus and devise an original piece of performance work to present to an invited audience.

The performance needs to be between 10 and 20 minutes long depending upon the piece, the performance discipline and/or the number of performers in the group.

As part of the set task learners must complete a digital process log at 4 key milestone stages. The digital process log should capture learner's contribution to the development and rehearsal process, reflect upon the process and the final group performance.

The set task is marked out of 60. The digital process log is marked out of 42 and the performance out of 18. The weighting of this externally assessed unit is intended to assess learner's ability to work collaboratively to create a performance in response to a stimulus. Learner's accounts of the devising processes is worth 70% of the final marks and it is worth remembering the importance of the devising process within this examination.

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

Overall, examiners experienced a wide range of performing arts work covering the full range of marks available.

The best work seen was created because of a robust and rigorous devising process in which learners successfully collaborated in order to develop and shape material with a clear artistic vision and impressive creativity. In the most successful work, this process was analytically documented in the digital process logs. It could be observed in recorded clips of the developing process included with Milestone 2 and 3 of their digital process log and was evident in the final group workshop performance.

Stimulus

The stimulus for this first examination series was Article 19 from the Declaration of Human Rights. 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.'

This stimulus provided learners with the opportunity to respond in a wide variety of ways and a wealth of different responses in all performance disciplines were seen. There were a large number of serious issue-based pieces and a lot of work focused on historical figures that have stood up for the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Task

Milestone 1: Interpreting and Planning

A01: Understand how to interpret and respond to a stimulus for a group performance

In this first log entry, the marking grid for Milestone 1 assesses learner's ability to demonstrate their understanding of how they have interpreted and responded to the stimulus in the set task.

Learners must discuss how they have interpreted the stimulus through practical exploration and through primary and secondary research. They must justify their initial creative ideas for the group performance making it clear how these creative ideas relate to the stimulus. Whilst doing this they must also demonstrate their contribution and engagement with the group's interpretation of the stimulus and the generation of ideas.

It is also useful if learners outline their artistic aims and intentions in this milestone. The target audience, the form and style of the performance and the practical performance skills they and their group can apply to the process and the final performance.

The best responses seen for this milestone entry were written after learners had had the chance to undertake relevant and useful primary and secondary research. They had considered and discussed the results of this research and their ideas for the group performance with the rest of their performance group. Learners had then applied their research as they practically explored some of their initial ideas in order to fully interpret the stimulus and practically explore their creative ideas for the final piece. Completing this work before writing their Milestone 1 log entry meant that learners were able to respond to all the requirements of marking grid 1 and, if demonstrating an accomplished ability to interpret the stimulus material to access the top band of the marking grid.

In the responses gaining high marks, the individual learners 'voice' was clear, they provided focused and perceptive ideas for the group performance work. There was evidence of a rigorous investigation and practical exploration, which was consistently linked back to a sophisticated interpretation of the stimulus.

Several learners appeared to have completed this milestone entry too early in the process. In these cases learners only outlined their own personal response to the stimulus with no reference to any research, practical exploration or their creative ideas for performance. This therefore did not provide them with the opportunity to access the range of marks available for this milestone log entry and often resulted in a limited or barely competent interpretation of the stimulus.

Other learners outlined all of their research in this milestone entry, whether the research was relevant or useful to the developing performance work or not. This again did not provide them with the opportunity to access the full range of marks often due to their lack of practical exploration. In these cases the log entries for Milestone 2 often

contained evidence of a more confident ability to interpret the stimulus, with the application of the research they had completed to the development of their practical ideas. Unfortunately this meant that this work could not be credited in Milestone 1.

In some cases, primary and secondary research sources were simplistic and findings generalised, suggesting a weaker understanding and a lack of focus on the research aspects of their response to the stimulus. In these cases, learners tended to have considered their initial response to the stimulus and used this limited research to support their initial ideas rather than considered it as part of the process to strengthen and widen their response to the stimulus. This often led to a less focused exploration process and to more descriptive responses in this and other milestone log entries.

Other learners provided a political standpoint, they sometimes referred to their artistic aims but again they did not outline their practical exploration nor their creative ideas for the performance piece. This meant that they were again not able to access the full range of marks.

Examiners noted that there were many images of mind maps included with this milestone log entry that were rarely useful and not developed further or used to support the learners' creative decisions.

Examiners recommend that centres delay the writing of Milestone 1 until learners have completed a significant amount of research, decided upon their initial creative ideas and begun to practically explore and develop these ideas for their final performance work. This will ensure that learners have access to the full range of marks for this milestone log entry.

Milestone 2 and 3: Development and realisation of creative ideas (early and mid-stage review)

A02: Develop and realise creative ideas for a group performance in response to a stimulus

A03: Apply personal management and collaborative skills to a group performance workshop process

In their second and third log entries, the marking grid for Milestone 2 and 3 assesses learner's ability to describe the exploratory process they have used to generate and develop their practical material in response to the stimulus including any specific devising and/or performance techniques they have experimented with.

They must discuss their ideas for the form and content of developing practical work in relation to the stimulus and their creative intentions for the performance.

Learners must also discuss how they have developed and refined their ideas and their practical work.

Whilst discussing this process, learners must analyse the application of their personal management, group-work and collaborative skills and demonstrate their engagement and contribution to the process of developing their group performance workshop.

In the strongest Milestone 2 and 3 log entries, learners justified the developing ideas for the form and content of their practical work in relation to the stimulus and the creative intentions of the group performance. They also continually analysed how they and their group were applying their performance skills to develop and refine ideas for their practical performance work. In these log entries learners evidenced an effective and accomplished ability to select and devise the practical content of their performance work. Their ideas for the developing work ranged from cohesive to sophisticated and were often fully justified in relation to the creative intentions of the piece.

These log entries tended to provide a coherent narrative of the exploratory process with the set task stimulus remaining at the heart of the developing work. The artistic intentions behind the choices being made was always clear. These learners used technical vocabulary to describe what appeared to be a creative and inspiring development process. In these log entries; there was also evidence of a deeper understanding of professional practice in relation to creating work for performance. Appropriate practitioner references underpinned the techniques chosen and were clearly understood by the learner and usefully applied in the creation of the work. The recorded evidence provided for these milestones often validated creative decisions and demonstrated confident and sophisticated performance skills.

In other cases there was less evidence of selectivity with learners only partially explaining the developing process and their creative ideas. In the less successful log entries, there was a reliance on very limited and less sophisticated techniques (e.g. thought tracking and hot seating). These learners often provided a simple and straightforward narrative of the plot of the emerging piece and the log entries

themselves tended to be narrative and descriptive in style.

In some cases, it was a pity, that there was more focus on the selection of production resources than the development and realisation of the devising process which is the focus of this examination.

Most learners generally demonstrated appropriate or consistent personal management skills in their logs and accompanying recorded evidence, although this was often less robustly evidenced in those logs that focused on describing the development of the plot.

In the strongest log entries learners' complete engagement with the devising process fully conveyed their accomplished contribution to the developing work. Their personal management and collaborative skills were highly evident and richly conveyed as they discussed the development of their group work.

These learners also tended to include more personally selected recorded evidence and provide an explanation for it in the log entries providing a clear justification for the award of higher marks in marking grids 2 and 3.

Some groups approached the devising process by working independently, with a learner responsible for each section, and then joining them together towards the end of the rehearsal process. These pieces tended to be disjointed and less successful in performance. This approach also undermined the collaborative process and meant that learners account of the process for their milestone log

Examiners did also note that less successful achievement was sometimes revealed in accompanying recordings of group discussions/workshops when individuals were making a less effective contribution to the work as evident in the recording.

In the most successful milestone entries the learners sustained and accomplished contribution was evidenced through their personal input to the development of ideas often involving extensive planning, focused practical activity and an analytical approach to refining material during the creation and devising process.

Milestone 4: Review and Reflection

A05: Review and reflect on the effectiveness of the working process and the workshop performance

In their final log entry, Milestone 4, the marking grid assesses learner's ability to review and reflect upon the effectiveness of the development process and the final group workshop performance.

Learners must analyse the development process, evaluating the impact of their own and their group's personal management and collaborative skills. They must also analyse the impact of their own and the group's creative and performance skills during the development process.

Learners must analyse the success of the final workshop performance evaluating the impact of their own and their group's personal management, collaboration, creative and performance skills during the workshop performance.

In addition, learners must provide their creative ideas for further development of the performance material.

Examiners noted that learners often did not evaluate both the development process and the final performance in relation to the group and themselves.

Some learners used audience feedback very well to inform their own evaluation, sometimes making passing reference to the audience's opinions but always providing their own viewpoints. Other responses that gained less marks, solely outlined the audience's feedback to their performance work and provided very few of their own judgments on the process and/or the final workshop performance. In this case their own judgments often tended to be limited.

In responses that gained less marks, ideas for improvement lacked detail and depth and learners were unable to suggest creative and cohesive ideas for further development beyond the addition of simple suggestions for lighting and/or the development of other production elements. This was reduced further in some responses to making the performance longer or turning it into a film or television programme.

Some learners used this milestone entry as a final 'log' of the last phases of rehearsal and performance. Unfortunately, it was often difficult to match this approach to the requirements of the assessment criteria, the requirements of which are outlined above at the beginning of this section, for this milestone entry.

Even in the responses gaining high marks, where learners made perceptive and justified judgments and provided sophisticated creative ideas for further development of the performance material, learners often did not evaluate the development process.

Only a few learners considered all the requirements of this milestone log. Those that did were often perceptive and insightful. Thorough and fully justified judgments were provided on the process and performance work with sophisticated ideas for further development of the material.

Optional Evidence

Many learners demonstrated the good practice of including extra evidence to support their milestone log entries.

In some cases this evidence amounted to blurred photographs of the learners mind-maps, which could often not be easily read and were rarely referred to in the learners milestone entries. In other cases the maximum number of images was used for each milestone entry. These images tended to be relevant to the stimulus however they often did not appear relevant to the learner's creative process or there was a lack of evidence of how the images had been used in the development process. This use of the optional evidence whilst not detracting from the milestone entries did not support them either.

In the most useful cases learners successfully utilised the opportunity to provide additional, often practical, evidence of some of the exploratory techniques they were experimenting with during the devising process. The most effective log entries learners tended to also comment on and discuss the images or recorded evidence in their milestones.

Occasionally recorded evidence was lengthy and beyond the 4 minutes stipulated for Milestone 2 and 3 this almost never supported the learners achievement and did occasionally evidence their lack of response and/or engagement with the developing work.

It is worth noting that centres rarely identified learners in the recordings linked to Milestone 2 and 3 and should remember that examiners will have watched this work before they see the final workshop performance. Therefore identification of learners in milestone recorded evidence would be useful in future.

Group Performance Workshop

A04: Apply performance skills to communicate creative intentions during performance workshop

In their group performance workshop, learners must apply their performance skills in order to communicate their creative ideas, dramatic intentions, meaning and performance style to an audience. They must also apply their performance skills and techniques in order to demonstrate their technical command of these skills. Whilst doing this, learners should interact and respond to other performers as they seamlessly contribute to the whole ensemble performance.

Examiners were impressed by the variety and range of the work they watched. Work both in all performance disciplines and in a combination of performance disciplines was seen. There were some very interesting and clever interpretations of Article 19. Rosa Parks, the Holocaust, war, particularly World War 1 and 2, were popular themes. There was evidence of some real innovation and creativity in many performances and no two pieces of work were the same.

Those learners who had fully explored the devising process had experimented with creativity, and by so doing had rejected material and closely refined their work. They tended to create work with a depth of detail and understanding. These performances had a cohesive style and a clear plot, they were also clearly responding to the initial stimulus.

It was apparent in a few performances that learners had not had engaged fully with the devising process, personal contribution appeared to be limited and/or inconsistent. The use of simplistic devices and techniques often reduced achievement. Overall, this was reflected in the lack of substantial content and in unrefined group performance work.

Some, often more superficial work was seen which focused on a current, well-known political leader or LGBT rights, perhaps reflecting prominent media topics. These subjects were occasionally successful, one example being where the subject matter was handled with a real sense of comic satire. However the depth of response and understanding of this type of subject matter was often superficial, resulting in a clichéd and generally uninspired response to the stimulus.

In contrast, some of the most successful work seen was devised in response to an existing 'plot line', be that a historical incident, historical or otherwise famous figure, a piece of poetry and/or a fictional story. These often provided learners with an opportunity to devise very creatively, with a clear performance style as they interpreted the existing material in a highly original manner. This approach tended to enable highly able performers to really achieve and also supported those who were perhaps less confident performers throughout the devising process.

No one performance style was more interesting or successful than another. The effectiveness of the final workshop performance depended upon how closely the performance style or range of styles were matched to the content of the performance.

and to the learners technical performance skills.

There were some outstanding performances, in which learners demonstrated sophisticated performance skills, which communicated highly original and creative performance intentions. These were always engaging and in some instances very moving. The most effective performance work was very creatively 'scripted', choreographed and/or 'scored'. Another feature is that it was usually meticulously researched and this research was integrated seamlessly into the final performance.

Less effective performance work tended to lack an appreciation of how performance elements work together to produce a whole experience. This work often had clumsy transitions from one moment to another and revealed a lack of rehearsal and/or engagement with the devising process.

Centres are reminded of the time limits for performances. The group performance should last between 10 and 20 minutes. If the performance was shorter than 10 minutes or longer than 20 minutes it was often self-penalising.

Usually if a group goes over the 20 minute upper limit then the piece began to drop in pace or repeat ideas weakening the overall effectiveness of the work. Shorter pieces were again often a result of the learners lack of engagement during the devising process and were often a result of a lack of material to create a piece of the appropriate length. These learners often referred in their milestone log to the necessity of creating additional material in order to 'plug the gap' and meet the minimum performance time.

Centres are reminded that it is not a requirement that each group member should have the same exposure and occasionally this practice lead to a predictable structure with a sequence of solo performances that rarely conveyed a highly successful ensemble performance.

The maximum group size is 7 and all performers must be being assessed in this unit. It is understandable that occasionally a learner in the performance does not complete the course and therefore has not been entered for the exam. However, centres are reminded that it is not permitted for additional performers, who are not being assessed, to appear in this group workshop performance or to be part of the devising process.

Several centres recorded the audience feedback session and centres are reminded that this is not a requirement of this unit. If these recordings are included they are not viewed or assessed by the examiner.

Administration

Most centres presented the work as required. However, there were issues with some work from a small number of centres.

Centres should fully adhere to the demands of both the task for the specific year of entry and the requirements as detailed in the instructions within the Set Task Brief and as outlined 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. A folder should be created for each respective group in a centre and then sub-folders created for each learner within the relevant group folder/s. Each learner's work must be presented in its own sub-folder, along with others in the cohort, on a new, undamaged, DVD or memory stick that will play on any commonly used laptop. Where DVDs were sent without any protection, it often caused delays, as replacements were usually needed because the DVD had arrived broken or damaged in the post.

Centres are reminded that learner work, including milestone log entries and any accompanying images, video and/or audio material plus the recordings of the group workshop performance are assessed as a whole, so must be submitted together as such, in a single folder for each learner.

Centres are also reminded that they must complete the essential documents relating to each learner and the centre itself. These are required by the examiner for marking and centre/learner identification. It is essential that this paperwork is printed out and provided as a hard copy, which the examiner can write on and not just sent digitally.

The milestone entries should be completed on the milestone templates available on the Pearson website. Once these have been completed they should be converted and saved as a pdf document. Some centres saved each milestone entry separately and others saved all entries as one document, either approach is acceptable as long as the final version is on the official template and saved as a pdf.

Recordings were generally of a good quality making it easy to see individual learners throughout the performance and assess the specific detail of their performance. In some cases the camera was too far away, sometimes behind the audience, making it difficult to see some of the specific detail of the work learners were doing. Learners could not then be credited for some of the potential detail and technical skill within their performance work.

In other cases stage lighting sometimes impacted on the clarity of the recording and centres are reminded that this is a workshop performance not a final polished performance of the learner's work. The performance workshop should be filmed using natural lighting or a general lighting wash/cover. If groups choose to use more detailed 'colourful' lighting then the centre should ensure that this does not have an impact on the clarity of the recording and all learners can be seen clearly throughout the performance.

Centres should also ensure that the lights do not bleach out performers' faces and that the whole stage is in camera shot throughout the performance.

Identification of learners was also sometimes difficult if the identifications were filmed at a separate time with the learners in 'normal' clothes and then the learners appeared in the group performance in costume looking very different or alternatively dressed identically without any distinguishing features. The Administrative Support Guide clearly states that learners must introduce themselves, in costume, at the beginning of the recorded performance for their group. Centres are reminded that in order to support assessment this guidance should be followed and learners should be identified at the beginning of the group performance itself. If an artistic decision has been made to present themselves in similar clothes and hairstyles then some kind of clear and visible distinguishing feature is appreciated by examiners. One group of girls for example, all dressed in black with their hair up in buns very helpfully used a red mark placed in different places to distinguish themselves - one band was around a learner's middle, another around the neck, another had a red headband and the fourth had the red band around their forearm. This was very helpful and much appreciated by the examiner. Some centres sent pictures of their learners in costume, which was also helpful for identification.

Overall, centres should remember that whilst the performance should be to an audience this is a workshop performance and not a polished final performance. It is most important that learners can be clearly identified and that all of their hard work can be clearly seen within a recording.

Summary

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

- Centres should prepare learners to devise original work and support them to engage fully with the creative and development process.
- Ensure learners do not complete their Milestone 1 log entry too early on in the process.
- Before writing their Milestone 1 log entries learners should have undertaken a significant amount of relevant and useful research, decided upon their initial creative ideas and begun to practically explore and develop these creative ideas in response to the set stimulus.
- In their Milestone 2 and 3 log entries learners should demonstrate their engagement with the development and devising process rather than recount the development of the narrative of the plot.
- Milestone 2 and 3 should be used to evidence the exploratory process used to generate, develop and refine practical ideas including making reference to specific devising and/or performance techniques that learners have experimented with.
- There should be evidence of the learner's personal input to the development of ideas. Learners should analyse the application of their personal management, group-work and collaborative skills and demonstrate their engagement and contribution to the process of developing their group performance workshop in their Milestone 2 and 3 entries.
- In their Milestone 4 log entry learners should ensure cover all the required areas for this milestone. They should evaluate the process, evaluate the final workshop performance and provide sophisticated and creative ideas for further development of the performance material.
- Additional optional evidence for the digital process log should be used to provide evidence of some of the exploratory techniques learners have experimented with during the devising process. Learners should also aim to refer to this evidence in their log entry as they comment upon and analyse their developing practical work.
- Ensure learners can be clearly identified in their group performance workshop.
- Ensure the detail of learners performance work can be clearly seen in the recording and that the performance work is not obscured by audience members, lighting issues, the staging configuration and or the angle of the camera.
- The centre must ensure the task being responded to is for the correct series and learners are not responding to one of the Sample Assessment Materials or, for future series, are not responding to a previous year's paper.

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