

Unit 60: Deputy Stage Management (DSM)

Unit code:	H/502/5606
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to develop learners' knowledge of the role and function of a Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) in the theatre and events industry, and be given opportunities to fulfil the role of DSM for a performance/event.

● Unit introduction

Deputy stage managers (DSMs) are the workhorses of productions. They have a 'control' position; usually running the performance and ensuring all production crew are in position, standing by and ready to go on cue. Consequently, they need to have a clear idea of the production issues from an early stage. This will mean attending rehearsals, making notes on design and technical demands and ensuring the development of an effective 'prompt' copy of the play or performance piece.

Very often they are the member of the stage management team who has to have contact with all elements of the production; for this reason they need to have good communication and interpersonal skills and be able to engender trust. They will be in an important pivotal position during what is a tense time for all involved.

For many, the DSM position is the most exciting and 'hands-on' role in the production team. Documentation is live and working, knowledge is applied actively and health and safety is an immediate issue. This unit should provide the essential groundwork and underpinning knowledge for working in the performing arts sector.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know the skills necessary to function as a DSM
- 2 Be able to apply the skills of a DSM during the rehearsal period
- 3 Be able to apply the skills of a DSM during a performance
- 4 Be able to observe safe working practices as a DSM.

Unit content

1 Know the skills necessary to function as a DSM

Rehearsals: eg marking out, setting up, obtaining rehearsal props and furniture; producing rehearsal schedule(s), call sheets, prompt copy, prompting, recording moves, script changes, artiste timesheets, reading in, first aid, health and safety, preparing the rehearsing space, supporting director, actors and/or different production departments

Performance, timing and runs: get-in, get-outs; use of stage management desk; artiste calls, front-of-house calls; producing show reports; acting as prompt; liaising with front-of-house (FOH) manager; checking crew and performers all in attendance

2 Be able to apply the skills of a DSM during the rehearsal period

Artistic: eg liaison with designers, director, performers; communicating messages, keeping notes, recording script problems, scheduling/re-scheduling rehearsals as required

Production: eg liaison with wardrobe, stage management team, lighting and sound departments, FOH management, communicating changes/requirements from rehearsals, negotiating meeting times, costume fittings, use of props

3 Be able to apply the skills of a DSM during a performance

Administrative: eg marking up accurate prompt copy, running rehearsals, recording and communicating information; recording all technical and stage management cues, carrying out safety checks

Communication: eg use of cue-lights, giving standbys and 'go', talk back, use of prompt desk, liaising with production and technical crews, communicating with FOH for all clear, responding to actors, requirements and requests, liaison with director/design team and production team, production of show report, communication/liaison with musical director (if appropriate), giving FOH calls, keeping to time

4 Be able to observe safe working practices as a DSM

Safe procedures: handling and lifting heavy/awkward items; communicating and coordinating with others; working at heights; use of toxic materials and substances; recognising potential hazards; electrical isolation; securing cables, flooring; keeping fire exits and gangways clear

Legislation and regulation: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations (COSHH); Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER); Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER); Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

Tools, materials and equipment: eg access equipment, hand and power tools, electrical equipment, correct handling and storage of props (especially food and drinks, cigarettes, swords, guns); location and use of fire extinguishers on stage; safety curtain

Working with others: ensuring a safe working environment, particularly for ASMs, stage crew and cast

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 describe the skills needed to function as a DSM during the production process and in performance [IE, SM]	M1 explain the skills needed to function as a DSM during the production process and in performance	D1 analyse the skills needed to function as a DSM during the production process and in performance
P2 undertake most of a DSM's responsibilities during rehearsals with support and guidance [IE, CT, RL, TW, SM]	M2 undertake most of a DSM's responsibilities during the rehearsal period with minimum support and guidance	D2 independently undertake most of a DSM's responsibilities during the rehearsal period
P3 undertake most of a DSM's responsibilities during a performance with support and guidance [IE, CT, RL, TW, SM]	M3 undertake most of a DSM's responsibilities during a performance with minimum support and guidance	D3 independently undertake most of a DSM's responsibilities during a performance
P4 use safe working practice providing some advice for cast and other crew members with support and guidance. [IE, TW, SM]	M4 use safe working practice providing some advice for cast and other crew members with minimum support and guidance.	D4 autonomously use safe working practice providing some advice for cast and other crew members

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

This unit is likely to be delivered to a small group of learners within a tutorial-based system since the role of DSM is usually restricted to one per production. It is feasible, however, to use two DSMs in a shared context perhaps in a larger production such as a musical theatre performance. The smooth running of the performance will always take priority in the final decision on splitting a DSM role.

Each learner will need to be allocated to a suitable production and be made fully aware of the demands of the role. As the role of a DSM requires authority over peers, it is advised that learners are supported in situations of hierarchy such as production meetings and rehearsals.

Before undertaking the role in a full-scale production, learners will need to know how to mark up a rehearsal space, how to keep notes, how to communicate with different departments and, most importantly, how to keep a prompt copy (The Book). Initial knowledge on the basics should be delivered in the earlier sessions with some workshop type practice on using a prompt copy, a communications system (CANS) and cueing actors.

A small production should be taken advantage of at first with learners working with a small number of people on a small scale production containing approximately 20 lighting cues, five stage/actor cues using cue lights if possible, and 10 sound cues (start and stop are each a cue).

With experience and confidence learners could progress onto larger productions where fly cues, pyro cues, live and pre recorded sound cues and follow spot cues are available to them.

Since the DSM has more of a 'hands-on' role in the stage management team, the importance of producing and keeping clear working documentation should be emphasised. Practical exercises on interpersonal skills may also be a helpful preparation for this unit as learners will be required to negotiate with others.

Continued tutorials will guide learners towards the final elements of production and the change over from rehearsal to performance. This is a stressful time and will need careful monitoring to ensure continuity is maintained.

Breaking down the assessments into relevant chunks will ease learners' work load.

Safe working practices are a significant feature of this unit and links to manual handling or general health and safety awareness courses should be made.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to DSM unit and rationale.
Assignment 1: Roles and skills of a DSM – P1, M1, D1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Book (prompt copy) – making The Book from a photocopy of the script• The Book in rehearsal: blocking; setting where the actors will stand for certain lines as agreed with the director, learning lines and the cueing or ‘prompting’ of performers• layout of The Book, script sheet and cue sheets, using a ring binder or other to hold the script and cue sheets, storage of the book when not in use (never taking it home!)• writing the information: cues; standby and go cues – colour code (red and green), drawing lines from ‘cue’ to the part of the script, in pencil!• working with performers: cueing – to the stage, using cue lights for an action such as coming through a doorway, etc; forgotten lines and how to cue them (prompting) effectively.
Other cues: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• other cues: fly – cueing the fly-man/crew for hemp or counterweight flying• FX – such as wind/thunder/breaking glass/ghost chains, etc (manual not pre-recorded sound Fx)• Sound (Sd) cueing the (SdQ) CD/tape or any playback system• Lighting (Lx) Lighting cues (LxQ) and how to call them• Pyrotechnic – Pyro Q, understating resetting of pyro, line of sight safety operations, pre fire checks and associated safety procedures.
Scheduling: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• call times: when cast, crew, technicians, others need to be at, and ready for, work, finish times, break times. Some idea of the Working Time Directive• rehearsal space – room bookings, payments, appropriateness, furniture or set placement, cleanliness, environment (temperature) access to toilets and drinking water, first aid provision• meetings: production meetings and taking the minutes, feeding information in/out of the meeting, communication skills – listening, smiling, speaking, body language, professionalism (avoiding corridor meetings, rumours, hearsay); negotiating schedules and meetings to fit best all round.
In rehearsal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• working with the actors, director, production manager, set designer, lighting designer, costume designer and other members of the production team• cueing lines, knowing when an actor has forgotten or is experimenting with script/pace/timing, etc• housekeeping, setting up, maintaining, closing down a set/rehearsal space.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Communicating requirements to the technical team:

- production communication paperwork (task to create own version) including each department sections; posting information, messages, call sheets, minutes of meetings onto the notice board, use of email and telephone, housekeeping rules, health and safety information
- prop requirements – taken from the script and/or the director-designer (task – read a script and compile a prop list)
- set requirements
- lighting requirements, music and sound effects
- special effects, flying cues, costume.

In performance:

- carrying out pre-show checks, confirming crew are in, preset stage for house open, giving 'House Open' signal
- calling actors to the stage
- calling crew and operators to standby.

Running the book during performance:

- giving cues standby and go
- maintaining discipline on 'CANS'
- responding to actors needs:
 - ◇ breaks, lines, schedules, costume and prop issues, travel, personal.

Assignment 2: DSM in Rehearsal – P2, M2, D2, P4, M4, D4

Assignment 3: DSM in Performance – P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4

Assessment feedback and tutorial.

Assessment

This unit requires learners to undertake the role of deputy stage manager for a performance. For the purposes of this unit, the DSM is defined as someone who manages and records the process as it happens in the rehearsal room and runs a show from the prompt copy once it transfers to the performance space. The DSM is the vital link between the artistic and production teams and this will need to be reflected in the way individual learners work.

There should be a minimum performance run of two performances if the production is rehearsed conventionally. If the production is a 'one night' type event, then there must be at least one full technical or dress rehearsal that the DSM can run in addition to the live show. These brief single-opportunity productions offer limited scope to cover a full range of criteria, although they do offer useful experience of controlling the performance.

Whilst a working log of the process is useful and will provide assessment evidence if the information relates to the relevant criteria, it is stressed that 'The Book' is the one major piece of evidence that will support both rehearsal and performance related assessment decisions.

Criterion 1 requires learners to demonstrate a knowledge of the role and function along with the skills required of a DSM.

For P1, learners will produce some basic research providing a list of the roles and functions, as described in the unit content, along with at least two distinct skills required. Examples might be 'communication skills' or the 'ability to be organised'. The list, though correct, would not go into much detail. Learners will need to describe differences between rehearsal process and performance but again this may be a list. Examples might be 'cueing technicians and operators in performance' and 'working only with actors and the director in rehearsal'.

For M1, learners will provide a more detailed response to the roles and functions with a more descriptive account as to what skills are required with possible links to a job advertisement. Examples might be 'listening skills are a strong requirement as the DSM needs to know when to cue actors who forget their lines' or 'when in a production meeting, the DSM will take notes and pass the information on to the rest of the team'. Clear differences between the role in rehearsal and performance would be described.

For D1, learners will produce a detailed explanation of the roles, functions and skills required. An example, to follow on from merit, might be 'the DSM takes the notes in a production meeting and turns the information into the minutes of the meeting, publishing them on the production notice boards as a reminder to those who were there and as new information to those who were not'. Strong listening skills are required as the DSM has to listen to the actors as well as the crew and technicians when running 'the book' in a performance. This is so that they can maintain control over the performance by cueing at the correct time, to the right person and still be able to prompt actors if they forget their lines'.

Criterion 2 requires learners to carry out the actual role and function of a DSM along with a number of the skills required of a DSM in rehearsal. This means working closely with the director and the performers, developing a positive relationship and compiling the information into the prompt copy (The Book). In addition, communication of the requirements of others or items of prop set, etc need to be recorded.

For P2, learners will carry out the role with quite a lot of support and guidance from the tutor in setting up the rehearsal space, having the prompt copy ready to work on and a note pad and pencil at hand so that they can start work. Once reminded learners will get on with the job, until the next reminder or guidance given.

For M2, learners will work more on their own, occasionally coming for help and assistance or simply back up on a decision made. They may call a stop to a rehearsal if there is reason to do so such as the actors being in the wrong place or wrong costume, etc. The prompt copy would be kept tidy and readable and only minor errors in communication would be evident.

For D2, learners are clearly working autonomously. They display a confident command of the rehearsal room and are not frightened to stop rehearsals giving a clear explanation as to why. They would demonstrate a clear understanding of the role and functions as described in the unit content and would also display a good level of skill in carrying out the role in rehearsal. The prompt copy would be in excellent condition and the information communicated to others would be up to date, maintained daily and updated regularly.

Criterion 3 requires learners to carry out the role and function and skills of a DSM in performance. The relationship with the performers that was developed in rehearsal would be transferred to the performance area whilst developing a new relationship with the technical team. The prompt copy would be developed in the technical rehearsals towards a performance ready 'book'. Manners, discipline and level headedness will be at the forefront as this is the time for emotions (of all concerned) to ride high.

For P3, learners will carry out the role again with quite a lot of support and guidance from the tutor especially during the technical rehearsals as this is perhaps the most complex of processes. During the initial technical, dress and performance runs, learners will require a tutor next to them most, if not all, of the time (the tutor may need to be on the communications system (CANS) as well to prevent any major mistakes impacting on the performance).

For M3, learners will require access to assistance only if things start to go wrong for them. They will generally work more on their own being better at some areas than others. Mistakes will go unnoticed by them or unchecked but they should be able to recover with some assistance. The prompt copy would be amended when asked to do so or occasionally by their own action.

For D3, learners are running the technical and dress rehearsal and the performance with confidence. They will show a strong grasp of the situation, managing others as they go. Learners will demonstrate a confident command of the stage and run the prompt copy with a professional feel. The prompt copy would always be up to date.

Criterion 4 requires learners to use safe working practices relevant to their role and have an understanding of others around them. They may create risk assessments regarding the work on in rehearsals and will advise performers of what to look out for.

For P4, learners will observe safe working practices with ongoing support and guidance. They may spot a problem but not be confident to mention it.

For M4, learners will observe safe working practice advising others occasionally but with little support and guidance. Some support may be required before carrying out an action that may impact on the running of the technical or dress rehearsal. Risk assessments will be carried out and at hand.

For D4, learners will be managing the safe working practices of themselves and others. They will keep an eye out for issues and take preventative action such as ensuring cables are taped down or that performers know about hazards created by equipment such as lighting.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Roles and Skills of a DSM	Research tasks into roles and responsibilities of DSM and potential job opportunities.	Group or solo presentation. Essay. Question and answer.
P2, M2, D2 P4, M4, D4	DSM in Rehearsal	Carry out DSM role in rehearsals.	Tutor observation. Logbook. Completion of prompt copy. Minutes of meetings other production paperwork.
P3, M3, D3 P4, M4, D4	DSM in Performance	Carry out DSM role in performance	Tutor observation. Logbook. Use of prompt copy. Audio visual recording of event. Production paperwork.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Technical Support for Stage Performance	Crewing for Stage Performance	Assistant Stage Manager
		Stage Manager

This unit also has links with the following National Occupational Standards:

Technical Theatre

- G11b – Developing and maintaining work relationships
- TP21b – Support the running and crewing an ongoing production
- HS3a – Leading a team selecting and using safe systems for working at height
- TP5.1 – Sourcing costumes, materials and equipment
- TP5.3 – Sourcing lighting and special effects equipment and consumables
- TP5.4 – Sourcing props, materials and equipment
- TP5.5 – Sourcing materials and equipment for sets
- TP10b – Support the rehearsal process
- TP14.1b – Coordinate the getting in, fitting up and getting out.

Essential resources

A DSM will need access to production and administrative facilities. The scale of the resources and facilities will be dependent upon the scale of the proposed productions. Audio visual recording equipment will be required for assessment evidence gathering.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Links with a local venue for visits and work placement would be beneficial to learners. Inviting visiting professionals to deliver knowledge and skills is encouraged.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Bond D – *Stage Management: A Gentle Art* (Theatre Arts Books, 1998) ISBN 9780878300679

Fredman R and Reade I – *Essential Guide to Making Theatre* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1996)
ISBN 9780340655146

Pallin G – *Stage Management: The Essential Handbook* (Nick Hern Books, 1999) ISBN 9781854597342

Palmer S – *Essential Guide to Stage Management, Lighting and Sound* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2000)
ISBN 9780340721131

Reid F – *The Staging Handbook* (A&C Black, 2001) ISBN 9780713658293

Journals

Sightline

The Stage newspaper

Websites

www.abtt.co.uk

Association of British Theatre Technicians

www.ccskills.org.uk

Creative and Cultural Skills

www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk

Stage Management Association

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	carrying out research into roles and responsibilities of a DSM
Creative thinkers	solving problems with props/set/logistics during rehearsal
Reflective learners	using information from previous units undertaken
Team workers	working with the production team
Self-managers	preparing for and running the show from the prompt copy
Effective participators	carrying out the role of DSM.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	carrying out additional research
Creative thinkers	offering ideas to benefit the production/class
Reflective learners	repeating exercises in a workshop environment
Team workers	working in a group to achieve a result
Self-managers	sorting out own paperwork
Effective participators	actively taking part in discussions/meeting.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	managing and updating production paperwork
ICT – Find and select information	
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	researching the internet for appropriate materials and props
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text and tables • images • numbers • records 	preparing production paperwork such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rehearsal and show reports • minutes of production meetings • communication sheets from artistic to technical departments • call sheets • contact details of personnel
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	presenting results of research
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	sending messages via email storing personnel contact details
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	communicating in production meetings prompting actors' lines presenting research information
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	reading scripts using prompt copy in rehearsal and performance contributing to cutting of scene/lines.