

Unit 61: Stage Management (SM)

Unit code:	T/502/5609
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit aims to develop learners' knowledge of the role and skills of a stage manager in the theatre and events industry, and provide opportunities to implement these skills in a production context.

● Unit introduction

The stage manager (SM) plays a major role in the production and performance process. In large theatres and venues they could also be in an executive position making decisions on staging logistics and overseeing the technical procedures for resident and visiting companies in a wide range of art forms. At the other end of the scale they could be attached to a small touring company doing all the technical jobs as well as being company manager.

The role will vary depending on the size and type of the organisation and on the scale of the show being realised, but in all cases the SM will have a supervisory position, leading the team of production operatives and technicians. This may include the deputy stage manager (DSM), assistant stage manager (ASM), stage crew and lighting and sound technicians.

The stage manager also ensures clear communication between all the teams working on the show. This unit will provide the skills and techniques needed for pre-rehearsal planning, the rehearsal and fit-up processes and post-production or 'get-out'.

The unit is intended for those who have a real interest in pursuing a career in theatre production as well as providing a route into higher education.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know the responsibilities of a stage manager during the production process
- 2 Be able to create and use appropriate production and performance documentation
- 3 Be able to undertake the responsibilities of a stage manager during performance
- 4 Be able to take responsibility for the implementation and observation of safe working practices.

Unit content

1 Know the responsibilities of a stage manager during the production process

Primary responsibilities of a stage managers: supervising the setting-up and running of rehearsals; using designers' plans for mark-out of set; listing and arranging the supply and return of all action props; props budgeting; supervision of props and scenery setting/striking

Physical resources: arranging the supply of stage equipment, materials and tools

Production planning: taking into account creative factors; production concepts; requirements; objectives; style; available resources; human; physical; budget constraints; sequencing of processes; availability of people; health and safety; costs

Processes: read-through; production meetings; rehearsals; technical preparation; rigging; plotting; get-in; fit-up; technical rehearsals; dress rehearsal(s); photo-calls; first performance

2 Be able to create and use appropriate production and performance documentation

Documentation relating directly to a production: script breakdown; props requirements lists; prop-setting lists; backstage cue sheets; production and rehearsal schedules and plans; production meeting records; rehearsal and show reports

Administrative documentation: props and petty cash budget; records and accounts; stage management and crew rosters and timesheets; contact lists; stock lists

3 Be able to undertake the responsibilities of a stage manager during performance

Human resources: motivating, organising and supervising the work of the stage management team; coordinating the work of the stage crew during performances; maintaining backstage discipline; liaising and coordinating with other departments; health and safety; ensuring smooth running of performances

Physical resources: organising and maintaining all backstage and storage areas maintenance of stage equipment, materials and tools

Productions: at least two productions should be made available or two parts of a larger production, small scale/TIE type, medium scale dance/theatre, larger scale musical

4 Be able to take responsibility for the implementation and observation of safe working practices

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

Legislation and regulation: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH); Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulation (LOLER); Provision and use of Work Equipment Regulation (PUWER); PAT (Portable Appliance Testing); Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and others

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

Overall responsibility for safe working: clear communication of protocols to crew and technicians both in-house and visiting; allocation of adequate resources; risk analysis documentation; method statements

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 list the production responsibilities of a stage manager with reference to at least one performing arts organisation [IE, CT, SM]	M1 describe the production responsibilities of a stage manager, making references and some comparisons in more than one performing arts organisation	D1 analyse the production responsibilities of a stage manager, giving detailed comparisons from different types of performing arts organisations
P2 implement appropriate production and performance documentation which is fit for purpose [IE, CT, SM]	M2 implement production and performance documentation which is generally effective	D2 implement effective production and performance documentation which enables flexibility, accountability and efficiency
P3 undertake most of a stage manager's responsibilities during performance with some support and guidance [CT, TW, SM, EP]	M3 undertake most of a stage manager's responsibilities during performance with minimum support and guidance	D3 undertake a stage manager's responsibilities with independence pre-empting possible problems and providing creative solutions
P4 put in place safe working practice for self, crew and production teams [RL, TW, SM]	M4 develop and put in place safety protocols, creating effective and supportive environments for self, crew and production teams.	D4 develop and put in place rigorous safety protocols, encouraging and supporting highly effective working environments for self, crew and production teams.

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 CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

This unit is likely to be delivered to a small group of learners as, by definition of the role, only one stage manager would normally be involved in a single production. However, the role could be shared between two stage managers, each running a different half of a production such as Act 1 and Act 2.

At least two production opportunities per learner will need to be planned. A larger musical theatre piece would count as two for the purpose of sufficient evidence.

As learners would be working more autonomously, a tutorial approach is recommended to monitor progress throughout the production process. It would be useful for learners to meet with a working stage manager to gain a professional insight into the role.

Learners taking the role of a SM will need some guidance in working with their peers as they will often be in a position of responsibility and management of other learners.

There will be initial subject information-based sessions and research carried out at the start of the period of learning where the basics of the role are learned. This could include marking out a space, running a rehearsal, organising a space, booking rooms, any financial policies which are imposed and the preferred method of communication between staff, learners and peers such as a production notice board.

At first, learners should be matched up with a smaller production, possibly a two- or three-character play with minimal set and props where the responsibilities though important, are not as complex as a larger show such as a musical theatre or dance production.

The unit is suitable for independent study but the hierarchical nature of the stage management team in professional theatre and the underlying knowledge which is required to be confident in the role of SM, suggests that the tasks, roles and responsibilities, of the ASM and DSM need to be fully understood to access the higher grade ranges in this unit.

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 SM unit and rationale
Assignment 1: Responsibilities of a Stage Manager – P1, M1, D1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• supervising staff and activities – ASM, Crew, DSM – marking up, running rehearsals, prop and set lists, meeting and communications• purchasing, hiring, organising transport, resource management• schedules, call times, taking into account human and technical resources• managing process (in conjunction with the production manager), read-through, production meetings, technical preparation, rigging, plotting, get-in and fit-up, technical and dress rehearsals.
Assignment 2: Production and Performance Paperwork – P2, M2, D2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• script breakdown (and distribution)• props lists, prop setting lists (where they need to be backstage)• backstage cue sheets• production and rehearsal schedules (and subsequent amendments)• set and stage plans• production meeting minutes• rehearsal and show reports.
Assignment 3: Stage Manager During Pre-production and Production – P3, M3, D3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• coordinating work and staff and liaising with heads of department• organising and maintaining backstage storage and cleanliness• ensuring the smooth running of performances.
Assignment: Implementation and Observation of Safe Working Practice – P4, M4, D4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• safe procedures: manual handling, working at heights, electricity, toxic materials• COSHH, LOLER, PUWER, DDA, PAT• risk assessments and communications to crew technicians other staff and visitors• allocation of resources: fire extinguishers, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)• use of safety curtain, making stage safe for evacuation.
Assessment feedback and tutorials.

Assessment

This unit encourages learners to understand the role of the stage manager in a variety of performing arts organisations as well as requiring them to undertake the role of stage manager for an event. The role of stage manager requires a degree of autonomy on the part of learners; tutors will need to give advice regarding the scale of production involved and the number of occasions learners might need to fulfil the role in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

If learners have achieved the higher grades in the roles of ASM and DSM, this would indicate that they should be able to cope with a larger-scale production and a large stage management team.

P1 requires learners to demonstrate knowledge of the role and function along with the skills required of a stage manager with reference to performing arts organisations.

To achieve M1, learners would provide more information on the skills and knowledge required, perhaps looking at the educational requirements, history of the person, (for example started as an ASM and worked upwards); communication skills required (listening, speaking, computer skills, budgeting and management of personnel) and the stage management roles in at least two performing arts organisations that are significantly different. For example might be a large touring venue as opposed to a touring theatre company explaining how they would need to work together but from differing perspectives with different responsibilities.

To achieve D1, learners will provide a detailed description of the responsibilities explaining why they are important and how they fit in with the role in relation to other roles such as the director, designer, front of house manager, production manager, technicians and crew. At least three different types of organisations would be referenced in detail. This would range from a large touring or producing venue, a small- to medium-scale touring company and a small-scale/TiE type company where there are significant differences in the role. Reference to financial implications, logistical and practical restrictions that would affect each role would be discussed.

Information direct from organisations would give strong supporting evidence for the research.

Criterion 2 requires the learners to create and use production documentation.

To achieve a pass, learners will provide paperwork or documentation which is correct in format and structure for the purpose it is meant for. This would take the form of basic lists for props and set pieces, a contacts list of all members of the production with at least a contact telephone number, and a calls list informing members when they will be required for work. Handwritten sheets would not be sufficient as the documentation, needs to be mass produced, amendable and clear to read. Documents produced would contain errors that need pointing out before being published. There may not be an understanding that a lot of people would be viewing the document and relying on it for information they require. Guidance and some assistance will have been given along with further advice on how to implement the paperwork.

To achieve a merit learners will produce additional documentation covering schedules (for example in Word or Excel), minutes of production meetings, a props and set list with details on where and when they came from and the cost of hire, purchase or donation made and some instructions about their care if relevant. Downloaded documentation would be sufficient if it was amended to relate to the production being worked on (production name, etc). The documentation would be distributed to most of the members as well as being displayed on the production notice board. Out-of-date documentation would be filed.

There would be few errors with the need for corrections in some information that had not been thought through fully which may need pointing out.

To achieve a distinction learners would a high standard of documentation with a professional look and feel. The information provided would be correct, up to date and ongoing. Information on where to go for clarification or update, etc would be shown along with a date of issue and/or a version number. Any errors would be corrected efficiently and without prompt with apologies for any inconvenience, etc. The language would be efficient and sufficient to communicate the purpose.

All out-of-date documentation would be available for review. Communications paperwork would be emailed as well as printed and displayed. A sense of professionalism should be evident. At least two production opportunities should be made available to cover the requirements of the criterion.

Criterion 3 relates to carrying out the role of stage manager in production.

To achieve a pass learners will successfully stage manage (see unit content) a small production of no less than two performers for at least 20-30 minutes of performance. This would include managing the get in and fit up, the technical and dress rehearsal and the performance run followed by the break down and get out of the show. There must be at least two scene changes of at least two items each carried out. Cueing and prompting of performers may be given dependent upon the production needs. Some errors will occur such as dropping set or props, making noise backstage that can be heard out front such as talking too loud; hesitation that momentarily holds up the show but does not stop it.

To achieve a merit learners will successfully stage manage a production of four or more performers with four or more scene changes of four or more props or items of set. Fluid management of the technical and dress rehearsal with confidence showing at times and an ability to remain calm despite one or two errors would be evidenced. Minimal disruption would be heard backstage and a control of others would be maintained.

To achieve a distinction, learners would successfully manage a large production, such as a musical theatre piece or perhaps two consecutive smaller productions running in rep or back to back. A full control of all aspects of the production process would be observed with an authoritative air being displayed by learners.

Smooth scene changes with minimal mistakes and no negative effect on the running of the production would be carried out. Noise back stage is limited if not non-existent. A mature and disciplined approach to working is maintained.

Criterion 4 relates to safe working practice throughout the production process.

To achieve a pass learners will provide a basic though relevant risk assessment covering the most obvious hazards that they or their team might encounter, such as manual handling, trips and slips, items dropped from a height, falls from a height and electrical shock. Some form of communication of the risk assessment to the relevant members must be made. This could be on a notice board where it is in its own section. If emailed as well, copies should be sent to the assessor as evidence. A general idea is not sufficient to pass as there must be at least a reasonable even if basic understanding of the issues at hand.

To achieve a merit the risk assessments would be backed up with training or advice on how to minimise the risks, for example by wearing the appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment), warming up before heavy work loads, assessing the job before diving in, etc. An atmosphere of support with some monitoring would be seen. Signage covering the restrictions would be in place and referred to. Checks would be made to see if all was well and the personnel were adhering to the rules.

To achieve a distinction learners would constantly be monitoring any work which could be hazardous such as rigging and focusing lights from a tower or Tallescope. Learners would stand back and observe and instruct rather than doing it themselves thereby maintaining a control of the situation or process. Learners would always be present even if not seen, during technical and dress rehearsals. Constant referral would be made to procedures put in place to minimise risks and systems such as 'lock down' where all access is limited to relevant staff only. An attitude of making time to sort the issue out, for example 'can you get a hard hat please, we will wait for you', rather than allowing pressure to make decisions which could lead to breaking the regulations.

In addition to the risk assessments, method statements would be produced for an activity or process. This could be the get-in and fit-up of a set or the setting up of props or the loading of a van for example.

Learners undertaking this unit are responsible for gathering their own evidence – a portfolio containing all the production documentation and communication, witness statements from the artistic and performance team, and observation statements from the assessor gathered during the production process and performance run. All health and safety documentation should be separately filed. This could include a mapping sheet identifying where learners feel that they have achieved criteria and how.

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	Responsibilities of a Stage Manager	Research tasks/visits to establish knowledge of the role.	Presentation, group/solo discussion, question and answer.
P2, M2, D2	Production and Performance Paperwork	Learners to create and use production documentation.	Tutor observation, production documentation, portfolio, witness statement.
P3, M3, D3	Stage Manager during Pre-production and Production	Carry out the role of stage manager before and during a performance.	Tutor observation, production documentation, portfolio, witness statement.
P4, M4, D4	Implementation and Observation of Safe Working Practice	Prepare, implement and observe safe working practice throughout the production process.	Tutor observation, production documentation, portfolio, witness statement.

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
	Crewing for Stage Performance	Assistant Stage Manager
	Performing Arts Production Process	Deputy Stage Manager

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

Technical Theatre

- CPD4b – Overseeing technical production work for performance
- G6a – Providing leadership
- TP21c – Oversee backstage running and crewing of 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
- TP10c – Coordinate the rehearsal process
- TP9.1a – Rehearsing the technical aspects of a performance
- TP14.1c – Oversee the getting in, fitting up and getting out
- TP15b – Oversee the arranging, managing and receiving of tours.

Essential resources

A stage manager will need access to production and administrative facilities. The scale of the resources and facilities will be dependent on the scale of the proposed productions.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Access to a theatre or venue with links set up to facilitate work placement along with visiting professionals would be beneficial to learners.

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

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 role of stage manager
Creative thinkers	solving logistical problems with set/personnel/schedules
Reflective learners	using information from previous units undertaken
Team workers	working in pre-production and on the live event
Self-managers	preparing documentation and schedules during pre-production
Effective participators	participating in the running of the performance.

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
Reflective learners	repeating exercises in a workshop environment
Team workers	working in a group work to achieve a result
Self-managers	sorting out own portfolio
Effective participators	actively contributing to meetings.

● 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 van hire/equipment hire/materials
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 paperwork contact sheets communication sheets call sheets
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	presenting results of research undertaken
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 of 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/staff briefings
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	reading scripts contributing to set and props requirements.