

Principal Moderator's Report

Summer 2017

GCSE Drama (5DR02)
Unit 2: Exploring Play Texts

5DR02 Exploring Play Texts

Introduction

This is the final year of examination of the three unit GCSE specification 2DR01 and as such, the Controlled Assessment Unit 5DR02 is well-established, and has been well-supported by a myriad of online resources. Extensive Reports from the Principal Moderator are available online for the previous three years; this report is therefore a summative one, designed to support centres by highlighting key issues for the 2017 series only.

Content of 5DR02

The 5DR02 unit is made up of two components, each with a separate assessment objective. The focus of the unit is the exploration of a centre-chosen text over 6 hours of practical drama, taught and assessed by the teacher for Paper 01 Exploration. This exploration is then evaluated in a written piece of Documentary Evidence. Students also complete a written Response to Live Performance and these two tasks comprise Paper 02 Evaluation.

Key requirements and elements of content:

- Paper 01 and paper 02 have been assessed in Controlled Conditions (level of control - medium), with the drama teacher supervising, assessing and facilitating the work
- The theme/ topic/ issue has been selected by the centre to meet the needs of each group of students
- The text is selected by the centre to meet the needs of each group of students
- Selected extracts must be chosen through which the text will be explored
- 6 hours of Practical Exploration has been made available to all students
- Skills used throughout the unit have included the use of at least four strategies, two uses of the drama medium and the use of Drama elements for Paper 01, and the evaluation of students' own work and the work of others for Paper 02.

There has been essential guidance for all centres about all GCSE units in the Administrative Support Guide (ASG) document, which has been updated for each series, has been made available to centres online each Autumn and was re-formatted for ease of reference in 2017. The Assessment forms for all three units have also been made available as both PDF and editable Word documents.

Records of Work

A detailed Record of the Work undertaken by each group of students when exploring the chosen theme, topic or issue, has been a requirement of 5DR01; detailed guidance about this was once again provided in the 2017 ASG document in addition to the **optional** Record of Work pro-forma D1e. Popular texts for Unit 2 Exploration included, but were not limited to:

- Mark Wheeler texts (such as *Too Much Punch for Judy* and *Hard to Swallow*)
- *DNA*
- *Blood Brothers*
- *Blue Remembered Hills*
- *The Crucible*

- *Find Me*
- *An Inspector Calls*
- *The Woman in Black*
- *The Government Inspector*
- *1984*
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*

Generally, centres have continued to approach this unit pragmatically by choosing texts and productions of which they have had previous experience and which meet the needs of their students and the practicalities of offering young people a chance to see live performance work, and in 2017, a significant number of centres chose the same text for their students' Practical Exploration and for the Response to Live Production. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* was extremely popular for many centres, perhaps partly for this reasons, as were play-texts which provided the opportunity for students to experiment with form and style, for example the Frantic Assembly production 'Things I Know to be True'. Shakespeare plays. A number of popular musicals and amateur/ peer productions were also noted as choices for this task

In 5DR02, the choice of which extracts to use for exploration has been open to centres and a number adopted a thematic or character based approach to selecting extracts, looking for example at the relationship between Eddie and Mickey in *Blood Brothers* or at 'Christopher's Journey' within *The Curious Incident...*; many centres simply selected 'key' extracts for exploration, based on those scenes which would most engage their students.

Once again in 2017 the optional form D1e was made available to centres, aiding in the presentation of Records of Work, supporting the submission of records of practical work actually completed, rather than a scheme of planned possible lessons. For the majority of centres, this pro-forma helped centres to produce a detailed and helpful working document which aided the moderation process. Equally, there were many clearly annotated schemes of work which recorded with clarity the exploration completed by students across the six hours. The best practice seen included timings and clear records of the actual strategies, medium and elements of Drama used in each session by each teaching group. A copy of the extract material, the Documentary Evidence notes tasks and/ or guidance sheets were helpfully presented by many centres and centres presented their records of work both in the future tense ("students will complete...") the present tense ("students complete...") and the past ("students completed...") Any/ all of these options have been acceptable provided that the activities listed are those actually completed by each group of students.

The most successful ROWs offered students the opportunity to experiment with form and were based on texts, extracts and characters which caught the imagination and interest of the students. Successful units clearly addressed the need for a range of strategies/medium in each session of the 6 hours, while less effective ROWs often tended to focus on breadth rather than depth, for example through the use of one strategy per session, without for example, offering students the opportunity to develop their exploration of the chosen scene by using an additional strategy.

Paper 01 Practical Exploration

Paper 01 marks have been based on the entire six-hour exploration and the marks awarded are required to reflect the application and imagination shown across all the workshops. A recording of one sample practical session with five students identified for moderation purposes, has been a requirement of the unit, and teacher-assessors have been required to provide marks **for that session only** for the five identified students, based on their achievement in the recorded session. As in 2016, teacher-assessors were required to make a summative comment on every students' achievement over the 6-hour exploration on the D2a Controlled Assessment Record card and a detailed comment on the D2c Sample Session for the sample students only. Many centres made effective use of the D2c to record marks and comments regarding the achievement of the selected students during the sample session, avoiding repetition of the assessment criteria, and offering clear examples in support.

The practical activities carried out for the Sample Session ranged from the highly imaginative and clearly focused on the immediate exploration of the chosen extracts from the text, to the recording of activities which should have taken place outside of the 6-hour exploration such as note-taking, reading the play text and warm up activities un-related to the text in question. Teacher-assessors have been free to choose the most suitable tasks for their students within each session of exploration, considering, in addition to play-text and extract, the pace of each session, the nature of each task, the length of time allowed for development and opportunities for creative exploration and progression of student understanding of text. Successful sessions demonstrated a clear focus on using the extract to further understanding of the text itself rather than simply creating a performance. The 'off-text' guidance, available on the Drama homepage in 2017, had clearly been of support to many centres in planning exploration activities for this part of the unit, as off-text activities were used much more successfully in 2017 than in some previous series.

The role of the teacher in this filmed session has been of vital importance and the most successful recordings showed the teacher facilitating exploration while providing the freedom for creative collaboration to take place. The overwhelming majority of centres supported their students appropriately, demonstrating one of the strengths of the specification which is the freedom of teacher-assessors to provide the level of support required by their individual students.

The structure and pace of the session has also been significant; where strategies were used at an appropriate pace and then developed into further exploration, generally students were more creative, had greater opportunities for collaboration, and their work was of a higher quality in all respects. Where the pace of activities lacked challenge, for example the completion/ repetition of one strategy as the sole or main task for the session, outcomes were limited for all students. Where the practical was rooted in the text, allowing candidates to use drama strategies, elements and mediums creatively, the quality of the practical exploration was notably supported for all candidates.

Sharing of work, where centres had made the distinction between 'work in progress' and 'performance', was helpful to the moderation of the session. There were a small number of centres in 2017 where this distinction had not been fully realised and students clearly understood themselves to be engaged in the production of performance work. While the sharing of work in process has always been part of the six hours, and while many sessions have always been successfully based around realising a section of text, the work realised and shared will not have been polished or prepared to a performance standard; further, students operating at the higher levels will have had the opportunity to experiment and

develop their ideas about the text, as the focus of assessment for this paper has been on the process rather than the product of the practical exploration.

Verbal evaluation took place in many recorded sessions and this was often evidently both helpful and supportive to students where the evaluation of the work shared linked clearly to the exploration of the theme, topic or issue rather than to performance skills. However, in a small proportion of centres, candidates were somewhat disadvantaged where centres had tried to justify understanding through long periods of discussion or verbal evaluation to camera, rather than evidencing the actual practical exploration. Evaluation has always been assessed through the written Documentary Response (Paper 02) only.

The Sample Session

Throughout the specification, the requirement of the unit has been for a single unedited teaching session, ideally of approximately one hour and of no longer than two hours in length. This should have been recorded from a **fixed camera** position, although in 2017, the requirements for formatting was extended to include USB pen drives and portable hard drives as well as DVDs, and to allow recordings completed using Windows Media Player, Quick-time and VLC as well as those formatted to play on a conventional DVD player.

The quality of the recording has been of paramount importance throughout the life of the specification; centres have been required to ensure that they are able to produce a clear, good quality recording for the moderator.

Most centres provided their recorded evidence on either DVD or USB with very few centres submitting hard drives. In the vast majority of cases, DVDs were clearly chapterised and clearly labelled, both on the disc and on the case. USBs did not tend to be labelled but where the pen drive was both clearly labelled and named, this was most supportive to the moderation process. Recordings tended to be of good to reasonable quality, with some examples of excellent practice. As in previous series', the best practice was often seen where teacher assessors had seemingly viewed the recording although this is not a requirement of the specification.

Students have been required to identify themselves on the recording with clear statement of name and student number. Teachers have also been required to clearly identify students on the D1c Sample Session Record card. In 2017, while many centres had ensured that students were easily identifiable, moderators reported that identification was still a problem in some sample sessions.

As in 2016, there were some examples of practices such as the use of small labels and ribbons to identify students (which tended not to be visible to the camera) and where a fixed camera recorded the entire session without any use of pan or zoom functions. In a very few cases, there were students selected for moderation whose work was not sufficiently visible to camera to support the moderation process. There were also a minority of centres that made use of a 'roaming' camera and/ or who asked students to explain their ideas to camera; this practice did not support students in their exploration as the camera/ teacher-assessor became an intrusion/ interruption and as marks awarded for this paper are for practical exploration only.

For the new specification Component 1, advice on the identification of students for the moderator and on creating high quality recordings is available in the appendices to the specification document.

Paper 02 Documentary Response

Documentary Evidence

The Practical Exploration process has been evaluated in the Documentary Evidence for Unit Two, an on-paper evaluation, with a maximum of 1,000 words submitted for assessment/moderation. This piece of work has been required to be completed in Controlled Conditions. Students have been given the opportunity to record the exploration process over the course of the unit. These notes have been used to support the completion of the final documentary response in the Controlled Conditions Assessment sessions and have been refined to encapsulate the students' evaluative response to the exploration process and the way in which they explored the text throughout this exploration. All reflection, analysis and evaluation within the Documentary Response should have related to the six-hour practical exploration.

It must also be noted that for this task, although students were required to consider how the use of drama strategies enhanced their understanding of the text, the focus of their evaluation of the exploration need not have been on the use of drama strategies. This very different focus to the task (in comparison with Unit 1) was where an increasing number of centres were able to support students in producing succinct and concise evaluations, which remained within the word maximum of 1,000 words. The vast majority of responses made good use of the allowable word maximum. In the small number of cases where candidates had exceeded this word maximum, or had failed to make full use of it, this was acknowledged by teacher-assessors in both their D2a comments and the marks awarded.

The moderating team reported in 2018 a larger incidence of plagiarism than had ever been seen on this part of 5DR02, where students appeared to have accessed the work of other students online or from their own centre. It was thought that this may have been due to the gradual phasing out of Controlled Conditions in core subjects in centres, due to the changes in the new specifications. Regardless of Controlled Conditions, the requirement for internally assessed units across all specifications is that teacher-assessors must authenticate that the assessed work is the candidates' own. Where teacher-assessors are unable to do this, the work must be withdrawn and the candidates involved awarded zero. Where moderators identify possible plagiarism, the work of the entire centre must be referred to the Pearson malpractice team. These procedures will remain relevant to the Non-Examined Assessment work assessed and submitted for Component 1 in 2018 and beyond.

See the JCQ website for further information:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/in>

Some centres had encouraged candidates to reflect upon practitioner theory in responding to their chosen text; this is not a specific focus for GCSE and while in some instances this was supportive to students, in many cases this demonstrated a lack of holistic understanding of the practical drama exploration that had taken place. Similarly, responses which focussed on a literary approach without reference to practical exploration or explaining/ evaluating practical with little discernible reference to the text took students some way from their practical understanding of the text.

The majority of Documentary Responses were this year presented on A4 paper, word processed and in a continuous prose format. Writing frames were once again used by many centres which was supportive to many less able students although occasionally often limiting to the most able. As with Paper 1, it was noted that where candidates had been allowed a degree of freedom there was scope for greater depth of understanding. It was very pleasing to note that many centres this year had supported students in providing clear, specific

examples of both their own work and the work of others, and the best practice showed students evaluating these very specific examples clearly and in balance.

This part of Paper 02 has never required students to write about all six hours of exploration; a number of student responses demonstrated an episodic account of what candidates had said and done in each of the practical sessions and this approach tended to lack depth of evaluation and understanding. More successful this year was the approach where teacher-assessors had prepared students in considering their journey over the unit, with a sense of cross-reference between sessions, and of a development of ideas as a result of completing the six-hour assessment. This enabled students' work to evidence both depth and breadth of understanding and to meet the assessment criteria at the highest levels.

Response to Live Performance

Students have also been required to complete a Response to Live Performance, a second on-paper evaluation, with a maximum of 2,000 words to be submitted for assessment/moderation. This records the student's individual response to and evaluation of a live production of the teacher-assessor's choosing. Students should have been given the opportunity to record their initial responses and reactions to the production and these notes may be used to support the completion of the final response in the Controlled Conditions Assessment sessions and may be refined to encapsulate the students' evaluative response. All reflection, analysis and evaluation within the final response should have related only to the live production seen. This production is permitted to be the text explored in within the Unit 2 practical paper or of an entirely unconnected text; choice of text/ production is entirely a centre decision.

For this part of Unit 2, Paper 02 it was clear that there was a range of experiences in place, with students having visited theatres, having seen touring versions of productions in their own schools and having evaluated the performance work of students within their own centre where professional productions were not an option. Where students had been able to see the live production of the text studied, there was a sense that some students had been supported by this choice. Equally, where a production 'new' to students had been selected, there were examples of personal response to an inspiring 'fresh' theatrical experience.

Most responses remained within the word maximum and made use of a consistent Quality of Written Communication throughout. However, there were an increased number of responses which significantly exceeded the 2,000 words allowable for the task.

This was the task which moderators reported had been completed with the most consistent response to the Assessment criteria and it was very pleasing to note that many centres this year had supported students in understanding and utilising technical vocabulary, enabling them to communicate an understanding of theatre and performance in their responses. While writing frames were used successfully by many centres, it was noted that where candidates had been allowed a degree of freedom there was scope for greater depth of understanding and creativity of response. It is not surprising therefore that for many centres, the highest levels of achievement overall were seen in this part of Paper 02 in 2017.

This is also unfortunately the task where plagiarism was once again identified in work from an increasingly significant number of centres. In these cases, students were found either to have made use of unacknowledged published material based on the performance seen, for example professional reviews, or to have accessed the work of other students online or from their own centre. As previously noted, it was thought that this may have been due to the gradual phasing out of Controlled Conditions in core subjects in centres, due to the changes in the new specifications. However, as noted under Documentary Evidence, the authentication that student work has been completed under the required conditions and is the students' own has remained a requirement of the unit in 2017 and will continue to be required within internally assessed units in all subjects from 2018 onwards.

See the JCQ website for further information:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/in>

Administration and Centre Documentation

The majority of centres completed this effectively and met the submission deadline of May 15th with no issues. There was an administrative change to all internally assessed units in all subjects during the series in 2017, where marks were required to be submitted via Edexcel online only, as Pearson had withdrawn the use of OPTEMs across all subject areas. As this was a late change, the requirement to submit a hard copy of the submitted marks, with the authentication statement signed by the centre assessor, was understandably misunderstood by some centres, and this caused a delay in moderating team the work submitted by these centres.

Most teacher-assessors had completed all documentation effectively and accurately, but according to the moderating team, there was a slight increase in the number of missing materials, and administrative errors, for example missing or incomplete Records of Work, D2c forms missing from packs, incomplete D2a and D2c forms and arithmetical errors on the D2a. There were also more instances reported where online marks did not match marks recorded on the assessment forms and as these needed to be verified, this also caused a delay to the moderation of these centres' work.

Edexcel Feedback and Support to Centres

Enquiries about Results

These are completed by members of the senior team using the original Documentary Responses, and/ or Recordings as well as the Assessment Forms which have this year been returned to centres. An Enquiry can be requested on either Paper 01 or Paper 02 or on both aspects of the unit. EARs for this unit are for the whole centre as the original moderation process will be repeated by the EAR moderator and centres will be charged for re-moderation unless centre marks are re-instated. A detailed report will be produced for each centre, providing feedback for the centre, and explaining the findings of the re-moderation process.

Drama Subject Advisory Team

Paul Webster, a full-time member of Pearsons/ Edexcel staff, has been available again throughout the 2017 series to respond to centre queries and to support centres via telephone and email contact as well as through social networking sites. This has proved a successful innovation for the specification.

He and his team are available to respond to centre queries via email at:

TeachingPerformingArts@Pearson.com

Student queries can be addressed to students@pearson.com.

It must be noted that the Subject Advisor has no access to centre data, and cannot comment on the moderation process in terms of mark regression or on the content of E9 reports to centres. Where centres require more detailed information, an EAR must be requested for that paper.

Approval of material to be used or any administrative issues is beyond the remit of the subject advisory team.

Training From Edexcel

Edexcel has a programme of national, face to face, free standardisation meetings, as well as online training. All details are available on the Edexcel website via the training home page.

Conclusion

5DR02 as a text-based exploration has always been a highly successful unit throughout the life of the specification and in the final year of the specification, it is pleasing to note that centres this year have continued to demonstrate an understanding of character, motive, plot, language, and dialogue, experimenting with ideas, meaning and themes within the context of the play-text explored.

Centre marking in the vast majority of centres remained accurate in terms of the rank order of marks for students sampled on both papers; however, many teacher-assessors have continued to struggle to accurately judge the level at which their students are working. There was evidence of harsh marking by centres at the lower end of the ability range, sometimes for example where candidates' verbal input within the practical exploration was limited but practical engagement or collaborative work had not been recognised or acknowledged. Equally, at the top of the ability range, teacher-assessors did not always accurately assess the levels of creativity and imaginative exploration evidenced in that session, assuming that their highest achieving candidate was worthy of full marks. The result of this was that the spread of the candidates' marks was in some cases less wide than originally judged by the teacher-assessor.

Moderators in 2017 once more commented that, in the vast majority of cases, GCSE Drama students were exceptionally focused and committed to their work in Drama; for the entire team, there was a sense that it had been another highly positive experience to share the journey of drama exploration with all our students.

Exploration has been a significant element of the assessed component to GCSE Drama, not only within the 2DR01 specification but also within the legacy specifications which preceded it. While it is sad to see the end of assessed practical exploration in this final year of 2DR01, the wealth of skills, resources and experience developed by centres delivering this unit will undoubtedly support the GCSE Drama students of the future in preparing for both text-based performance work and in responding on paper to an explored play-text and to a live performance. The requirement for students to analyse and evaluate their own work and that of others remains an assessment objective within the new GCSE; similarly, Unit 2 has always required students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, therefore the work of teacher-assessors on Unit 2 in what is now the legacy specification, will be highly supportive for those moving on to work with students in the new specification.

The success of the unit has depended on these committed teachers who have worked so hard to make Unit 2 a rigorous yet inspiring process for all our students. I sincerely wish I could thank in person for their passionate devotion to Drama GCSE. Equally, the moderating team have worked tirelessly to ensure that every student achieves the right mark, first time. Many of these dedicated professionals will go forward to deliver and assess the new specification with the same levels of commitment and professionalism and I know that all at Pearson look forward to this continuing professional relationship.

This unit, developing skills of understanding script and performance work both as a member of the cast and of the audience, has been one of the cornerstones of GCSE Drama. My team and I have been privileged to be a part of this drama process. I will close this report with a reminder of the value and necessity of exploration within the new specification, expressed through the words of one 5DR02 student who wrote:

I love working all together in a group in Drama. It makes me feel happy and confident, and it helps me to understand so much more about the script than I do on my own.