

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator
Feedback



Summer 2016

GCSE Drama (5DR03) Unit 3: Drama
Performance

This report is compiled from the reports written by the complete examining team.

Overall work was seen that was of a higher standard than in 2015.

The Performance examination is worth 40% of the total GCSE qualification.

This is an externally examined unit and the assessment objectives and criteria do not change from those printed in the specification. This unit uniquely has elements of both an examined and coursework unit.

In preparing candidates for this unit the specification must be read with close reference to the Administrative Support Guide for the current examination series.

Centres choose the options taken by candidates, the texts or content for devised work and the audience present for the examination performances.

All work presented for examination must meet the requirements of the Assignment Brief for that year.

In response to feedback from both the examining team and centres this report will give a comprehensive overview of the many aspects of this unique performance examination.

Centres may note that much of the information is repeated from earlier reports but this reflects the reports from the complete examining team.

Overwhelmingly examiners reported that many of the issues they noted that affected student performance would have been avoided if all centres had read and understood the requirements of the unit. The Administrative Support Guide which is updated annually gives detailed information to support the administration of the unit which is available on the GCSE Drama homepage

Centres can access previous reports on the homepage for GCSE Drama.

The Assignment Brief

In line with units in other GCSE specifications that have a written examination, a different focus must be set by the awarding body each year.

The Assignment Brief for 2016 was available on the website from the last Monday in October 2015.

Centres are reminded that the texts or ideas in the brief are suggestions only and it remains Pearson policy not to approve or recommend any texts or material for Unit 3.

The Assignment Brief details the options (A-G) available and all the options were seen in 2016.

The chosen option must be entered on the D3a form Group Performance Sheet.

Many centres did not complete this again in 2016.

Examiners reported there was a correlation between the amount of detail of the written support material as detailed on the D3a form and the polish and success of the examination performances.

The Assignment Brief for 2016 was Consequence(s)

For the 2016 series this was to support all candidates in having a focus on the importance of secure and in depth content in order to make successful performances.

Some of the concerns detailed by examiners were as in 2015

- Performances where there was too much focus on abstract movement/physical theatre which could appear to be 'bolted on' and not intrinsic to the performance
- Performances that were focused on ensemble work with choral and whole group movement sequences dominating
- Performances where all students played many small roles for often a brief amount of time
- Performances where the main, some or all roles were divided between all students
- Performances where either no or unsuitable audiences were present for the examination
- Performances where the content was unsuitable for the audience
- Performances that lacked understanding of the content
- Performances that showed little understanding of creating 'theatre' and were strongly influenced by narrative television work
- Performances that were attempts to copy films or television series often in the comedy or horror genre

It is positive to report that the majority of centres had responded well to the Brief and there was an increase in students achieving consistently across all the criteria.

This was often evidenced in the supporting written documentation where students made clear reference to the Brief and how either the devised work or chosen text demonstrated this.

Many centres referred to a target audience for the exam performances but as in previous years the majority were peers, family and friends.

It is positive to report that there were very few centres which seemed to have ignored the Brief

This was the second year that some examiners returned to some centres for a second consecutive year and there were a few reports of the same texts or devised work being seen for a second time or that a chosen 'house style' produced very similar work.

Option A Devised work

This remained overall the most popular option.

Most centres detailed the stimulus material as required.

This could be the same for all groups or different for some groups. There were no advantages in either choice.

The topic/theme/issue from Unit 1 was used with success in some centres Most centres provided details of each performance.

Most work seen had serious and often demanding stimulus material.

Many performances demonstrated high levels of research into the source material Well-chosen initial stimulus material had been provided by the centre.

Option B Short Published Texts

This was a less popular option.

Some short published comedy 'sketches' were less successful, most centres included the texts as performed.

Confusions by Alan Ayckbourn was again a popular choice.

Single stories from Grimm's Tales and other Carol Ann Duffy texts were used Option C Extracts from full length texts.

There was felt to be an increase in this option in 2015.

Overall the choice of extract needed to be chosen with care to make a coherent performance.

More centres sent the examiner the extract as performed by each group.

The same extract for many groups within a centre did disadvantage some students.

Dividing a complete text into sections disadvantaged some students.

Option D Adaptations of full length texts

This was often very successful with skillful and thoughtful adaptations by centres.

The episodic form worked best overall for example choosing scenes from Bouncers/Shakers but maintaining the overall narrative arc of the original text.

Most successful centres sent the adaptation of text as performed to the examiner.

This was often chosen by centres who also taught GCE Unit 2.

There was an increase in this option in 2016, perhaps because it will be a requirement in the new specification.

There was an eclectic and more wide ranging choice of texts in 2016.

Texts by Willy Russell, Mark Wheeler and John Godber remain popular and supported the Assignment Brief.

Option E Combination of Devised and Published Text This was the second most popular choice.

It supported a flexible and creative approach and gave all students an opportunity to make an individual contribution.

More centres did send the script of the performance so examiners could be well prepared. Good practice was indicating the dialogue taken from the original text and the new devised work by highlighting or change of font.

This often produced very strong work demonstrating the individual student's research into the text.

Option F Theatre in Education

This was seen very little in 2016.

Strongest work was seen when the target audience was present Most centres included an outline of the performance.

The most successful work demonstrated an understanding of the particular demands of this style of performance.

There were examples of both published texts and devised work.

Devised work addressed relevant social issues such as bullying, peer pressure and body image.

Most of the work seen demonstrated a high level of research into the factual material available.

Option G

This was listed less but elements of this option were frequently seen in Option A.

The use of poetry and other creative prose writing was seen most.

Successful work demonstrated considerable in depth research and a range of material.

It supported students in showing a wide range of skills.

The most successful sent a copy of the complete text as performed to the examiner

Overall Achievement in Unit 3.

Work was seen by examiners that covered the full mark range.

Overall the performance work was of a higher standard than in 2015. Some examiners felt the standard was considerably higher. This may reflect the increased understanding of many centres in preparing students for the examination performances.

A few students were present at the examination but did so little that no marks could be awarded.

There was a definite increase in the use of non-- naturalistic, stylised and ensemble work which, although it often produced interesting performances, did not support achievement in the criteria.

Full marks were also awarded to some students in some criteria.

A few students produced performances that exceeded the GCSE level. This was in line with student achievement in the previous series.

Work that was awarded marks in the higher levels was a result of a well-structured preparation and rehearsal period.

Work in the higher levels had built on the skills and understanding gained in the Programme of Study.

There were examples of a 'house style' in centres that supported the students approach and final performance. This could be limiting for enabling more creative and imaginative performances.

Tightly structured ensemble work could make identification of individual students' achievement very difficult for examiners and disadvantaged some students.

Devised Performances Option A

The content of devised performances was very wide ranging and often thought provoking.

More successful work reflected the research undertaken in the preparation process Overall more work was seen that was serious in content and often had a strong didactic focus.

Much work was relevant to the students own experience and engaged an audience of their peers.

Strongest performances demonstrated a confident use of a wide range of skills and strategies chosen carefully to support all criteria in balance.

Contemporary issues remain the most popular and often successful basis for performances.

Simple staging including costumes/set/lighting was most supportive to effective performances.

Less successful work tended not to create a theatre performance but relied on a linear narrative and more realistic approach perhaps influenced by television drama.

Less successful work relied too much on externals such as costume/sound/music/props/blackouts/miming to songs/dance etc. that hindered the performance.

There were a number of centres where the work was strongly influenced by Frantic Assembly and Berkoff. At times this was not well understood by the students and disadvantaged them.

Again many centres are commended for supporting their students in the creation and realisation of devised performances that demonstrated their passion, conviction and commitment to creating vibrant 21st century theatre.

Scripted Performance (Option B/C/D)

The majority of performances were well rehearsed and presented.

* Successful performances demonstrated students' understanding of the author's intentions.

Successful performances showed depth of understanding of the crafted characters in the original text.

Students were supported where there was a sense of engaging with the full character arc Using Unit 2 texts supported students in depth understanding of the text.

Students were supported by the well-crafted language of the text.

Students had varying degrees of security with the text. Where there was a security this was the basis of an effective group performance.

The proxemics were well rehearsed and effective in most performances Simple staging was most effective in supporting the performance.

Less successful work was when students did not understand the demands of scripted performance.

Some students in a group lacking security with the lines affected the achievement of all in the group.

Some students were so poorly prepared that they had to either read the lines or receive many prompts.

Combination of Devised and Scripted Performances (Options E and G) Play texts and factual material were the most popular choices of stimulus.

This approach was supportive to all students giving them a clear foundation for the performance.

This approach gave a clear framework to support all criteria.

Centres used effective use of flashback, devised pre or post scenes based on a text with often considerable understanding.

Less work was seen on Options E and G but many of the points listed previously apply to these performances.

Performance Support (Used to support all options) No performance support students were seen by most examiners again in 2016.

Some centres had several Performance Support students, the majority had only 1 or 2

Performance Support was most often seen in centres with Performing Arts status or where there had been a clear focus on the teaching of these skills.

Most successful work was seen where the teaching of the skill had been part of the Programme of Study.

Most successful work was seen where centres had the facilities and resources to fully support this option.

This remains an option where the full range of marks is often not seen as students tend to be polarised at either the higher or lower mark levels.

Most students completed the minimum requirements for documentation but many exceeded this with very detailed and creative work.

Less successful students had very little or no supporting documentation and often refused to do a presentation or were absent on the day of the exam.

Very few presentations were pre- recorded.

Students can only offer one skill at GCSE level. Some offered 2 or more, but only one could be awarded any marks.

Many portfolios/documentation were projected.

More successful students then gave a summary of the main points.

Less successful students read the projected text verbatim.

Many presentations far exceeded the 5 minute time limit. Examiners did not consider any points stated after this time.

Some students supported their presentations with 'visual aids', for example demonstrating lighting cues or having students present in costume.

Lighting and Costume were the most popular options in 2016.

There was a great diversity in the achievement seen in 2016 and centres need to consider very carefully if they have the resources, facilities, skill and knowledge to support PS students to achieve at GCSE level.

There was evidence of strong support being given to students by school technicians as well as teachers.

Some students presented virtually identical documentation. Centres are reminded that although a framework can be given this must reflect the individual students work.

Administration of the Examination Performances Examination Dates and Times

All examiners were given an allocation that reflected their personal availability and location. Examiners were instructed to contact all centres in their allocation. If the initial examiner was unable to attend the centre for any reason they had to inform Pearson. All examiners had to confirm with centres that they were unable to attend and a replacement examiner was being sought.

Examiners can attend the same centre in consecutive series. This will continue for the final year of this specification.

Centres should be prepared in early February to have agreed possible dates/times with the SLT at the centre so the exam dates/times can be confirmed close to the examiner contacting the centre.

Centres must also be prepared with the total number of students entered for the exam. Some were rather vague or estimated a considerably higher number perhaps hoping for more examination sessions than the final numbers allowed.

Some centres were very tardy in contacting their examiner after the initial contact had been made. Examiners are not required to 'chase' centres for confirmation of dates.

The Initial Contact Form was revised for 2016 and it needed to be sent with all other documentation before the exam session(s). The majority of centres completed this very well.

Centre visits have to be agreed on a first come first served basis.

It seemed fewer centres in 2016 were unable or unwilling to negotiate a mutually agreed date(s) and time(s) for the examination sessions. If a centre can only offer a single date and time then they must be prepared to make a recording for examination purposes in future series. Pearson will not find another examiner.

In 2016 there was a marked increase in centres requesting a last minute change of date and time for the exam sessions. In some cases there was a valid reason for this, 'not being ready' was not. Centres must be prepared to make a recording for examination purposes in future series. Pearson will not find another examiner.

Examiners are not required to work on Saturday or Sunday.

All Pearson examiners are required to inform Pearson of any 'Conflict of Interest' centres. Centres must expect to have an examiner who may be located nearby.

Some examiners were unable to complete their allocations as arranged. This was due to a change in personal circumstances in virtually all cases. Pearson will make every effort to find another examiner but this may not always be possible particularly at short notice.

This is a complex examination to administer but overall it worked well in 2016 and it is hoped that both centres and examiners will have the flexibility to ensure this live performance exam works effectively in the final year.

Performance Times

Examiners must examine at least 20 students in a 3 hour session. In 2016 there were only a few centres expecting examiners to wait for unacceptable amounts of time during the school day. Centres are reminded that this is an examination and the 3 hour session must be observed.

Examination conditions should apply to Unit 3 as it would to all other formal external examinations.

In 2016 most examinations were completed well before the 9.00 PM deadline.

In 2016 most examinations started on time. Centres are reminded that examiners make every effort to arrive promptly and it is unacceptable they should then be kept waiting 'as we are not quite ready'. The 3 hour session begins at the start time agreed with the centre.

There were cases this year where examiners were unavoidably delayed due to unexpected transport problems. Centres should always be prepared to start the exam and record the performances rather than keep the students and audience waiting.

If an examiner is unable to attend at all due to unforeseen circumstances then the centre must record and complete the post exam documentation and send to the original examiner to complete the marking. This examiner will have all the original documentation and will have prepared themselves for the exam.

There were still a number of very short performances or performances with a large number of very short scenes (often with lengthy blackouts). This disadvantaged students and did not enable them to achieve in the higher mark levels.

A few performances were considerably overtime. Examiners stopped marking at the maximum time limit as detailed in the ASG 2016.

Any work outside the maximum time limit was not awarded any marks by examiners.

The majority of groups were between 4 to 6 performance students in 2016 Groups that tended to the lower end of the time requirement maintained energy and focus.

There was a considerable increase in examination sessions taking place in May, many taking place in the last 2 weeks of May.

Twilight and evening sessions remained popular but centres are reminded that this is an examination and this must be the focus of the session.

All examination sessions must run on consecutive days to give parity for all students. Some centres requested different sessions where there were students from different year groups.
Centre Documentation.

The majority of centres completed this well and met the deadlines both before and after the exam sessions.

There was an increase in the number of centres which failed to complete the written documentation and this did not support examiners being well prepared for the examination sessions.

Some examiners reported having to complete the documentation in the centres themselves.

Most centres had attention to detail and had completed all documentation very well.

There was a noticeable improvement in the detail provided to support the individual group performances as completed by the students.

Some centres sent incomplete D3b forms. Examiners are not required to complete these forms.

In particular the student descriptions on the D3b forms were frequently left blank. These should be completed by the individual students even if photographs will be available on the day.

Those centres that failed to provide examiners with the materials in the detail required disadvantaged their students.

Examiners noted there was frequently a correlation between the detail and rigor with which the documentation had been completed and the quality of the examination work.

Poorly completed documentation was often reflected in less well prepared and secure performances.

Examination Conditions

Most centres ensured appropriate and supportive audiences were in place.

There were several examples of very small or no audiences that disadvantaged students.

There were fewer reports of large and inappropriate audiences. These less supportive audiences were usually for twilight or evening performances.

Centres must ensure that audiences remain for the complete 3 hour examination session.

Some examiners were not provided with a suitable private and quiet space to consider their marking when in the centre.

Some centres did not allow enough time between performances for examiners to consider their marks. The timetable as agreed prior to the examination should be adhered to by both centre and examiner.

There were also reports of overlong amounts of time between performances which resulted in examiners being present in centres well over the time allowed for the number of students. Examiners are not required to stay in the centre beyond the agreed session time(s).

Virtually no centres and students expected examiners to speak to them either before or after the performances. There was clear understanding that examiners are not permitted to speak to students except to clarify identification.

Many centres gave the same importance to ensuring exam conditions were in place as they would if it were a written examination. All centres should do this.

The most successful centres had prepared students for the formality of the examination as well as the excitement of performance.

Identification of Students

Despite the information in all previous reports and information in the ASG 2016 regarding the importance of easy and clear identification of all students there were still far too many students all wearing similar costumes, most often 'theatre blacks'.

Other challenging costume choices were boiler suits in identical colours (white and orange being most popular), pyjamas, school or military uniforms.

Students had such insignificant identifiers such as coloured ribbons that cannot be seen clearly either in performance or recordings that they were useless for clear identification.

There were a number of students having many costume changes that were not detailed prior to the performance and this made it very difficult for examiners to clearly identify them.

Costume details were often not sent to examiners in advance. There were in some cases many unnecessary costume changes

Students who wore masks for considerable time in performance were disadvantaged.

The problem of identification remains the overwhelmingly major concern from examiners yet again in 2016.

This has been detailed in every report since the first year of this specification. Many examiners again in 2016 reported feelings of frustration, annoyance and despair that many centres do not support their students in ensuring that all students can be clearly and easily identified throughout the examination performances.

Centres must understand that if all students cannot be easily identified this disadvantages these students.

Large clear photographs of each performance group in costume provided on the exam day with names/numbers/roles played greatly supported the identification of students.

Wearing of very different coloured tops or tabards is excellent practice for straightforward student identification.

The importance of the DVD Recordings.

Overall the quality of the DVD was less good than in previous series, although some were exemplary.

It was felt that some centres had taken on board the importance of the recordings being in fact the 'scripts' for this examination but certainly not all.

There remain many centres which cannot have checked the quality of the complete recording. There were many cases where the recording was incomplete, silent or inaudible at times or out of focus at times. In the monitoring process it was most frustrating where the recording did not capture the whole performance space so some student's performances could not be seen in full.

There were also recordings where it was almost, and in some cases absolutely impossible, to identify individual students.

The main concern in 2016 was again the despatch of the recordings to the examiner. The majority did not come as detailed in the ASG in hard protective cases. Most were in clear plastic or paper covers, some with the addition of some bubble wrap or similar padding. The worst were just sent in an envelope with no protective covering.

Examiners do not check recordings or request replacements.

Problems with Unit 3 Recordings

This is repeated from previous reports as it is a comprehensive list.

- Never sent to examiner/not sent within 10 working days
- Not finalised so could not be played on any DVD player
- Not recorded so could be played on a DVD player (Examiners will not check on computers)
- Recordings made behind rows of audience
- Recordings where examiner's head obscures the action
- Recordings made at a great distance from the performance space
- Recordings that go in and out of focus
- Recordings that do not capture complete performances
- Recordings where the sound is distorted
- Recordings where the sound is overlaid by comments from the camera operator (s)

- Incomplete recordings
- Recordings that either freeze or jump
- Recordings particularly that are not chaptered
- DVD time sheets not being accurately completed
- DVDs not sent in hard protective cases so become damaged/broken in transit.

However on a more positive note there were many excellent recordings that captured the live experience of the examination with real professionalism.

Accompanied Visits

Pearson thanks those centres which had an accompanied visit in 2016. This is an essential part of the monitoring process.

In a few cases this did affect the running time of the examination and Pearson apologises for this.

The Principal Examiner would like to thank all the centres that she visited this year for the professionalism and positive approach they maintained in the light of having a quartet of examiners present. It is a most rewarding part of the role to see the diversity of the live performances presented for the examination.

The use of Blackouts and Black Clothing

It is positive to report that examiners reported that there were very few centres that had used blackouts so frequently that it disadvantaged students.

However there are still too many centres who continue to disadvantage their students by allowing them to wear theatre blacks.

This is repeated from the 2015 report as it remained true in 2016. As a first line examiner in 2015 I was told by a centre that they knew they should not have let all the students wear black but 'they want to, so what can you do?'

As the examiner of course I said nothing but wanted to ask if the centre would let them write illegibly in a written examination 'because they want to'.

Individual performance work that cannot be clearly identified cannot be awarded marks.

All examiners have the responsibility to award every student the correct mark and the mark which they deserve, but centres have the responsibility to ensure that all students can be identified.

There is one remaining year of this specification and I am hopeful that perhaps in 2017 there will be no group performances where all students are dressed in black or near identical costumes.

A range of coloured costumes that reflect the admirable diversity of the performance work seen would be a wonderful ending for Unit 3.

Post Results Procedures

Centres are reminded that as this is an examined unit and any review procedures mean that marks can go down as well as increase. It is important that before requesting this that the permission of the individual students has been given.

This is completed by members of the Senior Examining Team using all the available documentation and examiner comments.

In 2016 no replacement recordings will be requested. Any DVDs that were not sent within 10 working days after the final exam session will not be eligible for an

EAR. Any DVDs that were not sent securely as detailed in the ASG and became damaged cannot be used for EARs.

Examiners noted that many DVDs were sent in either thin plastic or paper covers that did not provide appropriate protection.

Summary

The statistical evidence confirms that at all levels the standard of achievement by students in 2016 was higher than in 2015.

Students achieving in the 2 higher levels produced performances that reflected that they had clearly been taught the specific skills required throughout the course. It was felt that marks in the lower levels were often symptomatic of students' lack of commitment or even disaffection, not lack of centre support. There was an increase in the number of students entered who did not attend for the examination performance but had been present for Units 1 and 2 and in some cases entered for the complete examination.

Unit 3 is a unique examination that enables candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of drama by demonstrating it in a performance.

Beyond the requirements of this unit the work done by centres to encourage leadership, working as a member of a group, meeting deadlines, making decisions, and working co-operatively will prove to be of great value to these students in their future lives.

In 2016 there were a larger than usual number of new examiners and I am pleased to end this report with some quotes from their final reports:

It was great seeing the range and diversity of the work.

I enjoyed every moment in my exam centres. It made up for all the amounts of paperwork.

I did not expect it to be such a positive experience. I cannot wait for next year.

Also there were comments from experienced examiners.

It has been a privileged and positive experience again this year.

I remain so impressed with the quality and standard of the work seen.

There are so many committed and enthusiastic drama teachers giving over and above to all their students.

A big thank you for all the tea, biscuits, sandwiches, water etc.

Centres thoughtfulness and hospitality was superb (this did not make a difference to the marking).

Although there are still uncertain days ahead for Drama in the school curriculum the evidence from the examining team is still that Drama GCSE has an invaluable place in the complete education of young people in the twenty first century.

Based on their performance in this Unit:

Centres

- should make the opportunity for every student to realise their full potential in performance
- must ensure all students can be clearly and easily identified in performance
- must understand the importance of the DVD recording
- must send the DVD recordings in careful packaging as detailed in the ASG
- must understand and act upon the information in the Specification and Assessment Support Guide
- should select texts/stimulus material that is accessible to all students
- should select texts/stimulus materials that stretch the most able students.

Students

- should understand the importance of working as a member of the group in preparing for Unit 3
- must make sure they complete detailed group notes on the performance to send to the examiner
- make sure they can be easily identified in the performance by wearing different clothes/costumes
- should work with commitment throughout the preparation period
- should be a supportive audience member to fellow students
- should be prepared to work as an individual as well as with the group in researching performance material.