

GCSE

Expressive Arts

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J367**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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A691 Working in Response to Artworks by Practitioners

A692 Working in Response to a Stimulus

Although there were fewer candidates this year the quality of work presented in the portfolios continues to reflect a deep interest in the arts and highly developed skills in understanding the process of completing a piece where a range of art forms are integrated.

Candidates showed a much better understanding of the areas of study. In portfolios of the highest quality this was reflected in the genuine integration of the areas of study. In weaker portfolios this work was often a photocopied template completed in a rudimentary fashion that did not connect with the whole portfolio.

Centres provided some excellent teacher commentary to support the awarding of marks. Where this was done well the teacher commentary complimented the evidence provided by the candidates in their portfolios. In some cases however teacher commentary outweighed the evidence of the candidate in the portfolio and this should be guarded against in future submissions for those centres.

In portfolios that reflected work of the highest quality there was clear evidence of independent learning. The best portfolios were organized so that planning, exploration and development could be clearly mapped. There were some very good examples of candidates making personal comments and judgements throughout the process as well as summative comments after the completion of realizations. However, one centre relied very heavily on teacher additional evidence, which made it very difficult to ascertain individual candidates' knowledge and understanding of the work they presented. Printed relevant material was appropriate evidence only when it had relevant annotations. There were some examples of material being included in portfolios without personal comments from candidates, including a photocopy of a page from the specification, which served no purpose in terms of providing evidence of candidate attainment.

Where candidates were encouraged to work independently the work resulted in highly imaginative, thought provoking work of an inspirational nature. In weaker submissions there was often a trail of writing frames and or scaffolding to support content. Centres should be aware this is not permitted under the current specification. Again in weaker portfolios there was a great deal of downloaded material from the internet often not acknowledged. Centres that are unclear about how this should be presented are encouraged to review the specification guidance produce by OCR.

Administratively most centres excelled in both the completion of the necessary paperwork and in releasing the required samples for moderation extremely promptly. However a small number of centres made moderation difficult either by omitting the teacher commentary forms, providing one DVD for all candidates rather than an individual DVD for each candidate and in some cases no supporting DVD at all. There was generally far better accuracy related to transcription of marks, However a few centres still submit forms where there are discrepancies and MS1 totals. This carelessness can be very frustrating for the moderator and takes valuable time to resolve errors between the CSF, TCF and MS1.

Although marking was accurate (or well within the acceptable range) in the vast majority of cases, there were centres that marked too generously. For some centres AO1 and AO2 were consistently the most over-marked objectives. In other centres this was reflected across all assessment objectives and suggested a lack of understanding in applying the marking criteria.

It cannot be over stressed that each bullet point / assessment criteria band selected must be fully supported by the candidate and/or teacher evidence that can be seen, read or heard by the moderator.

A691

A wide range of sources was used to inspire candidates. There was good mix of the five art forms and centres successfully managed the creation of portfolios that demonstrated with clarity the work and process of professional artists encouraging candidates to utilise their analytical skills and develop work using skills and techniques they had identified in professional works. In stronger portfolios the candidates work flowed logically and demonstrated that individual candidates had worked independently to produce their work. In some centres all candidates produced work of a very similar outcome suggesting that the focus perhaps did not encourage independent outcomes.

The following illustrate some of the professional work studied.

- Hairspray: music by M. Shaiman, lyrics by S. Wittman and Shaiman
- Something inside so strong: Labi Siffre
- Voter Fraud: Michael Antuonou
- Great Expectations: Charles Dickens
- Journey to the centre of the earth: Rick Wakeman
- The persistence of memory: Salvatore Dali
- At lunchtime: Roger McGough
- Goodnight Saigon: Billy Joel
- Stomp
- Revelations: Alvin Ailey
- Teachers: John Godber
- Stanslawski
- Brecht
- Oh! What a lovely War: Joan Littlewood
- Frantic Assembly
- Lloyd Newson: Enter Achilles
- Lea Anderson: Cross Channel
- Willy Russell: Blood Brothers
- Phantom of the Opera
- Philip Glass
- Metamorphosis Franz Kafka
- Escher
- Rodrigo Blaas
- Once upon a time – Nadine Gordimer
- Moulin Rouge Film
- Carnival Parade – Sombra
- Slumdog Millionaire. Longinus Fernandes
- A R Rathman J'ai Ho & Ringa, Ringa
- Rangoli/Kolam
- Salvador Dali – The Persistence of Memory
- Christopher Bruce - Swansong
- War art, propaganda posters
- War music – Vera Lynn, Bob Marley, Edwin Starr. War poetry – Wilfred Owen, Dulce et Decorum Est
- Heroes by Robert Cromier
- Comic Art genre, Bonnie Tyler
- Elton John Ghetto Gospel
- Edward Munch – The Scream
- Shakespeare – Macbeth
- Bernard Herrmann music

- Empty chairs at empty tables from Les Miserables
- Opening sequence from West Side Story
- I'm ok by Christina Aguilera.
- Film - Rebel without a cause.

A692

A wide range of themes were introduced to candidates and some very imaginative ideas were produced. In strong portfolios the outcome very much focussed on the integration of the art forms to express ideas, feeling or emotions. In less well developed submissions the work was often led by factual information and lacked creativity in interpretation.

In some portfolios it was extremely difficult to identify individual candidate's contribution and centres are reminded that it should be very clear what and how each candidate has contributed to a completed piece of work.

Some examples of themes

- Two tribes go to war
- Revolution
- War
- Miscommunication
- Dreams
- Change/Metamorphosis
- War theme & veterans
- Self harm
- Depression
- Suicide
- The following are some examples of the professional works considered
- Tribes go to war: Frankie goes to Hollywood
- Zero Degrees: Akram Khan
- Rosie's monologue: William Hanley
- Duckling's monologue: Timberlake Wertenbaker
- Caliban monologue: W. Shakespeare
- Banksy
- Animal Farm: George Orwell
- Talking about a revolution: Tracy Chapman
- Oh! What a lovely War: Joan Littlewood
- Mars the Bringer of War from the Planets Suite: G. Holst
- Bob Dylan (various songs)
- Alan Bennett: Playing sandwiches
- Edward Kamau Brathwaite: Limbo
- 3OH!3 (American electronic music duo)
- A Lady of Letters A Bennet
- Billy Elliot – Tap Dance
- Puberty – Munch
- Les Miserable
- The Secret Garden – Hodgson-Burnett
- Anthony Gormley - Sculpture U2 Sunday - Bloody Sunday
- Holst Mars Bringer of War
- Frankie Goes to Hollywood - War.
- Guernica - Picasso
- Sailor kissing girls in Times Sq. Eiesenstadt
- Dance – Haka: Maori War Dance
- A Child's War by Alexandra Miller
- Civil War Love Letters by J C Morris
- Pack Up Your Troubles; Poem
- In Flanders Fields by John McCrae

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- Rain by Edward Thomas.
- Eminem, The Gorillaz
- Danielle Buetti
- Kyle Cooper
- Lichtenstein
- David Hockney
- David Bowie
- Beyonce
- Films: The Equalizer, The Mask
- The Diary of Anne Frank
- Macbeth
- Brendan James - Hero Song
- Speech - Martin Luther King

In both units a range of outcomes were presented these included:

- Story books
- Media presentations
- Support materials for crisis situations
- Installations
- Monologues
- Plays
- Mask making
- 3D modelling
- DVD covers
- Wall art
- Self-help booklet for people who are emigrating,
- Domestic violence monologues
- Poems with artwork
- Scripts and stage make-up designs and props

Contemporary tattoo design is also becoming popular.

In summary this series has yet again produced work that clearly evidences an academic understanding of the arts from candidates and high levels of creative skills across a wide range of centres.

A693 Responding to a Commission in a Community Context

This is a unit marked by a visiting examiner.

The range of practitioners used to influence candidates' work was even broader this year; the internet is clearly a really useful tool for facilitating targeted research and throws up some fascinating professional artists/performers, but centres are not very good at making sure that candidates find out, and attribute in their portfolios, the person who has created the work that they are considering.

Generally, portfolios were of a very good standard with plenty of reference to Areas of Study, Cultural/Social/Historical aspects and the influence of practitioners. Candidates have been trained well during A691 and A692 to produce the right kind of evidence and it is clear that teachers monitor and closely review and re-organise portfolios before they are presented on the examination day.

With some centres, the candidates are so busy producing their final realisations that they forget to chart their decisions and progress, thereby producing a rather brief portfolio. Also, some candidates are still producing portfolios that appear rushed and have clearly not been vetted by their teacher; in the wrong order, pages back to front, pages lost, teachers' notes still included, other people's work included and so on. This makes marking them a very onerous task and sometimes it is a real struggle to try to find where marks have been awarded. Some centres are still not using the comment box on the TCF to justify marks for candidates with little portfolio evidence.

Areas of study

Most portfolios contain a range of references to the areas of study and candidates are much clearer about their significance in their own work and that of practitioners. Symbol and motif seem to be well understood by most candidates, whereas structure and shape were often present and effective in the final presentation, but were not always clearly considered or explored at the planning stage. Perhaps this area of study has become second nature to their work process and candidates forget they need to be explicit in describing them.

Some of the best portfolios considered the areas of study as the concepts arose during their explanation of the development of their work. This was usually incorporated into continuous prose rather than as a note under a sub-heading, which can seem a little contrived. Others made reference to an area of study for a selected practitioner and then explained how it had affected or influenced their work.

Sadly, some candidates produced interesting outcomes that demonstrated clear understanding of the areas of study, and yet they failed to refer to them in their portfolios, thereby failing to attract marks for that section of the exam.

Communities

Candidates had thought more carefully about their selected community. In many cases, this was the same as their audience, but where imaginative responses were developed generally they were different. The community should be reflected not just in the realisation itself, but also in the development work in the portfolio, and was not always apparent. A single line stating, 'My community is...' with no other references, is not satisfactory.

Practitioners and works studied included

- "Thriller" (Michael Jackson)
- Lowry (notably "Coming from the Mill")
- The Beatles (notably "She's leaving home")

- “Billy Elliot”
- “Blood Brothers” (Willy Russell)
- Turner (notably “Slave Ship”)
- “Teechers” (John Godber)
- Brecht/Parallel Monologues
- DV8
- John Cage
- Carol Ann Duffy
- John Williams
- Matthew Bourne (Swan Lake)
- Akram Khan
- Art works by Banksy
- ZooNation
- Danny Elfman
- Tim Burton
- Roald Dahl
- Lemn Sissay
- Zephonia
- Quentin Blake
- Warhol

Preparation (12 hours) was particularly effective when the 12-hours are blocked rather than in normal lesson time.

Almost all candidates used a minimum of three art forms, with some using four or even five; music was very strong in some centres with some excellent songs composed in their entirety and performed with flair. There were also some effectively atmospheric soundscapes and background music. Some examples of shadow puppets were simple but effective.

Intended audiences were, largely:

- Very young children (for story books)
- School assemblies (teenage issues)
- Focus groups (social issues)

Most common realisations were presentations on social issues and books for young children. Story-books were usually very well presented, scoring highly on art content, and the scripts were almost always age appropriate.

Social issue presentations were often worthy enough, factual with an earnest approach.

There was good use of technology. Working with film usually produced good results with candidates having the correct focus on the way the arts worked together to express their ideas, rather than on the technology of film making, for which of course there are no marks. Sophistication was shown in all areas (sound, editing, music, angled shots, labelling, scripts, acting) and these were often vigorous, dramatic and of real impact. An increasing use of a number of different packages for music technology enabled candidates with a range of abilities put together a sophisticated musical sound track exactly tailored to integrate with their performance. Again, the focus was on the manipulation of the software to produce exciting an imaginative outcome rather than on the technology itself – it was a tool in the same way as a paintbrush is a tool.

The use of technicians in centres was supportive and helped to ensure not only a fluent procession of performances but provided a boost to candidates’ confidence, security and the assurance that the technology would not let them down.

Centres are recommended to identify candidates by them speaking their name and number (vocally) whilst holding a confirming noticeboard. Each can then be readily identified at later stage by the examiner.

An improvement was noticed in the standard of portfolios. They were generally direct, compact and focused, and on the whole there was little padding. In a small number of centres they were occasionally lacking depth and/or compiled afterwards; sometimes they were too bulky with large stiff covers; the ideal is a flimsy loose-leaf A4 binder or a scrapbook no larger than A3 with soft back. A small number of centres are still researching all commissions and in some cases this takes the up most of the portfolio.

Assessment by centres was mostly accurate, and there were helpful explanatory comments in some key areas. A small number of centres still did not complete the Working Mark Sheet correctly by failing to highlight the bullet points and criteria. This is a requirement; not a voluntary activity and must be completed.

Sometimes links with Commissions were not always clear or even close and individual voices and emphases were frequently smothered in information and conventionally rather than imaginatively delivered. Similarity in interpretation and presentation suggested a lack of individual approach in a few cases. More individuality and personality (and change of tone) could increase impact. In some centres all candidates used the same pattern of presentation: often a monologue written and performed by the candidate and then a dance. In such centres it would be good to see candidates given more independence to design and structure their own presentation with better merging of the way the artforms are used.

Although candidates do not have to use a performance as their realisation, many do. If the performance mode is chosen they should be aware of audience needs by

- Facing the front (not turning back to read off the screen)
- Looking up from the printed page
- Articulating clearly
- Pacing the delivery appropriately

Use of accent to convey mood and character could also add depth and raise impact. Recorded voices, too, should not be garbled, rushed or unclear.

Some presentation issues included:

In performance

- Clearer vocal delivery (recorded or live)
- Direct eye contact with audience
- Avoidance of head-down reading; if a monologue cannot be learnt, candidates should devise ways of delivering it that either make a feature of reading (eg diary entries) or record a voice-over
- Appropriate use of pausing and pacing
- Use of accent/wider vocal range to convey character and mood.

In production:

Poor performance space and production values do nothing for candidates' confidence. Sometimes this is unavoidable, for example, when a classroom is the only space available. Even space can be cleared of furniture and made to resemble a studio. Candidates dancing in school uniform is somewhat incongruous! Effective use of costume can lift a performance, and at the very least an artform-appropriate mode of dress should be worn, unless the clothing is integral to the piece itself. When visual art is offered it is best presented when displayed on a board or wall rather than hand held in a very transient and often crumpled manner.

There were many examples of story-books for children, and these were often very well illustrated and imaginatively scripted. On the other hand, weaker candidates sometime submitted poorly finished booklets. ‘Small but perfectly formed’ is a useful description of what candidates need to aim for when presenting their work for A693.

When story-books were also submitted dramatically, they were sometimes less successful, although the strongest candidates could deliver a story with clarity and expression whether live or as a pre-recorded voice-over.

Increasingly, candidates are submitting work on film, whether by using actors or creating animation. These were often of very high standard, despite time constraints, and there were many examples of sophisticated techniques such as film noir features, angled shots, split screen and slow motion. Atmospheric music and sound effects were frequently well employed, and editing was stylish and mature. In the creation of trailers and of charity appeals in particular, slogans and informational snippets were integrated and had a strong impact.

Candidates had prepared well generally, with live performers knowing lines and moves. Presentations were of appropriate length and were well structured, with (usually) strong conclusions.

Responses to the Commissions:

1. KING SOLOMON’S MINES

Responses included

- Prequel (read aloud, as “performance”)
- Ladybird style adventure rewritten for young children
- Monologue of deaf, black slave (with sign language used on film)
- “Don’t Drink and Drive” – a social issue very loosely connected with original (“based on a bet” – candidate)

2. MYSTERY AND MELANCHOLY OF A STREET

Easily the most popular Commission, and the one with often the clearest links with a practitioner, Lowry for example. It was used well for art, drama, dance, and music and seemed to spark candidates’ imagination

Interpretations included

- Charity appeals/Support Group meetings (on film or live), often on domestic violence, child abuse, bullying, mental illness...
- One original story of boy afraid of own shadow
- Girl reduced to prostitution by poverty and family abuse
- Road Safety talk (bland interpretation of painting)
- Son lamenting the loss of soldier-father (loose connection)
- Effects of long term imprisonment (loose link)
- Detective investigates crime
- Art Installation tunnel (light at end) – imaginative and individual interpretation, with closer connection with stimulus
- Stranger danger (via shadow puppets)
- Domestic abuse: the appearance v the reality
- Political prisoners
- Kidnappings
- Child trafficking
- Being watched

3. KING OF THE ENGLISH

A story book had a recognisable connection with the original stimulus, but “Lost City” and the appeal on BDD (Body Dismorphic Disorder) were loose interpretations

There were several re-workings of the Alfred the Great story: often amusing and designed for teaching purposes. They seemed to attract a response from male candidates.

4. I WON'T LET THE SUN GO DOWN

Responses here included

- Women's rights
- Teenage violence
- Satire on corrupt politicians
- Animal cruelty (including effective bird dance)
- Syrian appeal
- Cold War tensions leading to nuclear war
- Dangers of drink driving
- Homelessness
- Domestic abuse
- Possession by the devil

5. WICKER OR WHAT

This attracted candidates who created a variety of responses incorporating all the art forms. The concept of things not being what they seemed and complexity seemed to motivate several candidates. One of the most impacting performances was a cautionary tale, on film, based on Stranger Awareness – simple verse and images communicated forcefully.

Other interpretations (of varying connection with the commission) were

- Campaign film on self harm
- Anorexia
- Cancer appeal support group for Depression
- Dance therapy workshop
- Domestic violence
- Head v Heart

6. COLOUR OF MY DREAMS

One of the most interesting interpretations was a talk by a real-life Baltic immigrant candidate who spoke about the difficulties of being accepted (bullying, language, food) but with positive images of country and lifestyle.

Unfortunately this commission also tended to be the refuge for candidates with limited imaginations who took the idea of children not doing well at school but being successful in later life. Whilst this could be a valid approach, very few actually explained how they managed it.

Other subjects included

- Campaign film on Human Rights
- Story about dyslexia and ADHD
- Storybook about colour blindness (cured)
- Storybook for children who are both deaf and blind
- Boy's struggles to overcome his stammer

- Issues: Aspergers, epilepsy, Downs, autism
- Bullying of a dyslexic pupil
- Career decisions of teenagers: worthy jobs versus dream aspirations (+ idea of teenagers being too young to be forced to lose their illusions / face reality)
- arts v academia: song and dance

7. TOURIST TRIP TO MARS

This attracted a variety of candidates, many of whom had seen the story of a girl from the West Midlands who had applied to do this, recently aired by the BBC. Some candidates with an interest in Dr Who developed a response in line with their enthusiasms – the best-seen being a development of a guided tour. Often responses were fairly predictable and often factual based on science.

- A strong presentation was based on a video game – destroying aliens.
- Many were mainly storybooks
- Space enthusiasts
- Some groups of scientists in the form of a TV programme

8. UNTOUCHABLE

Not greatly used but candidates who did use the commission had picked up on the idea of prejudice and developed responses on this theme. Topics included:

- Help group talk on problems of self-harm
- Loneliness
- Sexual abuse of teenage girls
- Gender discrimination; Stereotyping
- Discrimination: police against ethnic minorities
- Slavery
- UKIP

9. SONGS OF WANDERERS

Surprisingly, bearing in mind the popularity of dance in previous series, this was the least popular commission. However, it did inspire some very creative costume and dance work. One high level response had developed the idea of rice grains into flower petals - linking Wordsworth's 'wandered lonely as a cloud.....' It made an excellent, well integrated response.

10. WATCH YOUR STEP

Interpretations here included:

- Recruiting troubled teenagers to a Street Dance club
- Story for children where they choose path options within the narrative
- Horror film preview
- Homelessness and domestic abuse
- Slave trade
- Problems of being bipolar
- Autism – imaginative and accurate live dance mirroring that shown simultaneously on screen
- Theft of painting leading to murder
- Lobbying MPs (colourful buildings)
- Head versus heart shown through street art and street dance

- Installation showing the way in which a community of people affects the space in which they exist. Philip Glass inspiration for soundscape
- Really interesting piece inspired by ZooNation, based around 'Alice in Wonderland', falling through a hole in the ground, spotlighting inmates in an asylum with different mental health issues

By far the most popular commission this session was commission number 2, the painting, 'Mystery and Melancholy of a Street'. Commission number 6, 'Colour of My Dreams', was the next most popular, with commissions 4, 5, 7 and 10 following with fairly equal popularity. Least popular were commissions 3 and 9.

All centres visited this year have stressed their disappointment and unhappiness over the demise of this specification. Both teachers and institution principals have made a point of voicing their concerns with regard to the inappropriateness of the alternative planned GCSEs for their students who would normally be taking the Expressive Arts course in Years 10 and 11.

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