

OCR Report to Centres

January 2013

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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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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Drama (J315)

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A581 From Page to Stage

There has been an improvement in the quality of DVDs that moderators have received from Centres both in terms of the filming and chaptering.

The most successful Centres had clearly considered where the camera should be positioned to provide the optimum view of the candidates for the moderator throughout the performance. Whilst the majority of centres used a tripod and the 'zoom' facility to good effect, some centres preferred to 'hand hold' the camera whilst filming, this again was found to be successful where the operator was experienced and had a good working knowledge of the performances, whilst understanding how to use the camera to track candidates and exploit practical performances for moderation purposes.

Many centres understood the importance of candidates spending time prior to the performance saying their name and candidate number slowly and clearly to camera.

Further helpful practice was observed in several Centres where candidates in addition held a large card with their name and number clearly written for the camera. Successful chaptering ensured that all candidates could be identified and tracked with ease by the moderator.

Moderators observed that candidates continue to make good use of their ten hours controlled assessment. The most successful were those candidates who prioritised the importance of the playwright's intentions for an audience and understood the genre and style. Such candidates supported the intentions with good stage craft and effective production elements. Moderators were pleased to see that some centres were challenging their candidates with their choice of text and therefore allowing them to 'take risks' within the performance space whilst fulfilling their potential. Such texts included:-

The Crucible	Arthur Miller
Death of a Salesman	Arthur Miller
Find Me	Olwen Wymark
Hamlet	William Shakespeare
Macbeth	William Shakespeare

These texts allowed candidates many opportunities within the performance space for demonstrating the foundations of the course using 'the areas of study'. This was demonstrated through the choice and use of performance space, often simply but effectively exploited to convey a context whilst due consideration was given to the positioning of the audience for maximum effect. The semiotics of theatre, in particular recorded sound, costume and lighting further enhanced the performances. Candidates who had researched their characters including off the text improvisations provided a depth of understanding of their role and when combined with performance skills, moderators observed some sensitive, thoughtful and sophisticated performances.

Centres are reminded that performances should not exceed the specified time limit; working to limits helps candidates to fully appreciate the demands of the text and fulfil their potential within the performance space.

Centres which prioritised formatting the extracts on to DVD directly following the performances were assured that the work was stored and ready for moderation. Several Centres had used the DVD to provide the candidates with the opportunity to reflect on their performances prior to writing their evaluation section of the Working Record.

Working Records

Moderators commented that these are 'getting better'. The majority are divided into three clear sections, which clearly show the journey that the candidate has taken from 'Page to Stage.' The presentation continues to improve and subject specific vocabulary is more prevalent and understood.

Candidates have a better grasp of how to record their research and how it has informed their performance. The strongest candidates demonstrate a good understanding of not only the development of the performer but also offer due analysis of the direction and design of the extract. The majority of centres clearly ensure that the evaluation section is completed after the performance (1 hour of controlled assessment) and that candidates have been ably supported by constructive feedback from teachers, peers and audience which has enabled them to analyse and evaluate their performance. Using audience questionnaires has proved to be a very positive tool for candidates. Those candidates who fully exploit the opportunity to reflect on the work of another enhance their understanding of both the dramatic process and product.

However, whilst the majority of candidates show a good working knowledge of genre and style within the performance space the discussion and understanding offered within the Working Record does not always reflect the practical understanding. Different genres and styles are transposed without being fully understood and endorsed.

Centres who offer moderators a clear and comprehensive insight into 'how, why and for what' marks have been awarded really embrace the ethos of moderation and are much 'hailed' by moderators as they greatly aid the moderation process. Those centres who further offer an overview or insight into their process of internal moderation amongst the teachers who have delivered the course also aid the moderation process.

The majority of centres are a little generous in their marking. As the specification is now several years old there does seem a little complacency about using the marking scheme. Moderators have requested that Centres reflect on the marking schemes with greater rigour for future submissions.

In conclusion moderators continue to observe an enthusiasm by candidates and centres for this unit. Centres clearly have a very good grasp of how to introduce the unit through focused lessons and workshops prior to the controlled assessment time. The choice of more challenging texts is making further but exciting demands on the candidates all of which bodes well for the future of the specification.

A582 Drama in the Making

This is the last year moderation will be offered in the January series. Only a small number of centres entered candidates for this series, 14 in total, so feedback relates to what is a small sample.

It was clear that the majority of centres had been taking note of Principal and individual centre reports, as there were few issues relating to administration and presentation of evidence in the submissions. The presentation of evidence on chaptered DVDs made navigation and the locating of candidates the smoothest yet. There were one or two centres, which it would appear, may not have accessed their centre report for this unit from the previous series. These can be obtained from your examinations officer.

A number of centres took advantage of previous guidance that if a candidate is writing a script or creating designs for items 2 or 3, it is optional to film them presenting their ideas. So in a number of centres there were candidates with a single filmed item, Item 1, this is acceptable. In one centre this was the case for all the candidates. Working Records (WRs) were much improved and generally reflected an investigation, which is at the core of this unit. The WRs for the strongest candidates charted the 'journey' and moderators often commented on them being 'an enjoyable and informative read'. Most centres were adopting a version of the five recommended headings to store work under. Introduction, Item 1, Item 2, Item 3 and Final Evaluation.

There were improvements in Final Evaluations, with centres appearing to fully utilise the hour allowed for this. However there is still a tendency to make it a re-cap repeating what they did for the three items. Once candidates have completed their 'research' by completing the 3 Items, they should reflect on the potential of the stimulus to make a good play.

For instance what is the best audience, genre, and performance style? What strong characters and tensions have been identified that could be included? It is permissible to include the ideas of other candidates that have been observed with the source acknowledged.

This moves on from what they have done, to how they would develop it and is it worth developing. Candidates should have already evaluated each individual Item as they completed them; many candidates did this in some detail so the Final Evaluations often contained a lot of repetition. Most centres had embraced the idea of Item 1 being an improvisation testing out script ideas, which is the intention. There were few centres this time over developing the item and attempting to create a full drama with several scenes and including semiotics. There did appear to be a tendency in centres for the preparation stage to be used to fix things too much so that by the time candidates started Item 1 all the key decisions had been made, which meant the investigative approach was not developed through the three items. The preparation period is for general work rather than specific work on the stimulus. The work on experimenting with the stimulus starts once controlled assessment begins. Candidates should be encouraged to concentrate on one scene and have some character development, rather than create multiple scenes.

There are developing two broad approaches to the stimulus and both are perfectly legitimate. The first approach is where the candidates are given a brief (as illustrated by the first OCR support DVD). The brief often defines certain aspects of the investigation eg you will be creating a TIE performance for KS3 on the issue of In such a scenario certain aspects are fixed, but candidates should still have the scope to investigate the plotting and performance possibilities. The second approach is they are given the stimulus and have to decide themselves what they are going to do with it (as illustrated by the more recent OCR support DVD). Here there will be no whole group collective response, individual candidates can come up with totally different solutions. Their final evaluations will reflect this, they don't all have to agree and do the same play.

Many candidates are selecting TIE as their genre, but as with many candidates writing on genre the understanding is often very weak. It is very typical to state 'We are doing TIE as we want to educate the audience'. Such a response is not adequate. All theatre educates or informs. If

working on TIE they would be expected to consider the KS, the areas of the curriculum it is supporting, and how specific curriculum content is going to be included, any sensitive areas for consideration regarding their audience. In most cases candidates were devising scenes that were in no way connected to a possible TIE programme. They were creating their own plays, which is of course perfectly legitimate, but they were not specifically TIE.

For items 2 and 3 there was a good range of performance, and scriptwriting items, which candidates tackled with confidence. There were some good design items, however there were candidates who struggled on this and moderators commented that they thought there were candidates who could have scored more if they had instead produced another performance or devised a script. In some cases it seems as if centres are fixing the items that candidates tackle i.e., all candidates do a monologue for Item 2 and a design for Item 3. The candidates should choose what they are going to tackle for items 2 and 3. If candidates have little experience or knowledge of design for theatre they do not have to tackle this option.

A varied choice of stimulus was made and they all appeared to engage the candidates. It is preferable not to use an existing play or film as a stimulus, as the plot and characters are already fixed, the intention is for candidates to create their own. There is of course scope to adapt from stories or historical situations where story and characters are given. However it is important candidates have the opportunity to devise their own distinctive interpretations of any material given.

Overall centres were tackling this unit with more confidence, with more utilising the flexibility it offers candidates to select what they are going to work on. For centres preparing candidates for this unit please read in conjunction with the June 2012 Principal's Report which draws from a larger cohort of centres and consequently is fuller in terms of advice and examples of approach.

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