AQA

Technical Award L1/2 Performing Arts

PER 1: Unlocking Creativity
Report on the Examination

3745
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Introduction

A small number of centres entered students for this unit in this first year of the Technical Award Performing Arts specification. This unit forms the foundation for further learning on the course; students are required to respond to a brief provided by AQA and then work in small groups to devise an idea for an original performance. This idea is then presented in the form of a pitch along with extracts from the piece. The set briefs for this first year were: 'Urban Myths and Legends' and 'Struggle'. Both briefs proved equally popular with students. 'Urban Myths and Legends' inspired a range of imaginative responses including the reinterpretation of classic fairy tales in a contemporary context and stories associated with the local area. 'Struggle' inspired performance ideas related to a range of social and political stories - both directly connected to the Suffragette movement and to other, more contemporary, issues. Some of the best ideas stemmed from subjects that were strongly connected to a moral or social theme that the students clearly felt strongly about - this added relevance to their research and greater depth to their aims for their performance.

Administration / presentation of work

On the whole, centres were well aware of the requirement to present contextual information on the record form to aid the moderator in identifying students on DVD recordings and to fully justify/explain the awarding of marks. There were no difficulties in student identification with a particularly successful strategy being to clearly state each student's position within the initial line up prior to the presentation. The quality of video recordings was generally acceptable although some centres had the camera at too great a distance from the presenters. Teachers should note that it is not necessary to send further DVD evidence of students' practical work, only the recording of the pitch presentation and extracts. Centres are reminded that there is a 40 side limit for portfolios. Some students presented work that was very brief and which failed to cover the range of evidence required. Portfolios were generally clearly formatted and students presented their ideas imaginatively using a combination of prose, diagrams, annotated photographs, tables and spreadsheets for budgeting information. It is permissible for students to use up to 10 further sides for materials included in an appendix. It should be clear how this material relates to the ideas presented in the main portfolio.

Assessment

It is important that teachers and students appreciate that the portfolio is a record of the *individual's* ideas and planning, not the group. Evidence within portfolios may vary from the group evidence provided during the final pitch presentation to reflect individual preferences. Group evidence in the portfolio is not acceptable and authorship must be clear.

The five areas of assessment are commented upon in the sections below. Teachers are reminded that the first three areas relate to evidence presented in the portfolio only.

Research (portfolio)

This area of assessment covers the initial workshop stage and the research undertaken for the pitch presentation. It is a requirement that students clearly demonstrate that they have experienced both performance and production based workshops at the outset of the course. Most centres achieved this through brief workshop evaluations. An initial skills audit was included by virtually all students which helped to give a clear baseline of their skills and experience at the start of the course. Further evidence related to investigations into the performing arts industry and specific research activities for the chosen brief. Some of the evidence was rather general in nature - students are advised to always show how the research has made a *specific* impact on the

development of their ideas. Some portfolios contained a very large amount of evidence for research at the expense of others areas. The student and teacher notes on the unit 1 brief include a table suggesting the amount of sides that should be dedicated to each area.

Idea development (portfolio)

Students generally responded very imaginatively to the challenges set by the brief. Whilst they are required to experience both a production discipline and a performance discipline during the workshop stage of the unit it is entirely acceptable for them to focus on one chosen area for their input into the brief. All portfolios should demonstrate a clear overview of the ideas and intentions for the planned performance but some may give more weight to production and design and others to performance. Some students who discussed design ideas at length in the pitch presentation made very little reference to this within the portfolio itself. Students who had a strong concept or underlying theme to their production idea were generally more successful in expressing their ideas in greater depth. Many students were very imaginative in the way they presented information using mind maps, tables, annotated photos and diagrams. It was good to see how many students applied influences from theatre/other production companies to their ideas.

Planning and budgeting (portfolio)

This area demonstrated a range of evidence including synopses, stage plans, annotated scripts, designs for publicity material and awareness of health and safety. The most successful evidence came from students who had clearly investigated professional practice and methods of presentation (for stage plans etc.) and allowed this to influence their own style of presentation. It was encouraging to see that students were aware of financial planning and had considered the production costs against relative ticket prices and overall income. At times it was not always easy to see how the material presented related to the performance idea and students are encouraged to add notes to give further context/background to the evidence provided.

Practical activities (presentation)

It is important to remember that credit is awarded for both content *and* presentational skills during the pitch presentation. Students may make use of cue cards but it is expected that they will not read from PowerPoint slides or computer screens. Each individual should be the author of their specific section of the presentation. Generally, presentations were well-divided between members and it was clear that there had been adequate rehearsal. Some presentations were highly professional and engaging. Some groups decided to include the performance extracts at various stages of the presentation whilst other centres concluded the full presentation and then moved on to the extracts. Either approach is acceptable. Some students who were focussing on production roles could have made greater use of visual aids such as large scale designs/models and other group members who could model costume or make-up. Recordings were generally well made and there were no issues with volume or clarity.

Transferable skills

The key term for this area of assessment is *communication*. It is expected that the communication skills of each group member is considered throughout the process and not just during the presentation. To achieve marks in the highest band a student should demonstrate excellent communication within the group at all stages of preparation but this will also be clearly evident in the presentation itself.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator