



GCE

Performing Arts

Advanced GCE A2 H546

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H146

Reports on the Units

June 2010

H146/H546/R/10

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

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Chief Examiner's Report

June 2010 saw a good level of entries on this specification. It is apparent that centres do prefer to submit work for the majority of units in the June session, which is in line with the expectation of the specification. There was evidence of good practice in all units and varied work across the spectrum. Centres are providing increased opportunities for candidates to develop greater knowledge and understanding of The Performing Arts Industry through increased workshops and performance work. This is encouraging as these opportunities fulfil the vocational aspects of the course.

Examiners and Moderators reported that candidates were generally well prepared and displayed an awareness of the requirements of the specification. Good practice was evident in all of the units; G380/4 saw good candidates submitting detailed case studies and thorough answers alongside research and comparative skills in the study of two organisations and in the projections for the first year of work; In the G381 Skills Development moderators commented on improved analysis of skills development and its process, through detailed skills development action plans; performance work in G382/6 saw some outstanding productions with candidates tackling all aspects of performance technique. Examiners/Moderators commented on the high standards seen in some performances and also produced in portfolios. Some centres had really started to develop the type of performance tasks undertaken by candidates. Portfolio work saw a better use of technical terms and industry conventions supporting the vocational aspects of the specification.

The weakest units were the production pathway units 383/7. This was mainly because many candidates are still not using industry style conventions when tackling their set briefs. Aspects of G385 Exploring Repertoire were also reported as challenging where candidates had not applied sufficient understanding and knowledge of the stylistic conventions.

Candidates generally, across the units, were able to access the assessment criteria with confidence. However, performance statistics showed that many candidates were performing well on some of the units but not so well on other units. Centres must ensure that candidates are able to access the assessment criteria for each unit. There is detailed guidance on the OCR website to support teachers with detailed guidance and assignments.

G380 Investigating Performing arts Organisations

G380 is an investigation unit designed to help candidates to understand how 'the business' works and the range of roles within the organisation. Moderators commented on the number of portfolios presented that reflected quality research into how businesses operated, generated an income, employed staff and marketed shows. Centres had ensured that the candidates selected appropriate venues and undertook appropriate research.

Some of the portfolio work was of a high standard showing a considerable amount of research and presented accordingly with a good use of terminology and technical terms. Many candidates were able to produce case studies that covered the scope of the performing arts industries and the way in which they operate. Good practice saw information sourced extremely well presented, using graphs, pie charts, data collection charted for comparative analyses and PowerPoint used to deliver the job presentation.

Concerns, however, have arisen where centres have allowed candidates to present case studies on the same organisations and present on the same job role. This makes it very difficult for both the Moderators deciphering which work is candidate driven and which is teacher led or web

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information and also for the candidates where they only have access to limited information. Centres must encourage individual responses from candidates.

Candidates found the comparative aspects and reflective commentary difficult. Candidates need to be able to express opinions and qualify them with reference to measurable outcomes. Candidates must also comment on aspects such as pay and conditions, trade unions, the social and cultural dimensions of the organisations as well as the opportunities for progression and development. Good candidates were able to make perceptive comments on the effectiveness of the organisations. Comments about purpose, structure, operations and markets are essential alongside a good analysis of the job structure within the organisations.

The second aspect of the unit containing the job presentation was, again, less well done. Issues with regard to the type of job selected and generic evidence meant candidates were unable to access the higher marks. Too many candidates are selecting generic job roles that do not identify the specific person being studied or the organisation in which they work. It is essential to set the role thoroughly in context of one of the selected organisations.

G381 Skills Development

This unit presented a wide range of work across genres during this session. More candidates were submitting a detailed Skills Development Plan (SDP). The whole unit hinges on initial targets that are regularly visited and updated through feedback and progression of the work undertaken. If candidates do not include this plan they are unable to comment on the progress and development made. The essential part of this unit is to be able to show development of skills. Centres that record this journey from initial readings to the finished piece are able to justify marks awarded and show the development made.

The unit gives the candidates the opportunity to develop professional practice and explore new skills in specialist areas of the performing arts. Candidates need to evaluate the level and range of their technical skills and identify suitable activities and exercises through practical exploration to develop and extend their abilities.

All centres need to concentrate on the process of acquiring skills through practical involvement in pieces taken from repertoire. There were still too many issues with self-devised work, particularly in dance works, which is not permitted by the specification. Performance work must be recorded on DVD and accompany the portfolio to support progress made. Good practice saw chaptered DVDs that recorded the candidates' journey through the development of the pieces and gave an insight into the progress the candidate had made rather than just the end product. However, centres must ensure that all candidates can be easily identified on the DVD.

G382 Professional practice: performance

Many centres produced high quality performance work that really focused on the ensemble aspects of the unit. Centres had considered the choice of material more carefully during this session to ensure that all candidates had the opportunity to access all levels of the marking criteria and were given adequate exposure time. Selection of material is probably the most important factor for centres and during the next session they may wish to ask for further guidance and clarification as to whether their chosen piece meets the requirements of the specification. The use of repertoire was reported as being much better with only a few centres including aspects of self-devised work, mainly in dance works, this of course is not allowed.

This performance unit is about the skills and activities involved in a performance project from the initial planning to the development and ultimate performance of the piece. Some candidates

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seen during this session had developed a real sense of 'belonging to' and 'ownership of' their work.

The discussion saw many candidates who were passionate about their performance work, what it meant to them and how they personally had developed. Centres really tried to provide challenging projects where candidates could aspire to professional standards in front of a 'live' audience.

Performance

Many candidates showed good performance techniques, created appropriately for the type of material selected. Audience awareness and communication were improved with many candidates able to demonstrate a good understanding of this. There was no doubt that for the majority of candidates the practical aspects of a performance piece were both exciting and challenging and definitely motivational. Some centres displayed a strong sense of professional practice in their work with impressive theatrical performances. The key factor was undoubtedly teamwork. Good centres demonstrated appropriate and effective interaction with everyone involved giving a feeling of unity and coherence.

Centres must ensure that candidates are prepared, as there were clearly occasions where candidates needed further guidance for example, singing in the correct key and tonal qualities, as well as basic skills and stylistic demands. Candidates should not be left to produce and direct the pieces. Teachers must take responsibility for these areas.

Many centres considered the professional aspects of performance and were including the use of lighting and sound as well as elaborate sets, props and costumes. The inclusion of an audience allowed candidates to communicate and engage giving the event a real sense of occasion.

Performance Diaries

Examiners commented on improved portfolios in this session with emphasis on diary logs, research and health and safety. Good practice was seen where candidates showed clear evidence of planning, target setting, diaries that contained reflective comments on progress and clear application of skills and techniques. Health and Safety information was improved with many candidates going beyond just warm ups, spills and wires. Candidates were attempting to apply industry practice to their own work through detailed logs in rehearsals, performance awareness and risk assessments.

Whilst there was an improvement from the last session, there was still evidence of poorly produced diaries, done almost as an afterthought. Centres ensure candidates complete these as part of their ongoing work as they will otherwise lose vital marks that affect their overall grade. Centres need to ensure that candidates are aware of the importance of the diary and must encourage students to bring them in line with the standards achieved for performance work.

Recording the performances was done fairly well, with some chaptered DVDs, but centres are reminded that they must send the DVD recording to the examiner within three days. Centres must take responsibility for DVD recordings and ensure that they are of a good quality and that they can be played on a variety of DVD players. Identification of candidates must be included on the DVD with supporting notes of entrance and exits as well as key scenes and moments.

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G383 Professional practice: production

There was only a small cohort entered for this session. Whilst there were some improvements with regard to evidence through DVDs, the quality of the work overall remained weak. Many centres do not seem to understand the range and depth of technical evidence that is required both in the portfolio and the production demonstration. Centres must look to provide industry compliant software and process including industry standard diagrams, scales and terminology.

Good practice saw candidates presenting various aspects of their work to camera creating 'DVD diaries'. This showed the examiner the preparation work that production candidates are involved in as well as what is going on before, during and after a performance. Portfolio work contained further evidence to support the candidates' work.

Centres should contact OCR for advice and guidance or look to attend INSET courses to gain a better insight into how to deliver this unit.

G384 Getting Work

Moderators reported an improved awareness about the professional context of the work. Centres have responded to the demands of the unit which has in turn helped candidates to understand how the industry operates with regard to employment. All work must be based on sound research, focusing on interviews with freelance professionals. There was evidence of some outstanding work where candidates displayed a real sense of the income they could achieve, alongside an understanding of the business and the professional aspects of getting employment. These candidates demonstrated a thorough awareness of the professional context of the work. Promotional packs were more persuasive, through visual evidence, as well as realistic in content. Quality in the outcome is essential to attract the professional agencies and employers. Candidates should focus on a particular market – agent, music/dance genre.

Centres need to read the Principal Moderators report for further guidance.

G385 Exploring Repertoire

Both centres and candidates need to approach this unit in a more academic way. This unit requires extensive research into both the stylistic features of the selected works and the application of these stylistic features in performance. Having researched and gathered key information candidates then need to move this knowledge into performance.

Many moderators commented on further improvements made by centres with some outstanding performance pieces where centres had worked to apply professional standards. In these cases centres had really engaged with repertoire and its demands. Centres need to be aware that equal marks are attached to both performances as too many centres are producing one high quality full-scale production and one production that is almost an afterthought.

Moderators also commented on the tendency by centres to 'over mark' candidates in this unit, particularly at the top end of the marking band which meant many centres, unfortunately, had to be scaled down. Centres must ensure that they are not over-marking their candidates by applying the marking criteria more rigidly.

The written essays were not always sufficiently related to the practical work undertaken and contained irrelevant research. Candidates must be guided towards the socio-historical contexts in which the selected works were written and performed. Greater focus is also needed on the use of footnotes, citations, acknowledgement of websites and bibliographies. Candidates must state and acknowledge what they have read and where they have learnt about their selected

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pieces. The Principal Moderator has written a detailed report and centres should read this as well as seeking further advice from INSET meetings and exemplar materials.

G386 Producing Your Showcase

Examiners reported an improvement in the quality of the work seen in this unit. There was evidence of good practice seen and varied work across the centres. Candidates seemed to be better equipped in approaching the unit. Many centres had understood the holistic approach needed and examiners reported that the standard of the overall performances appeared to have improved with more centres making it 'an event' with the use of lighting, costumes and simple staging. Many candidates attempted to put their selection of material in context which helped to show their understanding and interpretation of the pieces. Where centres had supported candidates from the selection of their material right through to the final performance the work was at the top end of the marking scale, showing professionalism and outstanding practice.

Teacher guidance in both selection and performance of the material is essential. Many centres realised the importance of selecting the right material, including suitable material as well as balance and contrast. Candidates need guidance and support and should not be left to select, rehearse and perform without their teachers input. There were still many candidates however, who had selected works that were unsuitable and far too difficult for them to cope with. This often meant that the candidates did not show any real understanding of what they were doing, resulting in a lack of mastery of the material and weak performances.

Good candidates were able to shape and mould their material to display a sophisticated understanding of the interpretative skills required. For these candidates, performance work was impressive, they had made a real effort to perform their pieces using effective lighting, sound, live music, costume and make up. It was extremely impressive to see candidates achieving such high levels of skill as well as a perceptive understanding of the professional context of the work.

Too many centres do not recognise that the performance aspect of this unit is essential. Where centres had supported candidates from selection through to performance, the candidates were able to access the higher marking bands, showing professionalism and in some cases excellent practice. Centres must attach more status to the event, ensuring that it is a real sense of occasion. Standards at this level are expected to be significantly higher than the AS performance unit and centres must acknowledge this.

Centres need to read the Unit reports from the Principal Examiners/Moderators carefully, to ensure that they are developing their own understanding and subsequent application of the specification. Many centres would benefit from greater attention to the completion of the preparatory notes, as too many candidates are losing valuable marks in this area. INSET is strongly recommended.

G387 Production Demonstration

This unit only attracted a small entry and candidates did not respond to the industry requirements that have been suggested. Many candidates selected a technical realisation but were unable to document the process and subsequently, delivered an end product that did not meet the demands of the unit. Work seen generally on this unit was of a poor standard. Many candidates did not consider the idea of collecting evidence to support what they are doing and only presented an end product/demonstration. Many candidates responded to requests by examiners for presentations of their work and this did help to improve the marks awarded.

Candidates must show evidence including detailed DVDs, thorough preparatory notes and planned demonstrations. A few candidates, through their portfolio work and product

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presentation, were demonstrating a solid understanding of the processes required to realise their designs. They included research undertaken and creative processes adopted, showing a depth of understanding. Not all candidates considered the social, historical and cultural influences relating to their designs. Some candidates displayed knowledge of technical language and conventions with stronger candidates working to comply with industry requirements. Stronger submissions supported the candidates on the G386 pathway, which is how the unit was originally designed to work. The product demonstration should be authoritative and absorbing. Designs need to create highly effective engagement for the audience. There should be evidence of technical accuracy. Candidates should be able to demonstrate a personal style in shaping and moulding the designs. Presentations of the work at the higher end should contain a level of originality in both the conception and realisation.

Candidates must submit both their preparatory notes and their portfolios containing their designs, as well as pictures, photographs and DVD evidence of their product demonstration. Centres are encouraged to support production candidates in recording a DVD diary throughout the process detailing all aspects of the work undertaken. This helps the examiner to see how the candidate has worked and can be a better source of evidence than the portfolio and diary. All centres must ensure that the interview/discussion with the examiner and production candidate is recorded. Evidence is often difficult to provide for the production candidates and every opportunity to capture it should be undertaken. Those candidates that did supply DVD diaries were able to capture work undertaken that may not have been obvious in their portfolios and awarded marks which may have been lost without DVD evidence.

Centres should ask for guidance on this unit to ensure they are complying with the specification.

G380 Investigating performing arts organisations

Many of the portfolios presented for Unit G380 during this session showed that candidates had researched deeply into performing arts organisations, enabling them to discover how they operated as businesses, generating income that allowed them to employ performers and stage entertaining shows. These candidates had been steered to appropriate organisations to study and guided in a way that allowed them to meet the spirit of the unit as well as performance criteria. Moderators commented on the range of different performing arts organisations and the roles within them that had been studied and the insight shown by many of the candidates submitting work for this unit.

However, concerns have arisen from the small number of centres who allowed candidates to present case studies on the same two organisations and give talks on the same job role. This defeats one of the intentions of this unit. A class group can gain knowledge of a wide range of job roles if each individual takes a different one to research and report back to the group on. But the main concern is that of plagiarism. When the group is sharing all the same resource material it is very difficult to ensure that each has undertaken individual work and that plagiarism has not taken place. Centres should be aware that action is taken when plagiarism is suspected. Centres must avoid this in future submissions by ensuring candidates carry out independent work.

To overcome the difficulties encountered by centres in accessing suitable organisations to obtain primary data one approach is for the class group to visit a local performing arts venue together to collect information. Each candidate then writes his or her first case study on this one organisation from the research that they carried out individually. The visit will give the centre the opportunity to teach candidates how and what to research and guide them on what to present.

The second case study must be an exclusive one, and the subject chosen by the candidate (but with support from the centre). The candidate will be expected to conduct individual research and present a personal case study. It is recommended that candidates cover a spread of organisations but avoid those that may impose some limitations (sole traders and freelancers). Candidates should quote sources and give references that will demonstrate the individual work of the candidate.

While the evidence indicator asks for 'two different organisations' it would be difficult to find two identical performing arts organisations. Two seemingly similar theatres or two concert halls or two arts centres will have very different structures, missions, products and be targeting different markets. They would prove interesting to compare and candidates should not be penalised for selecting two organisations that on the surface, seem very similar.

The most difficult part of this unit for most candidates this session is the requirement to compare organisations and provide 'reflective commentary on their effectiveness' (AO4.1.2) and 'produce an analytical account of the purpose and effectiveness' (AO4.1.3). Candidates are expected to be able to express opinions on the organisation, its effectiveness and to qualify this with reference to some measures - range of products, mission statements (and a comment on whether or not they are being achieved) ticket sales, balance sheets, standing in the community and reviews etc. Unfortunately this was not evident in most of the work seen this series and this omission is not being picked up in the marking.

The specification requires each candidate in a class group to present on a different job role from within one of the two organisations studied. Some candidates continue to present on a generic job role (an actor) and at times the marking for this was generous. Where candidates take this approach it is not possible to describe 'its significance and purpose within the organisation'. A

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generic job role presentation does not achieve marks above the lowest band (A01.3.1 and A04.2.1)

Other evidence seen had candidates presenting intimate talks on the personal employment history of the individual in the job role. Centres should remind candidates that this is not a career talk. It is an explanation of the importance of this job role to the organisation. It needs to be pointed out on the organisational chart with lines of responsibility described. The nature of the work and its importance will be related to the type of contract offered and the benefits enjoyed. There are no marks for the incumbents' CV.

Many well organised centres presented evidence for the job role presentations through a labelled and chaptered DVD plus a printout of the presentation slides with supporting notes and a script. This approach allows candidates to fully demonstrate achievement of the criteria and centres are encouraged to take this approach.

Weaker candidates consistently approached the case studies through the history of the organisation. They sometimes wrote pages about the way the 'theatre' was founded and developed. This is simple factual information, which is easy to find and write up, but there are no marks for this. These weaker candidates often sketched over the important parts, how the company is organised and operated. While the company history may be interesting and sometimes helps to put the study into a context, it is recommended that this is kept brief and only included where necessary.

Whilst the quality of portfolios has improved with less superfluous material included the weaker candidates often included seating plans or pictures on the venue or flyers for shows. Higher scoring candidates limited the illustrations to organisational charts, which were explained and pie charts that describe income and expenditure or funding streams.

The quality of work in portfolios showed improvement with fewer candidates trying to comment alternatively on the two organisations throughout one essay. The more successful candidates present a case study on one organisation, followed by the second before concluding with a comparison and 'reflective commentary'. Candidates should be encouraged to be concise and to be reminded of the word count guidance.

Most centres helpfully completed the URS sheets as required during this session. There often was clear use of the 'location column' and page numbers provided that linked with annotations on the scripts. This enables moderators to quickly find key evidence and confirm the marking. The comments column should help explain to moderators how the marking criteria were met; and should not include congratulatory comments to the student. Please note centres must include both candidate and centre numbers on the URS forms.

G381 Professional Practice: Skills Development

Most aspects of the moderation process went well. Centres generally understood the sampling process and enclosed the correct documentation. It is important that centres send all documentation promptly. Centres must send work on time and not wait to be chased by moderators. Internal standardisation should take place in good time before the OCR deadline for submission.

If a centre has ten or fewer candidates, they should send all the coursework promptly to the moderator. If the centre has more than ten candidates, they should send the MS1 and wait for the moderator to send them a letter stating which portfolios should be sent as a sample. Centres are reminded that where there are more than ten candidates you must wait for the moderator to inform you of the sample required.

DVDs must be sent with the portfolios and centres should not wait for moderators to request recorded evidence. DVDs should be chaptered. They should be checked and played before they leave the centre ensuring that the DVD(s) can be played on a DVD player. Moderators had problems with DVDs which would not play on any lap top or computer or DVD player. Please make back up copies in case DVDs are damaged in the post or will not play. Moderators reported that a number of centres are still not packing DVDs appropriately resulting in breakage in transit. Please package the DVDs in padded bags to avoid breakage...

It is very helpful if each candidate has their own DVD of evidence with their portfolio. Each recorded performance should appear in chronological order so that the moderator can assess the development of skills being made by the candidate.

Some centres are still offering devised dance instead of repertoire work. **DEvised WORK IS NOT PART OF THIS UNIT.** Moderators do not count a devised dance piece as one of the three works, either in progress or final performance. Only repertoire work is acceptable on this unit.

Centres should include a front sheet as page one of the portfolio clearly stating the skills chosen for development and the three pieces of repertoire with details of titles of work and the names of the playwrights, composers and choreographers eg "King Lear" by Shakespeare, "Ghost Dances" by Christopher Bruce (1987).

Candidates should have researched the repertoire and be able to give detailed notes relating to when the piece was written, who performed it and where. There should be an explanation about which version of the repertoire they are using and how they have adapted it for performance. This is particularly important for dance pieces and physical theatre. Stand-up comedy should not be devised. If the work cannot be identified as repertoire then it will be disregarded as evidence.

Centres must identify the candidates on the DVDs. Ideally candidates should introduce themselves to camera by name, number and title of repertoire piece. DVDs should be accompanied by a running order. There should be a recent photograph of the candidate and details concerning their appearance on the DVD such as a brief description of their costume so that the moderator can identify them. DVDs should be chaptered with a clear indication on the running order sheet of where the candidate appears on the DVD for example John Smith 0234 enters stage left at 10 mins 30 seconds. Much time can be wasted in searching for candidates' performances on the DVD. If a candidate cannot be identified, the evidence will be disregarded.

The position of the camera in relation to the stage needs careful consideration. Sometimes moderators could not see the candidates at close range and could not assess the performances. The most helpful recordings showed work in progress at close range so that the facial expressions and eye focus were obvious to the viewer. For final performances with live

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audience, the camera is naturally placed further away. Some of the best DVDs showed a development of the piece from first attempt through rehearsal to the final performance. Final performances must take place in front of a live audience in an appropriate venue. Rehearsal rooms and studios are not likely to produce the best type of final performance for the candidate. Camera work has improved and many centres had remembered to ensure that the candidates present themselves to the camera BEFORE the performance and state their name and candidate number.

The pages in the portfolios should be numbered and centres should use these numbers when referring to the location of evidence. Centres should apply the assessment criteria rigorously and provide detailed annotation on the pages of the portfolio and on the URS to justify the marks awarded. Reference should be made to the DVD to help locate the evidence. If the location column is not filled out using page numbers and DVD timings, the moderator will send the portfolio back to the centre for this information to be given on the URS. Most centres are using detailed annotation but some centres are still not filling in the location column with sufficient detail.

Portfolios should be unique to the candidate and art form and relevant to the skills chosen for development. Internet research and studies of practitioners must be relevant to the repertoire chosen for performance and annotation of research should make this clear. Please do not allow candidates to include downloads and teacher handouts which have not been annotated by the candidate. Whole scripts should not be included.

The **Skills Development Plan** (SDP) should be detailed and include a summary of what the candidate has already achieved. This should be a resume of no more than 500 words and can be in the form of a CV or short biography. There were some excellent examples of CVs and biographies this session. The SDP should outline which skills are to be worked on and state the three pieces of repertoire work (two in progress and almost complete and one finished piece performed in front of a live audience.) The SDP should be adjusted as the unit progresses. The SDP is the framework for the unit and should include notes on workshops and lessons. Candidates must refer to the SDP throughout the portfolio and explain how they have adapted it in response to feedback and self-evaluation. Some centres did this in the form of a table and this worked very well.

Commentaries should be in written form or presented on DVD. They need to be detailed and demonstrate candidate ownership. There have been some very informative and detailed commentaries presented on DVD which have provided good evidence.

Tick box approaches and pro forma documentation are not conducive to in-depth analysis and they hinder personal engagement. The commentary should be an independent document which explains how the repertoire demonstrates the skills development. The candidate can write notes throughout the portfolio detailing development and then a commentary at the end.

Observation reports must likewise be detailed analyses of the candidates' work and development, written by appropriately skilled observers who use appropriate technical terminology and their experience to make artistic judgements. In order to document the journey made by the candidate throughout the unit, it is helpful to make observations at the beginning and end of the unit and at key points on the way. Some centres did not sign or date these reports rendering them invalid. There should be a minimum of 3 observation reports.

The unit has presented a wide range of work this session. Some centres are stretching their candidates and offering them some challenging texts to work from such as King Lear. Some very mature performances have been presented across the art forms. However, three final performances and a weak portfolio will not gain high marks. The essential part of this unit is to show development of skills. For each piece, there should be recordings of first readings, rehearsals, dress rehearsals and final performance in the case of the finished piece. It is fine to

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show a candidate marking through a dance and then rehearsing it once the routine has been learned. Music candidates can show how they learned their piece and how it was developed through rehearsal to final performance which could be part of a musical theatre show. It is recommended that centres offer a candidate a variety of pieces so that they are not all in one style or from one era. One piece needs to be a group piece.

Most centres show good awareness of Health and Safety procedures and this is clearly shown in the portfolios. There needs to be a constant update of Health and Safety regulations to encourage candidate awareness. Health and Safety should be embedded in the portfolio not merely added in an appendix. Candidates should be able to show how they have used the information and knowledge in their practice. Dance performances should take place in a room with a sprung floor. The majority of centres chose appropriate spaces for their rehearsals and performances. If possible, try to give candidates a variety of spaces in which to perform.

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G382 Professional Practice: Performance

G383 Professional Practice: Production

General administration and organisation

Administration was generally good with effective communication between examiners and centres. There were some reports of centres failing to send diaries and portfolios 14 days in advance. Centres are reminded that DVD evidence should be sent to the examiner within three days of the exam.

Generally the external examination was managed well by centres with appropriate timetables and organisation on the day. Documentation in most centres was used appropriately.

Centres with G383 candidates have continued to extend the range of evidence recording both the interviews and provided a 'roving eye' DVD that followed technical work during the rehearsals and performance, this gives a comprehensive range of supporting evidence and should be regarded as a model by centres entering candidates for this unit in the future.

It would be helpful if the candidate contribution to performance form included two photographs, one of which should be of the candidate in costume.

The Examination

Centres continue to work hard to give each candidate an equitable amount of exposure in appropriately timed performances.

The choice of material provided sufficient technical and artistic rigour to produce evidence at an appropriate level with very little devised work apparent during this session. There are however a small number of centres reproducing dance school or rock school pieces. All performances had audiences and good technical support including costume and make-up was evident, particularly from those centres with G383 candidates who had engaged well with the professional standards required.

The choice of material needs to be given greater consideration by some centres to ensure that all candidates have the opportunity to access all levels of marks and are given sufficient exposure. Most centres understand the meaning of repertoire but some continue to produce an evening of short variety pieces, some of which are self-devised and many of which were solos.

G382 is an ensemble piece and should be treated as such. Solo performances where the candidate performed just one song/dance/piece of music within a group piece or as part of a band are not fulfilling the unit specification.

Thought should be given to costumes, scenery, lighting and sound. Some centres had made a real effort with set, costumes, lighting and sound and this enhanced the work of the students. Some were very simple but effective. Some were more elaborate. Others had given little or no consideration to these aspects. A range of approaches is expected given the choices and resources available but centres must give candidates the opportunity to produce evidence that tests their understanding of professional practice against the assessment criteria.

Most centres now seem to be fully aware that candidates cannot elect which art form they wish to be assessed on and understand that a candidate is marked on their entire performance.

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Where musical theatre was presented it was done with some style and candidates seemed to engage effectively with the range of genres presented. Candidates still need to pay more attention to small but crucial presentation details such as holding focus just prior to and just after performance has finished. Candidates should also bear in mind that it is not a good idea to telegraph a mistake by grimacing at the audience.

Drama pieces were either light-hearted or deeply grave. In both cases candidates did not always understand the style or genre which they were attempting to convey and the audience needed to be tolerant in places. Centres would be well advised to select material which both suits their candidates and which is well-provided for in terms of research resources.

Most candidates performed with a sense of enjoyment and worked hard to achieve the best performance that their skills allowed. In the larger groups a few candidates were overshadowed by others and would have benefitted from greater exposure.

In the mark scheme there are clearly significant marks to be gained by engaging with, and understanding the needs of the audience and some confident performances failed to recognise the importance of this.

Some centres had encouraged the candidates to work as a 'company' and this had successfully engendered supportive working environments and cooperation between students. Less successful was the collaboration between technical/production students and performers. This dramatically affected portfolio marks with some G383 Production candidates not taking an active role in meetings/rehearsals. In all the performances seen the support of a large and enthusiastic audience proved stimulating to the candidates.

It is interesting to observe the different routes taken by centres. Sometimes the safe route of a traditional performance elicited some well constructed diaries but bland performances. Other more challenging work was more difficult to document but produced some electrifying and creative performances. The choice of material should challenge students and broaden their perception of performance material and outcomes.

The Production students' true level of technical knowledge and appreciation of their subject was rarely reflected in their portfolios which tended to be very sketchy. Examiners will continue to try and address this imbalance by recording interviews with candidates and seeking additional evidence of operations during the performance.

The Interview

The interview with the performance group remains a useful way to become familiar with individual candidates and is the necessary first step in knowing the candidates. There is also some enjoyment and relaxation in the process with candidates, once they understand there are no marks attached, being able to show their preparedness and understanding of the process they are able to embark on. Generally candidates were fluent and articulate.

Portfolios

Portfolios continue to improve with candidates able to respond to some very useful and comprehensive structures from centres. Better candidates are able to augment these with committed and 'owned' responses drawing on practitioners and seen performances. The best portfolios showed clear evidence of planning, target setting, diary entries that showed progress and an application of techniques.

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Health and Safety contents have improved with the use of risk assessments, annotated photographs and appropriate warm-up activities all contributing to an enhanced understanding. However, standards continue to vary considerably. There were some good examples where candidates had really tried to link H & S to their own performance and this should be encouraged but many candidates were still relying on vague comments about wires and spills and keeping the stage area clear without much thought about their own, specific, circumstances. There were some good examples of risk assessments applied to performance, for example, one centre where one candidate had taken on this responsibility.

Some centres are still encouraging their candidates to take on a production role in addition to that of performing. Whilst this shows an awareness of the whole production process it results in some portfolios containing a great deal of information on, for example, ticket and poster design, at the expense of informative portfolio entries. Little credit can be given in such circumstances.

Portfolios contained a considerable amount of generalisation both in research and H&S. Candidates need to use the precision required in linking research and process to specific performance outcomes. Many centres are using structured approaches to address this however some candidates' marks continue to be limited by poor portfolios. Portfolios were variable in content with a surprising number of candidates failing to use the format of a diary or log to record the development of their role. Many were loaded with downloads and photos with no reference to this material in the text and no credits as to where they were sourced.

Further information and guidance can be obtained on the OCR website and by joining the online community.

G384 Getting Work

Administration

In almost every case MS1 mark sheets and CCS160 forms were submitted appropriately. Annotation was generally good, from colour coding to detailed notes on the work itself. However, occasionally there were no notes on the work, or general comments such as 'throughout portfolio' were offered. This slowed the moderation process, making it more difficult to easily identify where marks had been awarded. Comments should be impersonal and objective, rather than used as candidate feedback. A number of centres tended to be somewhat over-generous in assessment, rewarding the amount or material submitted rather than the appropriateness of that material in communicating a clearly focused vision of a potential career. It was noted by several moderators that the standard of work achieved varied considerably between centres even where similar marks had been awarded.

Professional Context

There continues to be awareness of the professional context of the work, although the most noticeable hindrance to this remains where candidates relied on their school or college experience and the often limited experience of their teachers to provide all of the details for their pack. There is a need for portfolios to be based on research into the demands of the industry, focused to a large extent by the interviews conducted with freelance professionals. In the best work these interviews were explicitly reproduced as appendices and also clearly permeated and informed all of their work. There were still some portfolios that contained no evidence of having undertaken any interviews whatsoever.

Some centres adopt a very teacher led approach to this unit and whilst they give access to professionals in the business candidates need to be more attuned to the fact that the people they interview should relate to the areas within the profession in which they are seeking work.

There was an increased awareness of the use of promotional websites and several candidates had printed their web pages for inclusion within the portfolios.

Promotional pack

The best promotional packs had a clear reference to a specific artistic audience. They knew who they were marketing themselves to and what those companies or professional wanted. At worst, it was difficult to disentangle the promotional materials from the plethora of print-outs of internet pages, photocopied handouts and extraneous working notes, all of which severely reduced the impact of the work. These portfolios remained unedited and contained general course notes not responding to the specific demands of the specification. Most centres used appendices to take unused material and notes.

Résumés and CVs were not always well thought out and did not demonstrate a good professional progression together with a strong sense of professional aspiration in particular artistic vocational areas. There were often anomalies between what was claimed in the CV and what the plan actually contained. It should be noted that CVs and letters are not compulsory. It entirely depends on the 'audience' for the promotional pack and they should not be included habitually. This also includes letters that are in response to an advertisement; these can sometimes reduce the range of evidence and are not always appropriate. Overall the impact and attractiveness in marketing terms is what candidates should consider when designing the pack. They should be dynamic and lively (as well as informed) in a way that standard CVs and letters

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are sometimes not. Promotional packs should not be annotated, if necessary include the annotated copies as drafts in the appendix. Pro-mo packs should be as they are when they land on the artistic director's desk.

Sample letters were generally of an acceptable standard but there was considerable scope for adopting a more professional – and hence more persuasive – tone. The quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar sometimes undermined the quality of what was being said. It is vital that candidates adopt high professional standards in their use of written English – this is clearly in the assessment criteria. Some letters were not addressed to anyone and therefore their power to influence was severely restricted. It is important that there is an understanding of what is expected in the professional context – candidates should be asking themselves whether letters and CVs are what is expected in the specific job or vocational context.

Plan of first year of work

The Specification allows candidates to build their first year of work around a maximum of 50% contract work. This recognises the reality of the professional situation in providing a sustainable income during a period where getting work is difficult and where reputation is becoming established. It is a prerequisite, however, that such contract work should be in a related professional area. The majority of contracts were in teaching (either privately or in a College) and were appropriate in their scope and projected income. However, a minority of candidates identified work in supermarkets, restaurants and other retail work which had virtually no link with their professional aspirations.

The plans however, are becoming much more credible but some candidates still do not understand the need to get current rates of pay from the relevant organisations and unions and therefore come up with realistic earnings. Candidates in one or two centres continue to 'pack' the plan with over-detailed spreadsheets. The best plans were 'smart' and edited rigorously and provided figures that gave a clear indication of survival without providing multiple tables.

Most candidates related the range of freelance work identified to the research interviews they had conducted. Some centres provided plans for three or even five years – one detailed year is the demand, although it is quite acceptable as part of the analysis to look forward to subsequent years.

Better portfolios had numbered pages, contents and clear headings making it easier to locate the evidence. They also contained useful introductions and explanations to the various sections of work. Some candidates had not thought clearly about the qualifications they had gained and the work that they planned to do.

In financial matters few, if any, mentioned repaying student loans or student debt and none were intending to pay council tax. Not all candidates were clear about the differences between freelance and contract work eg terms and conditions of employment.

The best portfolios had an integrated approach to the tasks showing clearly how evidence gained from the interviews had informed the business plans and how the first year's work was likely to consist of a variety of jobs running alongside each other. Some candidates had merely described freelance and contract jobs without really considering the interrelationships between them. It made their work look unrealistic.

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Analysis of the plan

This was often the weakest aspect of the portfolios and proved to be a good differentiator between standards of work. It was almost a truism that the weaker the plan, the weaker the analysis of it. Most candidates were good at identifying the strengths of their plan since this was often closely related to the skills outlined in the résumé. Weaknesses were more difficult for candidates to identify. In terms of opportunities, the most able candidates could see that the nature of their work could grow in relation to their professional development and this provided a good source of discussion. Threats were more difficult to identify, but the strongest candidates were able to locate the work in a context that did identify such threats. Good candidates placed their analysis into a wider professional context and related it both to a specific professional area and their place in it. Given the current economic climate it should be a given for candidates to mention both their own personal issues and contexts in the SWOT analysis as well as the effect economic downturn has on the industry and audience behaviour.

G385 Exploring Repertoire

In overview, centres appear to have a greatly improved understanding of the purpose of the unit. That notwithstanding some centres are still struggling to grasp the criteria in full or in part and certain key requirements are not understood. In a number of cases this has disadvantaged candidates. Where centres have any doubts about the specification requirements they are urged to take advantage of INSET or for specific queries contact the Qualification Manager. Because this is a moderated unit centres are reminded of the importance of ensuring that supporting evidence and URS commentary is as detailed as possible. Where assessors have submitted very brief or non-specific comments or indeed, failed to annotate at all, the moderator has often been unable to support the marks awarded. Comments linking URS notation to both the essay *and* DVD evidence are the most helpful in this respect. For each AO one or two clearly signed examples are sufficient; it is not necessary to carry out an exhaustive listing of all instances.

It was not always clear whether a candidate was submitting work for the performance or the production pathways. There should be a clear unambiguous statement to this effect on the CCP, *Candidate Contribution to Performance/Production* form.

Centres too frequently seemed unable to draw a distinction between historical and contemporary studies. OCR is reluctant to be proscriptive in this respect, since it is understood that different art forms and genres demand different approaches but as a rule of thumb, the two periods should be separated by a clearly defined and easily recognisable cursor. In most cases this will be a significant period of time and /or a singular dissimilarity of genre or style. Periods must also present a significant contrast.

Essays

Candidate success in this unit stands or falls upon the quality of research. Study and research seems to be informing more of the performance outcomes but this research needs to be more relevant to the practical work undertaken. There is still a high instance of irrelevant research taken from popular websites which cannot in itself earn high marks. For example, while Shakespeare emerges as an enormously popular choice, many of the essays contain large sections of biographical detail (born, died, married etc.) which has little relevance to the socio-historical context in which his plays were written and performed. Candidates should be encouraged to develop an understanding of the purpose of the research and how it contributes to the performance produced and any adaptation thereof. Centres are urged to coach their candidates in the art of editing research so that only truly relevant material is included. The purpose of the research is to identify issues of genre, style and performance and production conventions as well as major socio-historical influences of the period which have influenced the text studied. Where personal events in the life of a practitioner can be cited as having had a direct bearing on the piece performed then this is of course, acceptable. Centres are recommended to select study texts which have appropriate research material available and to recommend books and academic Internet sources such as *Google Scholar* as well as other avenues of research. There continues to be an overreliance on single popular websites which may not be academically rigorous or accurate. When these were used as single references the evidence was often weak and limited in its relevance.

The similarities between some essays suggested that 'teacher led' notes had sometimes formed the basis of essays. Furthermore, plagiarism was clearly visible in cases where candidates had cut pieces from websites and pasted them into essays *verbatim*. Moderators are instructed to sample cited sources randomly to test the integrity of research. Academic rigour was more evident in socio-historical contexts but generally weak when applied to performance. Overall, research was of insufficient depth and could not therefore access the full range of marks

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available; the 'What' of research did not connect sufficiently with the 'How' of performance. Finally, candidates often did not state clearly which texts had been studied and a lot of moderation time was wasted in searching for this information.

Centres are requested to note that it is a **requirement** for all essays to include the following:

- Word Count (1500 words per essay + 10%)
- Bibliography/webography
- Footnotes/citations according to current academic practice (MLA, Harvard etc.)

There have been good examples of repertoire with genuine contrasts. In some cases however, selected texts were too 'close' to each other in style, period and/or thematic treatment. There is also evidence that some centres are manipulating the choice of texts so that candidates effectively get two chances at realising material which they are able to perform well. Work is needed to ensure the two choices really do offer a contrast to widen student knowledge and expertise.

Performance

A number of good choices were seen by moderators, demonstrating pleasing contrasts.

Musicals are not necessarily a good choice for those centres whose candidates do not possess good 'all round' Musical Theatre skills since assessment should be carried out on the appropriateness of the overall performance and cannot focus on strong points whilst overlooking weaknesses. In such a case, it would be better to identify opportunities to integrate single art forms into an 'umbrella' text; care should be taken however to avoid slotting candidates inappropriately into adapted texts as a 'party turn' to 'show off' their particular strengths. Such a course will disadvantage the candidate and consequently greater thought should be given to the preparation of candidates for performance.

It is regretted that a number of 'plastic chair' productions continue to be submitted. The ethos of this unit expects both productions to be treated with a balanced approach in which they are presented along with some attempt at production values. The classic case is where one production is the annual school play upon which considerable resources have been lavished and the other a classroom production in school uniform with no technical resources and no audience. Neither needs to be extravagant; both should be given equal value and attention to detail.

Marking

The single most significant trend has been the readiness to award marks in the top-most band to work that is unremarkable. Most centres awarding in the upper band had overly high expectations and marks were adjusted downwards accordingly. To achieve top marks essays need to demonstrate rigorous, focussed research which cites appropriately a wide range of high quality sources which are recorded in a detailed bibliography. The majority of essays lacked discrimination and organisation, failing to establish any kind of hypothesis or argument and basing conclusions on superficial evidence. Sweeping generalisations and historical inaccuracies were prevalent. Stylistic influences were often glossed over and the journey of discovery taken by both the group and the individual toward the adaptation and presentation of the text was frequently superficial or omitted entirely.

Historic essays were less well contextualised with candidates struggling to identify a sense of 'appropriateness' for the adaptation of an historic work for a modern audience.

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Administration

Most centres carried this out satisfactorily but in a number of cases submissions were marred by the absence of documents. Most centre work arrived promptly and was complete. Paperwork was generally good although there was a tendency to omit candidate/centre numbers on the URS. The candidate contribution sheet is an important document and centres are requested to ensure that these are completed fully. Candidate photos are a necessary requirement. Moderators still have had to chase CCS 160 forms and CW/Amend requests where transcription/arithmetical errors have occurred. It has been noted by moderators many transcription errors were reported this year. Whilst it is appreciated that many assessors are under some pressure at this time of the year centres are asked to consider the extra work that is incurred by all concerned if errors are allowed through. There were very late submissions from several centres and some poorly organised submissions with random paperwork and essays seemingly just thrust into a bag and posted.

DVD

Centres are requested to give attention to the quality and accessibility of DVD evidence. Poor camera work with ill-conceived angles disadvantages candidates, especially where facial expression or subtle gesture is hard to discern. The camera should be placed centrally and operated by a suitably experienced person with some familiarity with the performance thereby enabling anticipation of movement/entrances and exits etc. Similar care should be given to the acquisition of clear sound. At the beginning of the DVD candidate introductions (in costume) need to be slower and clearer. Where DVD evidence was chaptered appropriately and linked to the supporting material and written running order this made the moderation process much easier. Where the evidence is difficult to view moderators waste much time in endeavouring to work out who is who. To avoid the necessity of it being returned and a replacement requested, centres should ensure that their DVD evidence will play on a DVD player and Windows Media Player before sending it to the moderator. Overall however the quality of the DVD material submitted this session was good. Centres are recommended to keep a master copy in case of query.

In conclusion

There has been a distinct improvement in the work submitted this session. The above comments address the most common problems but the fact is that many centres are very close indeed to getting this module right is most encouraging'.

Centres should see this module as a departure from the other modules. G385 fulfils the QCA brief to incorporate academic rigour into the Specification and as such it depends on high quality research as a prelude to study in higher education. The performance both underpins and validates the research and not vice versa.

G386 Producing your own Showcase

General Comments

June 2010 saw a larger cohort of candidates. There was evidence of good practice seen and varied work across the centres. Candidates seemed to be better equipped in approaching the units. Many centres understood the holistic approach needed and examiners reported that the standard of the overall performances appeared to have improved with more centres making it 'an event' with the use of lighting, costumes and simple staging. Many candidates attempted to put their selection of material in context, which helped to show their understanding and interpretation of the pieces. Where centres had supported candidates from the selection of their material right through to the final performance the work was at the top end of the marking scale, showing professionalism and outstanding practice. This meant that the whole event had a sense of occasion.

Teacher guidance in both selection and performance of the material is essential. Many centres realised the importance of selecting the right material, including suitable material as well as balance and contrast. Candidates still need guidance and support and should not be left to select, rehearse and perform without their teachers input. There were still many candidates however, who had selected works that were unsuitable and far too difficult for them to cope with. This often meant that the candidates did not show any real understanding of what they were doing resulting in a lack of mastery of the material and dynamic performances.

Candidates should be producing a Showcase of three pieces of work containing two contrasting solo pieces and a duologue, duet or pas de deux. Candidates can choose to work in a single art form or choose a combination of art forms. The majority of centres understand the performance process of 15-minute showcases trying where possible to work back-to-back with their performance partner. There were still a few centres that were allowing candidates to perform their work in a compilation/variety show where their programme is interspersed with other candidates work, examiners were having to ask centres to change their programme often at the last minute. The challenge of this unit is to perform all three contrasting pieces over a fifteen-minute period showing a range of skill and abilities. The unit is about endurance, fitness and strength. Moving from one piece to the next showing focus and complete mastery of each piece.

The candidates were assessed over five aspects concerned with preparation and the performance itself. These included selection and preparation of the materials; accuracy and expression; stylistic awareness; difficulty of material and communication. Candidates were also required to produce preparatory notes to demonstrate the preparation process of putting their Showcase together.

Examiners reports again commented on a session of variable standards of performance work but of a slightly better standard. Selection of material was based more on candidate skills rather than likes and dislikes which meant stronger performance work. Good practice was evident where centres approached the work as a 'process to performance' encouraging candidates to create 'The Showcase'- developing and improving skills and performance techniques whilst tackling material that was both challenging and effective.

There were still aspects of 'I chose it because it was a challenge' or 'I selected this area because it was a new skill for me'. Candidates must be secure in their ability to attempt selected pieces. There are no marks awarded for 'having a go'. Candidates must select material that showcases the skills that they have. This is not a time to experiment with new ideas, candidates should be guided towards pulling together the holistic skills that they have developed throughout the units and focus on finding material within their ability range.

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The administration in centres was again, generally good. With the convenience of email, communications are significantly better and there appeared to be more contact between the centre and the examiner with regard to the details of the examination. Good practice was seen in centres that ensured the paperwork arrived in plenty of time, provided a running order and details of candidates' performances. Centres were generally adhering to the request for work to arrive 14 days before the examination. All performance work was on DVD with some very impressive DVDs submitted; some centres produced excellent DVD material with clear chapter labelling and candidate identification. This is very useful and helpful for the examiner. Unfortunately, some centres did not send preparatory notes or portfolios on time, details of running orders and candidate identification was often missing. It is essential that all centres adhere to the requirements of sending information on time. Examiners find themselves in difficult positions when they have to ask for information or altering the running order immediately prior to a performance.

Many centres had full audiences, which really helped the candidates to 'rise to the occasion'. Centres had considered programmes, refreshments and incidental music or PowerPoint presentations between pieces to keep the audience focused.

Performance spaces were much better during this session. Centres moved away from the classroom/rehearsal performance and ensured that a performance space with technical aspects was available. Candidates who performed in studio/theatre spaces were able to consider the theatrical elements that would enhance their performance. Many Centres are now using lighting and sound amplification, which does enhance the performance aspects of the work considerably.

There is no doubt that many successful centres are demonstrating good practice and making every effort to engage fully with the Examiner over all necessary details from pre-examination through to providing a DVD at the conclusion of the examination. Good practice included; details of candidates showcases highlighting their chosen pieces including copies of scripts, music, lyrics or synopsis of dances, named photographs, running order, travel arrangements. This process enables the session to run smoothly and allows candidates the opportunity to achieve their potential.

Hospitality for the examiner is also important. Examiners may travel long distances; being welcomed and provided with refreshments is very much appreciated. Many examiners commented on the lack of refreshments and provision of adequate breaks in long programmes. Centres must also remember that positioning of the examiner is crucial. Seating an examiner at the back of the auditorium may infringe their ability to see facial expression and body language as well as not being able to actually see through the audience. Centres must remember that this is still an examination and not just focus on the 'public performance aspects'

The Discussion

Although there were no marks available for this part of the examination, many candidates entered into the spirit of arriving well prepared. The discussion gave the candidates a chance to talk about their showcases and give the examiner an insight into what they were trying to achieve. The informal discussions produced a relaxed and informative result. Many candidates showed a good understanding of the creative process as well as Health and Safety and warm-up procedures. The discussion gave the candidates a valuable opportunity to take ownership of their work. Many candidates talked about their vision and interpretation of the selected pieces. Fewer candidates were interviewed alone; many choose to discuss their programme with their performance partner. This provided detailed discussions and gave many candidates confidence.

Dance candidates needed to demonstrate an understanding of style, genre, musical awareness, motif and technical language. During this session many candidates were able to indicate where

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they had taken the work from and discuss the issues that arose in taking a dance from DVD or paper and creating it in its repertoire form. Good candidates had researched their pieces thoroughly and could talk about influences of dance practitioners and performances seen. Good candidates successfully described the choreographic process employed to learn their work. They were aware of stylistic influences and able to put the dance into context, describing the purpose of the pieces, the intended audience and its impact. There were still a significant number of dance candidates who did not select work from repertoire and had in fact self-devised the pieces; therefore they were unable to discuss any of the above. Other candidates had used repertoire as a stimulus and then created their own response. This is in breach of the specification and centres must ensure that all selected dance pieces are taken from repertoire. Personal interpretation of the works is allowed but selected pieces should exist in repertoire form and not be a group dance converted to a solo or a solo piece choreographed into a duo.

Drama candidates were quite well prepared. Many candidates displayed an understanding of the process, but failed to really understand their chosen pieces showing little appreciation of the playwrights' intentions. Good candidates were able to discuss their ideas for performance of the pieces, influences, style and context as well as characterisation, period, mood and atmosphere. They had excellent knowledge about the style of their pieces, as well as detailed character analyses. This enabled them to inform the Examiner of their intended interpretation. Knowledge of the play and the period of history are fundamental to all aspects of preparation and development of the work. Candidates are expected to have read the plays from which their selected works are taken. This knowledge gives the candidates the appreciation of the social, historical and cultural dimensions of the selected works.

Music candidates, particularly, instrumentalists were well prepared. They were able to discuss factual information regarding the composers, including an awareness of the body of work, other pieces written or how successful the music had been in the charts and gave an understanding of style, genre, musical awareness, how the composer communicated the work, technical language and influences. Good candidates were able to discuss their own interpretations on style and content and relate them to historic and social influences. Candidates need to be able to discuss technical competence and how they have achieved balance/contrast in their showcase. Candidates are awarded higher marks for learning the pieces, which also allows for audience interaction and communication. Centres should check that the selected pieces are appropriate for an advanced level examination as low graded pieces and set studies do not always fulfil the assessment requirements. Singers must ensure that they select songs that are suited to their vocal ability. Too many singers were choosing pieces without looking at key signatures and the range of notes covered. It is not acceptable to select a song and then change the note structure because it is not suitable for the vocal. Candidates will require teacher input to ensure that they are selecting songs that complement their singing ability and still provide good balance and contrast.

The Performance of the Showcase

Performances spanned a wide range of genre, art forms and styles. Successful candidates were able to perform in contrasting styles and showed a good range of skills and techniques. There was an improvement in performance technique and many candidates showed a greater understanding of audience awareness with improved communication skills. However, a number of able actors/dancers reduced their overall marks by choosing to perform songs despite the fact they could not hold a tune. Overall, performance material was varied and the diversity of material selected for the showcase was very encouraging. The number of self-devised pieces appeared to be reduced.

Technical support in many centres made a real difference to the quality of the performances. Good Centres had provided sound and lighting as well as a suitable performance space that was well lit and appropriate. Many were able to provide projections and media coverage that

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enhanced the overall look of the performance. It was particularly effective for the dance candidates giving visual depth and meaning to their performance work. Many performance pieces were presented with full use of costume, stage and lighting which, although does add to the spirit and realism of the candidates work.

Some candidates attempted pieces that they clearly did not understand, while others chose pieces that were unsuitable for relatively inexperienced young people. There were noticeable differences in the standards from one centre to another. Some centres encouraged their candidates to produce stylistically impressive, dynamic and absorbing performance work, while others allowed candidates to be under rehearsed, unimaginative and tentative. Most candidates made an attempt to consider ways in which technical aspects such as set, props, costume and lighting could be used to enhance their performances, but others used the adoption of a 'minimalist' approach as an excuse for doing very little.

Dance

Good candidates were performing some impressive dance routines and working with repertoire. They were able to show understanding of the stylistic elements and display a good technical ability.

Good dance centres were able to provide the candidates with material from choreographers and a wealth of performance material. This gave the candidates the opportunity to perform works that provided the correct standard and access to the assessment criteria in the higher bands. There were still a few centres that allowed candidates to devise their own dances. This is in breach of the specification and disadvantaged the candidates. There are plenty of professional works available and centres must employ these in order to provide the correct standard of dance and works from repertoire. Many dance candidates had considered balance and contrast selecting pieces from different genres, in order to show a range of dance skills and techniques.

Dancers seen were able to show awareness of Health and Safety issues. They had discussed various aspects of footwear, jewellery, hair and costume in their preparatory notes. Spatial awareness and suitability of the performance space were also highlighted. There was also evidence of costume and appropriate setting and style. Dancers must ensure that their choice of costume is appropriate as too many dancers were adjusting their costumes during the performance.

Drama

Although all candidates chose pieces from repertoire during this session, examiners felt that too many candidates selected pieces that they did not really understand. Some candidates selected very challenging and demanding pieces, which posed questions as to whether candidates should select difficult pieces or 'play safe' and select simple pieces. Candidates should be reassured that the assessment criteria used does take this into consideration. Stronger candidates displayed good acting skills with emphasis on both physical and vocal techniques. Good Shakespeare was evident where candidates had an understanding of iambic pentameter, clear diction and clarity of voice. However, some candidates performing Shakespeare pieces did not have a secure understanding about the structure of the language and its performance aspects. There was evidence of some difficult and challenging works selected. Some candidates were unable to cope with the demands of their selected pieces, which meant that there was too much prompting.

The majority of candidates had considered the use of costume and props. Some candidates had really worked hard to ensure that they captured the time, period and stylistic elements of the pieces. This was effective and even simple costumes enabled candidates to really 'get inside the character' which added impact.

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Good performances had considered the audience and how to engage with them. Good candidates were using a range of skills, techniques and drama conventions. Material selected in the session covered a range of genre including contemporary drama, Greek Theatre, Classical Speeches, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Churchill, Berkoff and Pinter.

Music

Musical Theatre was popular in this session with candidates selecting pieces from traditional to newer versions of musical plays. Candidates were able to demonstrate expertise and advanced technique across all aspects of singing, dancing and acting. It is important to ensure that candidates are able to cope with all of the aspects of musical theatre, if the piece requires all art forms it is important that candidates have the necessary skills to deliver the piece. Examiners noted that some centres had just selected aspects that suited the candidates, missing out for example, acting as the group were all dancers or just combining dance and music but ignoring the acting scenes. If candidates present the material in the form of musical theatre that it is essential that they are competent in all three aspects. Most of the pieces were performed with backing tracks although a few centres worked with live music. Musical Theatre allowed more candidates to display a range of performance and vocal techniques combined with facial expressions, gesture and characterisation to capture the feeling of the piece, as well as demonstrating the candidates' technical ability.

Many candidates scoring in the upper marking bands were able to produce dynamic performances of their Showcase showing complete mastery of their selected material. They were able to shape and mould their material, displaying a sophisticated understanding of the interpretative skills required. Candidates at the highest level showed a committed personal style. A number of candidates displayed a high level of skills and a perceptive understanding of the professional context of the work. Good practice saw a number of candidates producing authoritative and absorbing performances, which really engaged with the audience.

Preparatory Notes

Once again, many of the preparatory notes submitted were disappointing with some candidates spending a great deal of time describing the selection process and researching pieces they ultimately rejected, but failing to explain the reasons for their final choices and giving only scant attention to the process of actually preparing for performance. Others provided incredibly detailed diaries that simply described each lesson without any clear indication of application or evaluation of progress. Some centres appear to have developed templates for students to use in producing their written work, but this can lead to a lack of personal engagement with the process. Few candidates understood the importance of applying social, cultural and historical research and the need to use a range of rehearsal techniques to develop and improve the quality of their own performances. Application of research and the exercise of initiative tended to be confined to peripheral considerations such as costume. In some centres, the interview, which provides no additional marks, revealed far greater understanding of the context of the pieces and the application of quite sophisticated rehearsal techniques than was apparent in the preparatory notes.

However, there were some examples of very high quality written work, and the same candidates often produced the best performances. The best examples displayed a professional approach to planning for performance, with their research into potential pieces and selection procedure explained rather than merely described, with relevant research into the social, historical and cultural context of the pieces actually applied to the final performance. More dance candidates were submitting DVD evidence of the dances that they were going to perform. This was very helpful as it provided undisputed evidence that the pieces were repertoire. All dance candidates

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should be encouraged to follow this process. There was also clear evidence of initiative and the adoption of targeted rehearsal and preparatory techniques, including meaningful evaluation of the process. There was good evidence of developing skills and techniques through a fluent demand of technical vocabulary. Centres must ensure that the preparatory notes contain evidence of each stage of the preparation process and that therefore some kind of a diary is necessary.

Unfortunately, for some candidates submissions were little more than basic descriptive logs, with limited Internet research that was not applied and little evidence of the use of action planning and feedback to develop the final showcase.

Those candidates who did not produce and submit any working notes were disadvantaged and unable to access the higher marks. The preparatory notes are worth 20% of the final grade and both Centres and candidates must be aware of this.

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

G387 Production Demonstration

This session saw a small entry. Evidence including detailed DVDs, thorough preparatory notes and portfolios and planned demonstrations/ presentations was not as forthcoming as in previous sessions and many candidates were unable to demonstrate what they had actually done. Too many candidates have selected technical skills yet failed to really implement what the industry requires in practice. Candidates in this session were generally weak because they were unable to show process and production demonstration. Design work was not evident in many portfolios. Hand drawn diagrams and lack of technical terms impeded many candidates. Standards in this unit must match those on the performance pathway and in this session too many candidates produced poor quality work.

Candidates are required through their portfolio work and product presentation to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the processes required to realise their designs. There should be research undertaken and whichever creative process adopted by the candidate should show a depth of understanding. Candidates must consider the social, historical and cultural influences on their designs. Material selected particularly at the highest mark should be impressively sophisticated. Candidates must display a good command of technical language and conventions as well as complying with industry requirements. Candidates should be working alongside the G386 candidates and not on stand-alone projects. Briefs should be set and monitored by the teaching staff and candidates need to be accessing professional theatre practice.

The product demonstration should be authoritative and absorbing. Designs need to create highly effective engagement for the audience. There should be evidence of technical accuracy. The candidate should be able to demonstrate a personal style in shaping and moulding the designs. There were some candidates who were able to score towards the higher bands and their work contained a level of originality in both its conception and realisation. Where production candidates work alongside the performance candidates this shows how the specification should be applied and taught in centres.

Less successful candidates needed to improve the research, detail and presentation of their work. There must be evidence of industry standards, scaled drawings and construction techniques. Drawings and designs of period sets and costumes must be historically accurate and candidates must ensure that any accessories/props are to scale. Buying the dressings for a set box from retailers is not what the unit is about.

Candidates must submit both their preparatory notes and their portfolio containing their designs as well as pictures, photographs, DVD, or video evidence of their product demonstration. Some candidates failed to submit any work at all. Overall, the unit saw work that was competent to basic and rudimentary.

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