



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

DRAMA AND THEATRE AS

SUMMER 2023

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Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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COMPONENT 1: THEATRE WORKSHOP

General Comments

This year saw all centres uploading their Component 1 work to Surpass; this has been a positive move and the support of all teachers and examinations officers in following the guidance has been appreciated. Most of the work submitted was of a high standard and moderators were impressed with the commitment shown by the candidates.

Administration

All centres submitted their sample on time and materials were generally well organised. There were some omissions which centres are asked to address. In addition to the candidates' work, centres must submit:

- Component 1: Centre Approval Form – signed by the Headteacher and complete with centre stamp,
- Component 1: Programme Proforma – completed correctly with clear group numbers; the chosen text must be stated and the name of the practitioner/theatre company selected for the reinterpretation work,
- Copies of the reinterpreted scripts.

The candidate's work must also be accompanied by signed Candidate/Teacher Declarations and GDPR consent forms.

As all work for Component 1 is now submitted via Surpass, please ensure all necessary forms and candidate work is clearly labelled and easily accessible. Some centres group all the admin together in various files followed by candidate work in groups. Other centres group materials by candidate with one file containing the forms, written work, and the video of the practical for each individual candidate.

Please remember that candidates must be identified on screen at the start of their pieces. School photographs or separate videos when not in costume/make-up, is not always helpful.

Most centres adhered to the timing requirements of the pieces and applied the necessary penalties if appropriate.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Text Performance and Creative Log

Moderators saw an effective range of work presented for the faithful interpretation of text. Candidates performed a diverse variety of scripts from classical texts to more contemporary choices and it was refreshing to see candidates deviating from naturalism and exploring non-naturalistic texts. The candidates were well prepared for this assessment task with polished performances and evidence of detailed process. There was a larger number of centres choosing duologues over monologues this year and it was pleasing to see candidates challenging themselves by presenting a contrasting programme. In the monologue work, we are seeing less candidates approaching this element like a speech exam, but we are still

seeing examples of performances where candidates are playing to the camera rather than approaching it as a performance for the stage. The original context of the scenes was mainly understood, and candidates were applying rehearsal techniques to develop their work, using sophisticated dramatic terminology. The AO1 assessment varied with some centres accurately applying the criteria consistently across the cohort and others marking far too generously. All bullet points in the grade descriptors AO1 1a and 1b should be evident in the work; some centres are awarding high marks when essential content is missing from the log. It is good practice to include photographs and screen shots into the main body of the log, as when correctly labelled, this supports the work and provides evidence of process. Teacher comments are extremely useful when gauging how a centre has arrived at a mark, but these must be related to the assessment criteria and not simply explain how hard a candidate has worked.

The AO2 assessment was generally accurate regarding the rank order of candidates but some centres were generous with their marks when the work did not reflect the assessment band(s). Teachers are encouraged to be objective when assessing the practical work and be realistic in terms of candidate attainment. The best candidate in a particular cohort may not be a full mark candidate when the assessment criteria is applied. Very few centres were harsh with their marking.

Reinterpreted Text Performance and Creative Log:

A popular choice this year were immersive performances exploring Punchdrunk, Artaud and local theatre companies. These were often exciting for the audience and presented challenging performance skills for the candidates. Whilst this experimentation is to be applauded, centres must ensure that the positioning of the camera is focused on actors rather than audience. Some subtle performance details were missed such as facial expressions, movement and positioning and character interaction. The recording remains important evidence for the moderation process and should be considered when deciding performance arrangements. The more successful work rigorously applied the conventions and techniques of the practitioner/company from the beginning of the process after conducting detailed research. Less successful pieces created their work and then applied practitioner techniques. Most candidates used their logs to discuss their artistic aims and exploration of the practitioner/company influences during the reinterpretation process. The most successful candidates fully integrated theory and character development with their role as actor and did not focus solely on group process. Less successful logs provided research notes but did not make a clear link with how the theory informed their creative process. Brecht, Berkoff, Marianne Elliot and Artaud were the main choices for practitioner and Paper Birds, Punchdrunk and Frantic Assembly were the most popular theatre companies for the reinterpreted work. Some centres selected theatre companies with a local relevance to the centre. Teachers are reminded that if candidates select a lesser-known practitioner/theatre company, then confirmation that the choice is a valid one needs to be secured from the Subject Officer.

Moderators reported that most of the work presented was accomplished and creative. The reinterpreted scripts must be submitted with the centre materials with the original content clearly highlighted; some centres use a different colour or font to evidence this. In the strongest work, the practitioner/company influence is evident immediately, demonstrating a clear link between theory and practical application. It is important that acting candidates utilise performance conventions and techniques and do not rely on design techniques associated with the practitioner or company. This sometimes happens with work influenced by Artaud; discussion in the creative logs mainly focused on using technical elements to illustrate theory but not how an actor could be working with the Theatre of Cruelty techniques. Most of the reinterpreted work was supported by detailed lighting, sound, costume and set design. Whilst this is not assessed, it does elevate candidates' performance experience, supporting connection between theory and practice. Acting

candidates are reminded that their written work may contain reference to the development of technical ideas but should focus on the skills required for acting. Some candidates wrote insightfully about the lighting, sound, and costume, but ignored the development of how the acting influences were applied. As with the faithful text, centre assessment was generally in line with the assessment criteria but there were centres where marking was generous and further understanding of the national standard needed to be considered.

Evaluation:

AO4 assessment was generally accurate within most centres. A positive way to structure the evaluation was also evident with most candidates writing in two distinct sections: analysis/evaluation of process and analysis/evaluation of performance/design. This supported focused evaluative writing. Candidates must be reminded that when evaluating their performance or design, they must focus on their chosen skill. Actors need to focus on acting skills and designers should focus on their selected area. Very often the actors will analyse all elements of the group performance including technical areas at the expense of analysing their own performance skills.

Thank you for the work that has been carried out in centres in preparation for the AS assessment. The overall standard remains consistent with previous years, AO2 performance work remains strong and there is clear evidence of process and research in the creative logs. AO4 assessment has continued to improve and has been a strength for some candidates.

Summary of key points

Uploading to Surpass has been successful.

All content in grade descriptors for AO1 should be included in the creative log.

Consider the positioning of the camera when capturing immersive work.

When awarding the top of band 4 and bottom of band 5 in AO2, consider the difference in skill level and award accordingly.

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COMPONENT 2: TEXT IN CONTEXT

General Comments

No advanced information or adaptations were made or provided for this paper or in its marking. The standard of work for this component continues to convey detailed and creative approaches to the study of the set texts. The outcome of the examination was comparable to that of previous years. Candidates engaged with the creative opportunities of the set texts and exploration of different interpretations was evident. Candidates had been prepared well for the demands of the paper and organised their time and selection of ideas appropriately. Access to exemplar, past papers and CPD training continues to inform the approaches to learning for candidates. As a result, candidates were familiar and confident with the focus of questions and had thus been given a fair access to the same outcomes.

There was evidence that all the texts on offer had been studied by the cohort. Some texts continue to be more popular choices than others for candidates to study.

There was little to no evidence that candidates were unfamiliar with the layout of the paper or experienced significant difficulties in managing their time with regard to tackling the questions. The bullet points in the question enabled candidates to structure and focus their responses carefully.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question a)

The focus of this question was as a costume designer focusing on a given extract. Responses to this question continue to exhibit creativity and clear understanding of the way costume contributes to a wider impact upon the audience. Some candidates had chosen to leave this response until last, perhaps because it has the lowest value of marks; this, in a minority of cases, lead to a rushed response or one that was not entirely focused on the demands of the question.

The use of the bullet points provided, guided the candidates' response and is there to help keep to time constraints.

A detailed knowledge of the original production conditions was clear. Successful responses linked this to the demand of the question: costume design, rather than a social and historical background of the theatre period (which in the case of some responses, often drew attention away from the focus of the question). Some candidates focused too much on this aspect, veering into biography and this limited time available for the rest of the response where more marks were available.

Candidates' focus on how costume design reflected character was particularly creative and conveyed understanding in the context of the action of the chosen extract as well as in the text as a whole. Some candidates focused a lot on the emotional state of the characters but had omitted to consider how age and status of the character might be conveyed in costume design.

Candidates had engaged well in the interpretation of period and style of their costume ideas. Some had a thorough concept for their interpretation with costume design at the heart of their choice of production style and period of choice. For some candidates this remains an area where knowledge of how costume styles / fashion have changed throughout time would have informed their responses in more detail.

Candidates' knowledge of colour and texture had been well considered. They conveyed creative responses in colour choice and colour theory whilst also being informed regarding how colours associate with status and mood. Knowledge of the texture of costume, how particular fabrics move in performance and how this impacted upon the actor was an area of considerable development. Successful responses considered what fabrics were available in the chosen period and how this impacted on the styling of clothes / costume.

Successful answers focused on the impact of the costume design on the actors' movement. In the response to *Machinal* candidates highlighted how the tight "fit" of the costume restricted the movements of the actor playing the YOUNG WOMAN, creating a suffocating tension in her movements, and hugging her body to over emphasise her feminine form. Less successful responses focused on just the dress of the YOUNG WOMAN and omitted other aspects of costume, for example, footwear and accessories.

Question b)

The focus of this question was the performance of a given character from the extract by an actor. Candidates in the past have excelled in this type of response; this continues to be the case, although more detailed design and directing knowledge and experience has informed all the elements studied on the course. The majority of responses focused closely on the character given in the question and covered most of the extract's action.

Character motivation was clearly stated in their responses. Successful candidates had picked out significant moments throughout the extract where the action and / or another character's behaviour impacted on the characters' motivation. The question asked the candidate to focus on the performance of the character and as such rehearsal techniques were not relevant. When candidates indicated how the role is created they were not able to complete their ideas on performance in sufficient detail.

The majority of responses were confident and varied in the interpretation of vocal and physical skills. Candidates linked both skills together well using a full range of subject specific terminology. Subtly of the actors' skills to convey their motivation was observed alongside the effective use of tempo, pace, and rhythm. Some candidates limited the range of their response by selecting to play the character the same way throughout the extract. Whilst this was valued as their creative choice it was often hard to see their understanding of the text and the skills used by an actor and how they change according to motivation and action. These responses became self-limiting.

Candidates had engaged with the interaction of characters in the chosen extract. They had observed not only vocal interaction via dialogue but more subtle responses of gesture and eye contact. They had taken clues from the text to inspire such responses, for example, the entrance or exit of a character.

Successful answers engaged with the given characters' dilemmas in the extract and understood what state of mind they were in at its start. For example, in responses to *The Trojan Women* candidates had considered HECUBA's desperation with regard to her loss of power, family and the physical city of Troy. Candidates commented on how this affected her physical stance and posture as if the weight of this was held upon her back. Throughout the extract there were moments where she was able to throw it off and become more energised.

Less successful responses focused on one interpretation of the given character and one motivation throughout the extract despite interaction with other characters breaking that focus. Candidates might have characterised the CHORUS and discussed their vocal and physical role in changing Hecuba's motivation. The impact of interaction with the others on stage avoided the sense of the actor performing in isolation.

Question c)

This question focused on the role of a lighting and sound designer. Candidates were asked to select two extracts on which to focus their response. Most candidates selected contrasting extracts which enabled them to show a wide knowledge of lighting and sound design. Some candidates, either due to time constraints or misreading the questions, focused on one extract. Very few candidates used the extract used earlier in questions a) and b). The question stated *you must not use the above extract* and as such candidates have not followed the demands of the question. The length of extracts was wisely chosen to not be too long - this enabled a close focus on specific cues within the extract. Some candidates combined their lighting and sound cues together which simplified their explanation and justification of their ideas. In some cases, this led to very impactful responses where the understanding of how design teams can work together to create a concept was evident.

The atmosphere of the extract was often focused on more than defining the location of the action. All candidates covered several cues and state changes in their responses. Candidates explored a variety of sound types describing not only the sfx, for example, music, but their knowledge of how sound is manipulated and the length of the cue to create impact.

Similarly with the type of lighting choices, candidates were able to consider where and how light was focused on the stage alongside special lighting effects. Where the colour of light was indicated, candidates were aware of how colour can create mood or act symbolically to accentuate meaning. This was often not fully explored by candidates.

Successful responses made the choice of contrasting extracts. For example, in *Hedda Gabler* candidates selected an extract near the beginning of the play and one at the end. In this choice candidates had afforded themselves opportunities to make their creative choices contrast in terms of atmosphere and the energy within the extract. For example, candidates contrasted the demands of LX and SFX at the end of the play, creating the mania of HEDDA in an abstract use of chaotic soundscapes and flashing lights contrasting with the opening of the play that sets up the context of the family situation in a more naturalistic choice of sound and lighting ideas. These candidates kept their extracts short to focus on detailed cues.

AO4 :

Most candidates referred to two different examples of live theatre productions. This still remains something that some candidates do not manage to include, (perhaps due to timing issues) or they give two references from the same live theatre production without including the second example. All candidates identified the theatre production and where they saw it, including digital platforms. Effective responses connected their ideas for sound and lighting to the two productions cited and often developed the idea further. The depth of evaluation of live theatre is more variable with some candidates expressing an understanding of personal response and impact (perceptive and detailed evaluation) and other candidates omitting to evaluate the production and just indicate the link to their ideas. Less successful candidates made connection to live theatre but in a general sense rather than connecting to the focus of the question i.e., lighting and sound design. As there are equal marks allocated to AO3 and AO4 in the mark scheme this part of the question needs to have focus and detail. In highly successful responses AO4 is fully integrated into the AO3 ideas and response.

Successful responses included a sense that the candidates had experienced the production as a member of the audience and noted the impact made upon them when watching the live theatre production. This led to a more effective evaluation of the given element. Less successful responses focused on retelling what they had seen rather than a critical view of the piece of theatre. This led to retelling of the plot and the focus moving away from the analysis and evaluation of the production to a narrative of the events.

Summary of key points

- The order of the questions on the exam paper is designed to become more complex as candidates work their way through the paper. For some candidates this is helpful as it will enable them to focus closely on the text and the bullet points, assisting them to form the structure of their response. This might help them use this approach as they progress through the other questions and should be considered when advising candidates to change the order in which they approach the examination questions.
- The use of accurate subject specific terminology should be encouraged in all contexts so that candidates become fluent in its correct use.
- A range of different styles of contemporary theatre should be viewed throughout the course to give candidates a variety of experiences and material from which to select their references for AO4.
- Detailed biographical detail, synopsis of the original production conditions of the texts or live theatre should be succinct and always relevant to the focus of the question.



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