



EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**LEVEL 1 / LEVEL 2 VOCATIONAL AWARD
IN PERFORMING ARTS**

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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PERFORMING ARTS

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UNIT 1 PERFORMING

General Comments

In this first series of the qualification it was reassuring to see how centres had responded to both the demands of the qualification and the specific requirements of this unit. A wide range of work was presented across all performance disciplines. The majority of centres had clearly supported candidates to perform work in a discipline which suited their skills and interests.

Many centres had opted to start the qualification by working on Unit 2 and have chosen to submit this Unit in a later series.

Unit 1 is a performance unit. Candidates must select, rehearse and perform existing repertoire.

In the Candidate and Assessor Packs, there is detailed guidance of the requirements for each task.

Some centres submitted work as a whole school production and assessed candidates individually on their performance within this. Often in this instance candidates were not able to fully meet all of the criteria, particularly when it came to taking ownership of the work and including justification for selecting pieces. In other centres, candidates all worked on the same repertoire, for example one choice of text, but candidates were able to explain their choices and the steps involved in selecting specific scenes which interested them. The most successful responses came when candidates had real ownership over their choices of repertoire. They were able to demonstrate their thought process in selecting material, making links to the brief and explaining why their choice was suitable.

Approaches to this unit varied, with a balance of both solo and group performance work presented. Where candidates perform in a group, centres are reminded of the importance of clear candidate introductions. This can be recorded before or after the actual performance or as a minimum then annotated screenshots or candidate photos should be included within the evidence.

Administration

Evidence across the tasks can be presented in a variety of formats to best suit the needs of individual candidates. Some centres had facilitated this effectively and candidates presented work in creative ways, for example video diaries for Task 3, annotated rehearsal photos, screenshots of the composition process etc.

Many centres uploaded the sampled work as one zip file for each candidate, this was generally agreed as good practice as it reduced issues of larger / multiple files and aided the moderation process. Some centres presented work in PPT format which included embedded audio and video as part of this. This supported candidates to keep all of their work in one place throughout the process. When uploading PPTs, centres are reminded that this does need to be done as a zip file in order to preserve any embedded footage.

Teacher comments on the assessment record sheets and observation record sheets were generally very clear and gave specific justification regarding the marks awarded.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Tasks 1a and 1b

Outline the findings of the research you have undertaken for your chosen piece(s). Discuss how this research will influence your performance and what impact you are hoping to achieve.

These tasks require candidates to consider the context of their chosen piece of repertoire, for example the original style, performance space, target audience etc. This then supports them to consider their own interpretation of the piece. The most successful work seen made very clear links to this. Most candidates were able to produce some level of research for Task 1a, where the work often lacked depth was in how that was then applied to their own work for Task 1b.

It is also important to remember that work should make reference to the set brief, although the brief does not change each year, candidates still need to consider how their choices are meeting the requirements of this. High level responses from candidates carefully reflected on how initial choices may not be suitable for the brief, or may need to be adapted. An example of this is where candidates may have been considering a big musical number but recognised that since this is a community festival, performance space may be restricted or equipment may not be readily available, so they adapted their interpretation of the piece.

Task 2

Outline a rehearsal schedule that will enable you to be fully prepared for the performance required in the brief.

Professional practice is at the heart of this unit and as such candidates should be considering approaches to rehearsal and refinement of their work. Understanding of the page / score to stage process is important here, with careful planning and awareness that different stages of the rehearsal process require different types of rehearsal. Where candidates were able to access the higher marks in this task they included very specific types of rehearsal, for example an initial readthrough of a text, annotating scripts / scores / choreographic notation, band calls, sitzprobe, technical run, dress rehearsal etc. Less successful responses were a brief overview of a schedule which included rather vague comments like 'rehearse'. Where candidates are working in groups, there will naturally be some overlap and similarities in their schedules, but responses should be personal and take into account any planned time away from the group rehearsal to work on individual skills, for example character development, instrumental practice.

Task 3

Produce a reflective journal that records the practical rehearsal process required to ensure you are fully prepared for the performance required in the brief.

The reflective journal is another opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of professional practice and the creative process. In this task candidates should be plotting their progress throughout the process, they should demonstrate the journey from initial ideas to finished product. Some centres supported candidates with prompts to consider in their responses, this is fine to use, providing candidates are still able to produce a personal account. Successful responses to this task included real reflection and self analysis. Many candidates included annotated photos / screenshots of their work at key points and highlighted where improvements were needed and why. Candidates should be encouraged to consider the journal as a natural part of the process and record things such as action planning to help focus their next rehearsal. Centres are reminded that milestone moments should be included, for example an extract of a recording of an initial readthrough of text, blocking of choreography, initial stages of the composition, extracts of dress or technical rehearsals. Some high level responses included evidence such as short extracts of candidates working on vocal skills in order to demonstrate how they were responding to feedback on issues with projection.

Task 4

Perform / present your chosen piece(s) to an audience.

Candidates presented work in a variety of disciplines and it was a pleasure to see the skills developed in rehearsal culminating in a finished product. Centres are reminded that performance is at the heart of this unit, the most successful work had a real sense of occasion to it. It is understood and appreciated that all centres will vary in their access to resources and performance space and this sense of performance occasion does not have to mean performance in an auditorium complete with lighting and sound etc. Some very strong performances happened within the teaching space, but an effort had been made to create a space and a more formal audience, with some candidates having things such as token costumes to help them get into character.

Performances ranged from one longer ensemble piece to solo performances consisting of either one piece of work or a portfolio of extracts. All of these approaches are acceptable. Centres are reminded of the performance times of between 3-6 minutes for this task. There is no set penalty applied for work which is under the required time, although centres are advised that candidates are unlikely to be able to fully meet all of the objectives in Band 5 if they are under time. Equally where work was significantly over the time, candidates often struggled to sustain their skills in performance.

Candidate work for this task ranged from limited to highly effective application of skill. Choices of repertoire included both classical and more contemporary pieces of work.

The quality of recorded evidence varied, with some instances of very poor sound quality which did not always support candidates to demonstrate their level of accuracy and performance skills. It is noted that all centres will have different access to resources and technical support which may influence the quality of recordings, however careful consideration should be given to placement of the recording equipment during the performance. For example, where video cameras were placed at the back of an auditorium, it was often difficult to see facial expressions or footwork and sound quality was often limited.

Task 5

Evaluate the success of your performance including what you have learned from undertaking this work and how it will inform your future performances.

Reviewing and analysing work is very much part of the professional process and candidates should be provided with opportunities to respond to feedback from others. Just as professional performers need to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to improve, candidates should be given this opportunity. Successful responses to this task were analytical and reflective, both of the process and the performance. Candidates achieving in the top mark bands were able to fully reflect on their performance skills and make connections to professional working practices. Less sophisticated evaluations gave more superficial responses and were more descriptive than analytical. Some centres supported candidates by including prompts to focus their responses, where these focused on the bullet points from the specification for Task 5 this generated more in depth evaluation and analysis.

Evidence for this task can be presented in any suitable format to suit the needs of candidates, this does not have to be written in essay format. Some candidates opted to present this as a recorded video interview or included diagrams or annotated photos to support their reflection.

Summary of key points

Key points for centres to consider for future series:

- Candidates should be supported with selecting repertoire which will suitably demonstrate their performance skills, but they should also have ownership over this.
- Support candidates to consider how their research is going to impact on creative decisions for their own interpretation.
- Candidates should be encouraged to consider professional working practices throughout the process.
- Provide candidates with the opportunity to perform to an audience.
- Consider the positioning of recording equipment and include clear candidate introductions or supporting images.

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UNIT 2 CREATING

General Comments

At the end of the first series of this qualification, it has been a pleasure to see how centres have responded to the requirements of the unit and the brief. Centres have supported candidates to develop their performance or production skills, work has been varied and creative and centres have clearly structured delivery to suit individual needs and interests of their candidates. Centres have generally applied the marking criteria appropriately and have submitted appropriate evidence for moderation.

Unit 2 is the creating unit. Candidates must create original work in response to the published brief. The brief changes every year and is available in September to be used for either the Winter or Summer series.

This unit enables candidates to gain, develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the skills and techniques needed to create and refine original work in the performing arts. This unit can be completed through performance or production disciplines.

Creatives work in a wide range of different disciplines and environments, sometimes as individuals and sometimes as part of a team. They may work to a brief of their own design or create something in response to a commissioned brief. With this in mind, it is imperative that all the work created by the candidates should always be directed back to the brief. The brief should be at the core of every task, underpinning every creative decision that a candidate needs to make. By the brief becoming the focus, candidates can have a clear vision of what they are trying to create. Not all production disciplines this series were focused enough on their brief and more importantly on their chosen skill. They lacked the sense of journey that allowed them to create the final outcome.

In the Candidate and Assessor Packs, there is detailed guidance of the requirements for each task. Some candidates had an outcome but their logbooks did not always reflect this journey. Before responding to the set brief, candidates need to be taught how to write a melody, how to create dialogue, how lighting can be used to create particular effects etc. as appropriate to their chosen discipline. This can be achieved through looking at how other practitioners have worked and comparing techniques, as well as by giving candidates short exercises to complete. There is more to the qualification than completing the tasks and the most successful candidates had excellent prior knowledge to be able to apply their skills to creating.

There was a variety of approaches to this unit, from individual composition to group devised drama. Some centres facilitated a range of disciplines for candidates to opt from, which allowed them the opportunity to really focus on their own skills and interests.

Overall, the performance candidates demonstrated their discipline well, but there was a general lack of skill developed in the production disciplines. We need to actually see how the work was created, a demonstration of candidates actually applying make-up etc. Development logs should also be recording this process, for example, annotated photographs, video recordings of candidates programming lighting effects etc.

Administration

Many centres uploaded the sampled work as one zip file for each candidate, this was generally agreed as good practice as it reduced issues of larger / multiple files and aided the moderation process. There was a variety of applications used to record the work submitted, including PDF / PPTs / Word – all of which worked well. In many centres, candidates had been given the opportunity to present evidence which best supported their needs, for example some candidates submitted video diaries as their development logs or used annotated photos to support their ideas and document the process.

Where candidates are working in a group, is it vital that clear identification is included. This can be done verbally at the start of the recording, with candidates stating their name and candidate number or a screen shot clearly identifying them.

On the whole teacher comments were excellent and gave clear justifications regarding the marks awarded.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Task 1

Outline the components that you considered when writing your creative brief.

Evidence for this task can be in any appropriate format but should start with a statement of what the candidate intends to create, before adding the information required. Where work was successful, candidates had a good awareness of the intended purpose and effect of their piece. It was focused on why the outcome would be fit for purpose and used the research to demonstrate this.

By considering different performance spaces, performance candidates were able to show how their creative piece was suitable for their chosen audience. The production candidates did sometime struggle a little with this, it is important that they are able to consider how they will communicate with an audience.

There was a lack of understanding overall of the scale of the piece being created. All disciplines need have a good understanding of the number of performers or the equipment / instruments needed to produce their outcome for Task 3. Successful candidates drew on their own interests especially in the choreography option, where many different styles of modern and traditional dance were seen.

Research is the main point of this task. It should be the foundation of the candidates' creating, so that they can hang their idea on something. Allow them to use some Blue Sky thinking and be creative. Where work was successful, centres had encouraged candidates to really consider their local area and how this connected with the brief **'the arts are everywhere and in everything'**. This was evident in both the research and the finished piece – for example some candidates developed work in response to cultural festivals, local sporting achievements, historical events, the natural environment of their local area. Some candidates took a broader approach to the brief and considered the idea of the importance of the arts and what it means to different people. All of these approaches supported candidates to create a personal response which was well considered.

Professional practice and understanding the work produced by others is an important part of developing work. Where candidates did well in this task, they had clearly researched practitioners working in their chosen discipline and considered their styles, methods, approaches etc.

Task 2 – To be completed alongside preparing for Task 3

Produce a development log that records the exploration and development of your ideas in response to a creative brief.

It was clear from this task that where centres had shared the assessment criteria for Tasks 2 and 3 combined, this gave the candidates a clear way forward to be creative. If candidates selected to create more than one piece of music / dance / drama to meet their brief, they needed to include them all in the one development log.

There was evidence of clear feedback throughout the process and how this influenced the work created by the candidates. The most successful responses considered the whole creative process, including why ideas were included, developed or disregarded. The development logs should contain evidence which demonstrates how the candidates have explored the relevant ideas and techniques as appropriate to the piece they are creating.

Evidence was presented in a variety of ways. Some candidates opted for a word document with others using PPT, PDF or MP4. Some candidates included videos or audio of the process which clearly showed the creative journey. Some good practice when doing this included embedding the videos or audio into the PPT so that the candidates' response to the work was written in the same place. When submitting PPTs onto Surpass this should be done as a zip file in order to allow the recording to play.

Where the work was most successful, candidates had a real sense of ownership and a clear understanding of the brief. The brief and their ideas which developed from it framed every decision – and these were a pleasure to read. Where work was less successful, candidates were not brief or skill specific enough. If a candidate is doing make-design for example then images of how the make was applied would show the creative process. Production candidates generally needed to be much more specific with reference to the technical skills, for example make-up application techniques and materials, types of lanterns, angles, level of intensity used, not just colours.

Task 3

Present your final piece(s) to an audience.

For assessment purposes Task 3 is identified as being just the presentation of the completed piece (or pieces) of work, but of course this is the culmination of the work done in actually creating the piece of work candidates will present. Although this is the outcome, it will also feed into Task 4 and candidates need to be able to reflect and respond to feedback. Some centres did not have an audience present for this task, and others did not provide candidates with the opportunity to receive feedback. It is best practice where possible that candidates the opportunity to share what they have created with an audience and for that audience to give constructive feedback.

The various discipline specific criteria are laid out in the marking scheme. The assessment here is not of whether the candidate has managed to perform or present their piece perfectly, although this will aid in communicating the nuances of each discipline, it is whether the creative skills or methods have been employed in the creation and are evidenced in the performance or presentation.

A full range of work was seen in this task across all disciplines and they were a pleasure to listen to or watch. The most successful were creative and told a real story of their area. Performance candidates demonstrated a variety of skills with some excellent work very clearly linked to their research of practitioners. Where candidates work in a group, centres are reminded of the importance of individual candidates being able to demonstrate their contribution to the process, not just their performance. Production candidates should be presenting their work, so a demonstration of applying make-up for example, or a recording of them setting up and programming equipment, to support their presentation of ideas is recommended. If they have created work for other candidates, for example set or costume design, then evidence of this in practice should be included.

Many performance candidates did speak at the start or end of their work, explaining why and how they had created their idea. This is not essential, but where centres had included this, it often supported candidates' ideas. It is very important that all candidates can be identified. This is their chance to shine and share their outcome so clear identification is vital.

Task 4

Evaluate the success of your creative process and final creation. Discuss the areas of your work that need improving / developing and explain how you would make the improvements or justify why particular feedback has not been acted upon.

This task can be a written piece of work, or in any other format which is appropriate to the candidate, for example a video recording. Candidates can add images or screen shots to support their knowledge and help them explain their point.

Many candidates did well in this task explaining how the feedback given during the whole process helped them. They were able to comment on how effective feedback had been and how they developed their work accordingly. They included a range of peer feedback and self reflection. It can be difficult to write about how you could improve something which was actually very successful, so candidates could be aspirational here and consider what they could do if they had much bigger / better resources available, professional actors / dancers / musicians as performers, a fully equipped theatre with the best lighting / sound rig and a team of technicians.

Many candidates gave good examples of how successfully their outcome met the brief – but where this was not clear, candidates struggled to evaluate effectively. Production candidates did not always focus on their skill enough, they need to demonstrate how their skill has developed during the process. It may be helpful to refer to the discipline specific lists of points which appear at the top of the criteria for tasks 2 and 3.

The most successful candidates were reflective and could see why their work was successful or not. They demonstrated this through their understating of their skill. The highest achieving candidates in this task included real depth of analysis and reflection. On the whole the evaluations did show what was being created but candidates also need to focus on how their skills helped them be creative.

Summary of key points

Key points for centres to consider for future series:

- The work created must have a clear link to the brief, this should be evidenced in all tasks.
- Research is the key to Tasks 1 and 2. It will allow candidates to focus on why their outcome is suitable for the brief and their target audience.

- More reference is needed to professional practice, this will allow candidates to focus on their skill and the brief.
- All candidates must be clearly identified if a video is submitted.
- Work uploaded as Zip folders is an example of good practice.

The new Unit 2 brief will be released on the secure website on 1st September 2023, centres are reminded to check that they are using the correct brief.

Unit 3 will be available for entry for the first time in June 2024, the brief for this unit will be released on the secure website in January 2024.



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