



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Study of a Text in its Theatrical Context (Higher)

NUMBER D197 12

COURSE Drama (Higher)

SUMMARY

The purpose of this unit is to develop competence in investigating a text in its historical, social and theatrical context in order to explore how the text could be communicated through performance from the perspective of both director and actor.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Demonstrate awareness of the historical, social and theatrical context of a play.
- 2 Make an exploration of how a play could be communicated through performance.
- 3 Perform an acting role from a prescribed text.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following:

- Standard Grade Drama at Credit level
- Intermediate 2 Drama
- other appropriate prior experience in drama.

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Higher.

Administrative Information

Superclass: LC

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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CORE SKILLS

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes of the Unit Specifications for this Course.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Course.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Study of a Text in its Theatrical Context (Higher)

Acceptable performance of this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Demonstrate awareness of the historical, social and theatrical context of a play.

Performance criteria

- a) Describes correctly the historical and social context of the play.
- b) Explains clearly the conventions and styles associated with the writing and staging of the text.

Note on the range of the outcome

Historical and Social Context: prevailing social background and conditions of the period in which the play was written and the playwright's intended audience.

Evidence requirements

Written or taped evidence which demonstrates that the candidate has met the above performance criteria. Candidates should demonstrate understanding of **one** from the range of conventions and styles. These are: (1) structure and language, (2) staging and architecture, use of theatrical effects associated with original production and (3) the characteristics of any recognised dramatic genre(s).

OUTCOME 2

Make an exploration of how a play could be communicated through performance.

Performance criteria

- a) Demonstrates understanding of the themes, issues, action and characters of the play.
- b) Demonstrates clearly and with justification, own overall directorial interpretation of the play.
- c) Demonstrates, with justification, staging, design and acting concepts to communicate own overall directorial interpretation.

Note on the range of the outcome

Themes and Issues: relevance to a modern audience and possibilities for individual interpretation.
Characters: motivation and role in play, relationship to other characters, development within the action of the play, playwright's intention and candidate's individual interpretation.

Staging and Design: theatre spaces, forms of staging, actor/audience relationship, set, costume, lighting, sound, props and make-up.

Evidence requirements

Taped and/or written evidence that demonstrates that all the above performance criteria have been met.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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OUTCOME 3

Perform an acting role from a prescribed text.

Performance criteria

- a) Interprets the character convincingly, showing use of textual clues.
- b) Uses a voice which is appropriate both to character and clarity of words.
- c) Uses movement which is both appropriate to character and makes effective use of the acting space in relation to the audience.
- d) Interacts effectively with other characters.
- e) Communicates effectively the overall portrayal of the character to the audience.

Evidence requirements

Performance assessed by staff checklist. The candidate is expected to sustain the role for around five minutes and to communicate with an audience which may comprise the other candidates in the teaching group. Where spoken language is not the candidate's main mode of communication, special arrangements will require to be made.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Study of a Text in its Theatrical Context (Higher)

This part of the unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

A range of texts for study will be prescribed by the SQA each year. Candidates should explore the chosen prescribed text from the perspective of an actor and of a director in preparation for a production.

For further details on the content of this section, please refer to the course specification.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

For advice about sequencing of this unit if taught as a course component and suggestions for integration, please refer to the section 'Course details - Approaches to Learning and Teaching: Unit 2 - Study of a Text in its Theatrical Context'.

It may be necessary to use a combination of exposition, resource-based learning and some self-supported study to investigate the social, historical and theatrical context in which the chosen text was written, but practical workshops should form the core from which other activities are derived. It may not be possible to workshop an entire text and therefore the focus for workshop activities may be key scenes which are identified as those which highlight one or more main themes or issues of the play and/or contain an important development in the plot/storyline and/or introduce or focus on one or more main characters and their relationships. Apart from significance in the content, key scenes should provide a good vehicle for exploring the conventions and styles associated with the dramatic genre(s) to which the text most closely belongs, experiencing the playwright's use of structure and language and experimenting with acting style, basic staging and design concepts.

Initially, the workshops will be teacher/lecturer-led, using some candidates as 'actors' and the rest as observers. During this time, the teacher/lecturer will be demonstrating the directorial process. However, the candidates should become increasingly involved as 'collaborative directors'. As the candidates become more familiar with the text, there may be more emphasis placed on acting skills in terms of identifying and using textual clues, developing characterisation and using performance skills.

Short extracts may be used to provide individual practical directorial assignments. The candidate would prepare for direction by investigating the context of the extract and the relationships of the characters in it. The candidate would decide on how the extract could be staged, and block in moves. Other candidates could be used as actors to try out the direction. It may be helpful to the candidate to have an evaluative tutorial with the teacher/lecturer afterwards. The culmination of knowledge and understanding gained from both practical and non-practical study of the text should result in the candidate being able to conceive and justify an overall directorial interpretation of the text. The candidates should investigate how their overall interpretations could be communicated to an audience through performance and design concepts.

Obviously, a theatre visit to see a production of the chosen prescribed text would be an excellent resource for learning and teaching. However, a production of another play by the same playwright or of a play from the same period and/or genre would also enhance study. All theatrical productions will assist the candidate in learning about directing, acting and design.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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For further details about the teaching of investigating, acting and directing skills, it is recommended that teachers/lecturers should read the section 'Course Specification - Approaches to Learning and Teaching: General advice on learning and teaching'.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Each unit is assessed on a pass/fail basis. Candidates will be required to provide evidence of the achievement of each of the three learning outcomes. Teachers/lecturers may select the instruments of assessment which they consider will provide a valid, reliable and practicable assessment of the candidates' work.

In this unit, the candidates should be generating evidence for assessment which results from their investigation of how the chosen prescribed text could be presented to an audience. The two suggested forms of assessment are practical assignments and an assignment which requires a dramatic commentary.

Outcomes 1 and 2

- 1 Demonstrate awareness of the historical, social and theatrical context of a play.
- 2 Make an exploration of how a play could be communicated through performance.

The suggested assessment instrument is an assignment based on a dramatic commentary. The dramatic commentary should reflect the focus of the main areas of study appropriate to the chosen prescribed text. (See section 'Course details: Course Content'.) The assignment should involve the candidate in, firstly, demonstrating awareness of an aspect of the historical, social and theatrical context of the play and secondly, in demonstrating how this aspect could affect or be communicated through performance. Therefore, the candidate will be required to show both knowledge and understanding of the text and knowledge and understanding of the process of performance from the perspective of a director and actor.

Outcome 3

Perform an acting role from a prescribed text.

The recommended assessment instrument is observation of a performance of the acting role within an interactive acting piece from the relevant prescribed text. The performance must involve the candidate in an acting contribution of around five minutes. An observational checklist listing the performance criteria should be used to record achievement.

This checklist will form the main evidence but teacher/lecturer notes and a video recording may be used as supporting evidence.

SPECIAL NEEDS

This unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative outcomes for units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment Arrangements* (SQA, September, 2003).