Course report 2022

Subject	Drama
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	620

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	23.2	Cumulative percentage	23.2	Number of candidates	145	Minimum mark required	69
B	Percentage	31.6	Cumulative percentage	54.8	Number of candidates	195	Minimum mark required	57
C	Percentage	28.5	Cumulative percentage	83.3	Number of candidates	180	Minimum mark required	46
D	Percentage	13.5	Cumulative percentage	96.8	Number of candidates	80	Minimum mark required	34
No award	Percentage	3.2	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	20	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Project-dissertation

Overall, the project-dissertation performed as expected. Candidates selected both contemporary and historical practitioners and their practice to address their chosen performance issue within their project-dissertations. Many candidates engaged in performance issues related to current social, political and cultural issues explored by practitioners in professional theatre performances.

Candidates who did not focus on theatre making and theatre practice within performance, could not access the full range of marks.

Assignment

Overall, the assignment performed as expected. Candidates selected both contemporary and historical productions and practitioners in their assignment. Most assignments were written based on contemporary performances which had been accessed through online digital theatre platforms. Almost all of the productions selected for the assignment were appropriate for SCQF level 7.

Both assignment questions were attempted by candidates with question 2 being the most popular. In some responses to question 2, candidates wrote a performance analysis more suited to Higher level where the response did not root their analysis in an argument related to the practitioner's creation of dramatic meaning in the production and failed to engage in the question posed. In a few responses candidates misinterpreted question 1 and wrote about the status of the characters in the play that they were analysing rather than the status of the acting within the performance.

Most candidates completed an extended response to a chosen question, with a conclusion, within the controlled conditions of 1 hour and 30 minutes for this assessment task. A small minority of candidates did not submit a resource sheet and were therefore penalised as indicated in the course specification.

Performance

The performance performed as expected and allowed centres to select play texts and specialisms in acting, directing and design to support learner personalisation and choice.

Acting remains the most popular choice for the performance assessment with few candidates choosing design or directing.

Some visiting assessment dates had to be rearranged due to candidate absences, for example due to Covid-related illness.

Most centres had a limited audience for the actors which mainly consisted of the remainder of the class.

In almost all centres, and in some challenging circumstances, a sense of occasion was given to live performances and many visiting assessors commented on the positive experience of assessing candidates once more in person.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Project-dissertation

Most candidates referenced professional theatre and theatre practitioners in their project-dissertations. When they had a clearly identified performance issue that they explored within their project-dissertation and carefully selected and analysed performance examples in response to this issue, candidates did well.

There was often strong personal engagement with the topics and issues explored and some passionate discussion of topical themes in theatre. Candidates were able to use a range of digital theatre platforms and live streaming of performances and often analysed these effectively in their writing. Candidates who gave comparisons within their writing, were able to create a well-considered and balanced argument.

Candidates who gave detailed examples from features of productions and practitioner's practice relating to making theatre achieved well. Candidates who were appropriately presented and had the pre-requisite literacy skills required for this component were able to present their work coherently. Candidates who presented a well-considered conclusion, evaluated the analysed evidence and consistently returned to the performance issue that they were addressing did well.

Candidates who struggled with this task often presented a simplistic comparison of two productions of the same play. These candidates often did not identify a performance issue and had titles which indicated that they were going to compare two performances.

Candidates who wrote theatrical histories without any performance examples and without a clear issue often did not access the full range of marks. Candidates who presented dissertations about theatrical trends in, for example, acting training; theatre making; theatre pricing; diversity and equality in theatre, or were wholly reliant on statistics and did not reference performances, could not access the full range of marks.

Often within weaker dissertations, candidates were too reliant on opinions in reviews and did not convince in a personal response. Dissertations that were weak were often under the minimum word count and were self-penalising as they were often simplistic and narrative driven.

Assignment

Candidates who provided an argument in response to the chosen question and kept the question in focus throughout their assignment write-up achieved well. Candidates who achieved well had convincing knowledge and understanding of the practitioner and this was relevant to the production analysis and their argument. When examples were carefully selected, described and analysed in detail, and consistently used to build an argument, candidates achieved well. Candidates who expressed and justified their personal response to the theatre making and gave a considered conclusion achieved well. There was a strong correlation between well-structured and well-argued responses and succinctly organised resource sheets. Candidates who responded with a personal response to the theatre making, in response to the chosen question, did well.

Candidates sometimes presented a lengthy biography of the practitioner without contextualising their practice and making this relevant to the chosen question. When candidates provided a response more suited to Higher Drama performance analysis without referencing to the question they could not access the full range of marks.

A few candidates did not manage their time effectively and did not write a conclusion which weakened their through-line of argument. Some candidates did not submit a resource sheet with their assignment and forfeited 4 marks.

When candidates in a single centre appeared to have learnt a series of points and presented the same argument some individual candidate responses tended to be less convincing in terms of their understanding.

Performance

Actors
Many candidates achieved well in this component and appeared to enjoy the experience of performing and demonstrated strong stage craft and textual understanding. Candidates used a range of contemporary and historical texts for their performance assessment. More centres and candidates are using the recommended list of play texts as a guide to inform their choice of appropriately challenging plays and are using both familiar and new scripts within this assessment.

Some exceptionally strong performances were seen in both roles, but especially the monologue and this allowed the visiting assessor to use the full range of marks available.

Some candidates did less well in this component if they were less secure in lines and took many prompts. Some candidates appeared less prepared or less confident in the monologue sub-component.

Some candidates did not convince in a full understanding of textual clues in their performance of their monologues.

Some monologues were very long, and these were often self-penalising as the candidate lost impact in their performance.

There were examples of inappropriate presentation at this level where candidates struggled with the demand of the assessment task.

Directors
Most directors structured their rehearsal assessment well and presented their directorial concepts coherently. They also motivated their actors confidently and used accurate terminology in the main. Directors who had a thorough textual knowledge and, in addition, had clear concepts relevant to a contemporary audience achieved well. Directors who contextualised warm-ups and rehearsal activities and made them relevant to the extract chosen and their overall concepts, achieved well.

Some directors did not make their concepts clear and struggled to convince in a full understanding of the whole play. Some directors did not watch and craft the shaping of stage

pictures or character interaction and did not build clear meaning or impact in their direction of the extract.

Designers

Most designers need to be clearer with regards to the performance space that they are designing for. They also need a thorough working knowledge of the whole play and the practical demands of the text. The candidates who did well applied appropriate care and detail to the creation and building of the scale model set which carries most of the marks in this component. Designers who achieved well, demonstrated an understanding of scale and viability in their scale model set.

Some designers used technology effectively to convey their overall concept and to communicate their ideas about set transitions and to convey more complex stage pictures and imagery.

Sometimes designers appeared to spend a disproportionate amount of time on the two additional production areas, often making items of costume or props, for example, rather than presenting lists, designs or cue sheets. This was often to the detriment of the scale model set for which they are marked on their application of skills.

Designers who achieved well had a coherent and overall connecting concept for the scale model set and the two additional design areas.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Project-dissertation

Centres should support candidates to identify a clear performance issue.

Centres should support candidates to identify a range of performances and theatre practice to reference in their project-dissertation.

Centres should encourage candidates to present their own opinions in response to their chosen performance issue.

Centres should ensure that candidates are not writing about film, ballet or opera in their project-dissertation.

Candidates should be reminded that the project-dissertation should focus on professional theatre making and should reference theatre productions.

Assignment

Centres should offer guidance to candidates about how to select their chosen question for this task.

Centres should offer guidance to candidates about the relevance of practitioner study and how this will support their analysis of their selected production.

Centres should encourage candidates to present their own opinions in response to their chosen question.

Centres should ensure that candidates clearly identify the question chosen, submit a flyleaf and a resource sheet for this task. There is a penalty of 4 marks if the resource sheet is not submitted with the assignment.

Performance

Actors

Centres should use the recommended list of texts as a guide to support the selection of play texts for both interactive acting and monologue to ensure challenge appropriate to this level. The list of recommended texts can be found in the course specification (Appendix 3). The monologue should be from a full-length play and candidates should be encouraged to read the full play for both acting pieces.

Centres should remind candidates that no other actors should be on stage for the monologue. If they are addressing their monologue to another character, they should carefully consider their stage positioning to engage the audience and create impact.

Centres should ensure that monologues and interactive pieces are not overly long and should keep within the recommended guidance.

Directors
Centres should remind directors that all warm-up and introductory rehearsal tasks support the understanding of the script extract and/or overall directorial concept. Directors should clearly articulate their overall concept within their rehearsal.

Designers
Design candidates must have a clearly identified performance space for which they are designing.

The scale model set demonstrates the application of production skills at this level. It must be the focus of the design assessment and be large enough to communicate ideas in a visual way. Designers will not be credited for talking about what they would do.

Concepts must be captured in the visual presentation of the scale model set and supporting designs or lists and cue sheets for the two additional production areas. Designers are not required to make items or demonstrate application within the two additional production areas at Advanced Higher level.

There is no requirement for designers to present scrapbooks and numerous design mood boards. They should only present what is necessary to explain their final concept.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
♦ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report.