



Course Report 2016

Subject	Drama
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Performance

This component is worth 60 out of a total of 100 marks. The Performance accounts for 60% of the course assessment — 10% for the Preparation for Performance and 50% for the Practical Performance in either Acting or Directing or Design.

Acting candidates are required to perform two contrasting acting roles, one of which is interactive and the other a monologue. Each candidate is required to be involved in an acting contribution of approximately 20 minutes in total, with approximately 15–17 minutes for the interactive role and two to three minutes for the monologue.

Design candidates are required to produce a set design for a play, which must allow for one significant set change. The design interpretation is to be for an audience of today. Candidates are to prepare and produce a scale model set for the play. The set has to relate to an identified acting space. In addition, they are required to create design concepts for two other areas of design chosen from lighting, sound, multimedia, costume, make-up and hair, and props. On the day of the examination the designer is required to present their model of the set, ideas and concepts to a visiting assessor. The total time for the presentation is approximately 20 to 25 minutes.

Directing candidates are required to have prepared a substantial extract, for example an act, from their chosen text. On the day of the performance, the visiting assessor selects approximately three pages for the candidate to direct. Each candidate is required to be involved in a total time of 40 minutes of directing.

In Performance, the majority of candidates chose the Acting option. Directing was the second preferred option and Design the least preferred option.

Candidates and centres selected a range of texts for study. The texts chosen were mostly appropriately challenging at this level. Centres and candidates used previous Advanced Higher Drama prescribed text choices and also a range of national and international contemporary and historic plays.

Most candidates communicated their research and interpretative ideas for their roles with clarity and relevance in their Preparation for Performance summaries, and achieved good to very good marks.

Component 2: Project-dissertation

This component is worth 40 marks out of a total of 100 marks (40% of the overall marks for the course assessment).

In the project, the candidate is asked to identify a performance issue, and carry out appropriate research and communicate their findings in the form of a dissertation: word processed; 2,500 to 3,000 words in length; acknowledging sources and including visual evidence as appropriate.

This project-dissertation is set by centres, following SQA guidelines, and conducted under some supervision and control. The evidence for assessment is produced independently and submitted to SQA for external marking.

Evidence that meets the requirements of this component of Course assessment will be 2,500 to 3,000 words. The word count must be submitted with the project. Most candidates produced a word processed document and referenced project-dissertation that was within the given word count.

Candidates and centres chose varied topics and performance focuses for their project-dissertations. Many candidates used the key practitioners studied in the previous Advanced Higher Drama question paper, to start from or to refer to, when exploring their performance issue. The most common practitioners referenced in this approach were Stanislavski and Brecht.

Some candidates and centres used a live theatre performance to inspire a study of, for example, a director, designer, playwright or acting company. This often led to a retrospective of work and analysis of connecting or contrasting styles and performance ideas or theories.

Another approach had candidates looking at a single practitioner and focusing on different performance issues within their work. Some candidates referenced practical experiences and had interviewed contemporary theatre practitioners.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Performance

The Acting assessment often had an appropriate sense of occasion, with candidates and centres well prepared for the assessment event in the main. Many Acting candidates communicated clear understanding of their roles, had confident stage craft and created good impact in performance in both the interactive and monologue roles.

Designers often demonstrated a passion for their work and presented their concepts through a range of methods. Some candidates communicated original and imaginative concepts. Some candidates demonstrated a high level of expertise in the demonstration of their skills and made excellent use of technology.

Effective directors knew their text well and had a clear interpretative vision and a clear focus about the concepts they wished to explore in the rehearsal. Some directors demonstrated strong interpersonal skills and communicated highly effectively.

Visiting Assessors commented most positively about the quality and passion of many of the candidates in their Performance assessment.

Component 2: Project-dissertation

Candidates achieved well when they held a clear focus in their dissertation exploration and had a clear line of enquiry. The candidates that did this well brought their analysed evidence back to the issue identified and developed their thinking on the performance issue throughout the dissertation. The candidates who performed well often, when synthesising materials, made links and identified contrasts and returned to an argument expressed in their own voice. Candidates that were clearly enthused and interested in the performance issue communicated this in their writing.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Performance

Some Acting candidates had difficulty if the extract was unnecessarily long and did not fully convince with their portrayal and lost overall impact in role. This was particularly true of the monologues. Some Acting candidates who chose texts set in another regional/historical context had problems sustaining and convincing with their use of voice, particularly accent.

Some Acting candidates found creating convincing relationships challenging if their acting partners were not off script or were under rehearsed.

Design candidates sometimes appeared under-rehearsed in their presentation of their work, and occasionally had to be prompted to produce evidence to access marks, eg fully explaining how the model set box functioned for transitions of the play. Some Design candidates tended to talk about their ideas and concepts without producing clear evidence, eg designs/cue sheets. Occasionally Design candidates failed to design for the whole play and did not convince with a unifying concept.

Occasionally Directors appeared under-rehearsed and failed to be fully conversant with the whole text. Some warm-up or rehearsal activities lacked relevance — failing to contextualise ideas in the play and their overall directorial concept.

Component 2: Project-dissertation

Candidates found the dissertation demanding if their title lacked focus and was too wide in scope. In this case, the candidates often presented information without analysing and referring back to their performance issue focus. In some cases, the candidates drifted from their initial intentions given in their introductory paragraphs, and their dissertation lacked a thorough line of argument.

Some candidates found synthesising analysed evidence challenging, often repeating ideas without drilling down and drawing conclusions in their writing. On occasion, artificial links were made between current and historic theatre practitioners that did not have relevance in the argument given.

A small minority of candidates found expressing their ideas and thinking in a lucid, academic format challenging and did not demonstrate the literacy skills that are appropriate at this level.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Performance

Acting

- ◆ Acting candidates should select their monologue from a full-length play text and be cautious of finding stand-alone monologues on websites.
- ◆ As in the interactive acting choice, the monologue should be from a full-length play text, and not a musical or film script.
- ◆ The monologue should be from one part of the play, and there should be no other characters on stage.
- ◆ Candidates and centres should ensure that the monologue performances remain within the recommended 2–3 minutes in length.
- ◆ Lengthy set or costumes changes are not necessary in the acting performances.
- ◆ Elements of costume and key props that aid characterisation are valid — character skirts for example.
- ◆ All actors, including non-assessed performers in supporting roles, should be off script to allow for credible interaction.

Design

- ◆ Design candidates must design for the whole play, and in their presentation of their model box set must refer to each act/scene and any significant changes to the setting.
- ◆ The scale model set should be designed for an identified performance space.
- ◆ For the additional design roles candidates must also design for the whole text, and there should be a coherence and link to the set design. Ideas must be supported with evidence — designs/cue-sheets/artefacts etc.
- ◆ Design candidates need to rehearse the communication of their work. Creating cue cards may help them to go through their ideas systematically.

Directing

- ◆ Directors should be encouraged to time the phases of the rehearsal and practise different pages of their chosen extract.
- ◆ Warm-up exercises and rehearsal activities such as improvisation should be contextualised with regard to the script extract, the whole text and the Director's overall concept.

- ◆ Suitable actors should be able to take on complex direction and explore complex issues in the text to allow the director to communicate their concepts confidently and without compromise.
- ◆ Detailed uses of production areas are not necessary for rehearsal unless they are integral to the directorial concepts.
- ◆ After the final rehearsal it is appropriate that the Director leads an evaluation with their actors of progress made during the rehearsal, as time allows.

Preparation for Performance

- ◆ Acting candidates should reference interpretative ideas and relevant research for both acting roles.
- ◆ Design candidates should reference interpretative ideas and relevant research for their overarching coherent design concept for the whole play and both additional production roles.
- ◆ Directing candidates should reference interpretative ideas and relevant research for the whole play text and their chosen extract.
- ◆ The Preparation for Performance summary should be concise and relevant and communicated within the 700 words recommended length.

Component 2: Project-Dissertation

- ◆ Candidates should choose a dissertation title and issue that allows them to address the topic in depth. They should regularly review the title over the course of their study and ensure that the topic explored does not change from their stated purpose. If the candidate does change from their initial focus in their final dissertation, they should ensure that they have redrafted their title.
- ◆ The performance issue identified must be on a professional theatre practitioner or professional theatre practice or professional theatre theory, contemporary or historic, on which there is an academic discourse.
- ◆ The Project-dissertation should not be on an aspect of ballet, opera, or musicals.
- ◆ It is not necessary to reference a historic practitioner in the dissertation unless it is relevant to the performance topic.
- ◆ Candidates should ensure that their dissertation is proofread, and it would be useful to submit the final word processed version double spaced to allow ease of marking.
- ◆ Candidates should ensure that all sources are referenced. The Harvard referencing system is recommended.

- ◆ Candidates and centres must ensure that the word count is submitted on the dissertation and that it does not exceed or fall short of 10% above or below the word count of between 2500 and 3000 words.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0
------------------------------------	---

Number of resulted entries in 2016	537
------------------------------------	-----

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	28.1%	28.1%	151	70
B	28.9%	57.0%	155	60
C	24.6%	81.6%	132	50
D	8.9%	90.5%	48	45
No award	9.5%	-	51	0

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.