



National Qualifications

Course Report 2008: Drama

**Standard Grade,
Access 2 and Access 3
Intermediate 1
Intermediate 2
Higher
Advanced Higher**

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Introduction

The purpose of this Course report is to give centres:

- ◆ all information on internal and external assessment for the subject in the one place
- ◆ an easier way of making a comparison across levels and years
- ◆ support in achieving consistency in national standards across levels for both internal and external assessment

We will provide a link on the SQA website from the contents page of the Course report to individual sections of the report to allow for easier navigation, in addition to having access to the complete report.

We encourage you to provide feedback about the usefulness of the Course report. Please contact Mary McDonald, Qualifications Manager for NQ Drama, with your comments – mary.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk

Summary of Findings

General

2008 is the third examination year of the revised Question Paper structure for Standard Grade Drama Knowledge and Understanding and revisions to the Intermediate 1 and 2 Drama Question Papers. There is firm evidence that after the period of transition and change that centres are becoming increasingly comfortable with the related assessment demands as they prepare their candidates for the external examination.

For the 2008 examination, and for subsequent years, the format of the Advanced Higher Question Paper has changed in that the same two questions appear for each of the theatre practitioners in Section A of the paper.

SQA continues to support centres in a variety of ways: comprehensive Subject Update letters which are sent to all centres and published on www.sqa.org.uk; exemplification of assessment standards which in 2007/2008 focused on Higher and Advanced Higher levels; national training events – Advanced Higher Drama in December 2007 and Intermediate 1 and 2 Drama in October 2008. The exemplification programme continues in 2008/2009 with exemplification of Question Paper responses and assessment standards at Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher levels.

In 2008, Principal Assessor reports continue to bring attention to appropriate presentation levels: the accurate projection of which two Question Papers each Standard Grade candidate will be entered for; appropriate choice of texts for each cohort at NQ levels; the choice of progression pathway for each candidate. In 2007/2008, the distinction between Unit and Course in Drama continued to be reinforced: the complementary and supplementary nature of Units and Courses; the interface of internal assessment with external assessment; the value of Units as qualifications in their own right.

At all NQ levels in 2008, SQA's Visiting Examiners report on the high and, at times the very high, standards of practical performance. In addition, there is clear evidence of notable improvement in candidate performance in external Question Papers at all levels.

Entries and Awards

Entries and Awards — Standard Grade Drama

Year	Entries
2008	6,414
2007	6,343
2006	6,106

Grade boundaries for each assessable element

Grade Boundaries 2008

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General 1 Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Knowledge and Understanding	70	48	35	60	34	26	50	29	19

Grade Boundaries 2007

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General 1 Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Knowledge and Understanding	70	48	35	60	38	30	50	29	19

Grade Boundaries 2006

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General 1 Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Knowledge and Understanding	70	50	37	60	38	30	50	29	19

Distribution of awards

	Entries	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	No Award
2008	6,414	25.3%	27.0%	22.1%	16.2%	5.7%	1.1%	0.1%	2.5%
2007	6,343	18.1%	30.4%	24.5%	17.1%	5.5%	1.5%	0.0%	2.8%
2006	6,106	20.4%	29.1%	24.7%	16.6%	5.4%	1.1%	0.0%	2.7%

Entries and Awards — National Qualification Courses

Access 2

	Entries	Awards
2008	628	507
2007	364	345
2006	272	212

Access 3

	Entries	Awards
2008	196	147
2007	242	230
2006	187	141

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 1 Drama

Year	Entries
2008	213
2007	235
2006	77

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	70	60	50	45
2006	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	213	59.2%	17.8%	8.9%	85.9%	0.5%	13.6%
2007	235	35.7%	21.7%	18.7%	76.2%	6.0%	17.9%
2006	77	68.8%	11.7%	11.7%	92.2%	2.6%	5.2%

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 2 Drama

Year	Entries
2008	1,073
2007	986
2006	843

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	76	64	52	46
2006	100	76	64	52	46

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	1,073	51.8%	26.0%	14.9%	92.7%	2.1%	5.1%
2007	986	20.8%	32.2%	28.7%	81.6%	9.4%	8.9%
2006	843	27.4%	37.1%	22.2%	86.7%	5.5%	7.8%

Entries and Awards — Higher Drama

Year	Entries
2008	2,138
2007	2,034
2006	2,061

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	57	45	39
2007	100	70	57	45	39
2006	100	70	57	45	39

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	2,138	14.8%	33.0%	33.5%	81.3%	10.3%	8.4%
2007	2,034	11.2%	29.8%	36.2%	77.2%	11.5%	11.3%
2006	2,061	11.3%	30.9%	37.1%	79.3%	11.1%	9.6%

Entries and Awards — Advanced Higher Drama

Year	Entries
2008	272
2007	291
2006	225

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	68	57	46	40
2007	100	68	57	46	40
2006	100	68	57	46	40

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	272	15.4%	25.7%	29.8%	71.0%	12.1%	16.9%
2007	291	13.1%	19.2%	29.9%	62.2%	16.5%	21.3%
2006	225	12.9%	25.8%	36.0%	74.7%	13.8%	11.6%

Comments on Verification: Standard Grade

Element / Coursework moderated:

This section refers to the verification of the **Creating** element. (Visiting)

Feedback to centres

General comments

Centres and, in particular, candidates were very well prepared and clear about their targets. Lessons were well structured and in the majority of cases centres had followed the issued guidelines. Verifiers commented on the high level of enthusiasm demonstrated by candidates. It was felt by all verifiers that a number of centres attempted too much in the allocated time resulting in some repetition of tasks. Overall the verification of Creating was successful. Some candidates started to complete Presenting tasks during the Creating part of the verification.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

Centres must follow the guidelines issued by SQA, especially regarding content and timing. Centres should limit the number of stimuli used to one or two and thereafter follow the Drama Process as outlined in the Body of Knowledge as closely as possible.

Sufficient time (1.5 hours minimum recommended) must be allocated to this element.

Element / Coursework moderated:

This section refers to the verification of the **Presenting** element. (Visiting)

Feedback to centres

General comments

Centres and candidates were well prepared and clear about their targets during the Presenting part of the verification. Verifiers commented on the high level of enthusiasm demonstrated by candidates. All verifiers reported that this element was rushed. It was felt that the time allocated by centres for this element was too short.

All candidates had access to a variety of theatre arts but lack of time meant that not all candidates were able to fully demonstrate their ability.

Evaluations were well done but some centres are submitting evaluation items completed during the first year of the course. Although these evaluations were found to be concordant it was felt that they

did not reflect the true ability of the candidate. It was also felt that, at times, too much was being asked of some candidates.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development

The verification of Presenting should be given sufficient time for all candidates to demonstrate their ability – 1.25 to 1.5 hours recommended.

Centres should follow the Drama Process as outlined in the Body of Knowledge as closely as possible.

Centres should refer to the Arrangements Document for guidance on completing evaluations.

Evaluation items should reflect the ability of the candidate towards the end of the course as this grade is included in the candidate's overall grade for Presenting.

Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses

Titles/Levels of National Units Verified

D193	10	Drama Skills	Intermediate 1	(Central)
D193	11	Drama Skills	Intermediate 2	(Central)
D196	12	Investigative Drama	Higher	(Central)
D199	13	Devised Drama	Advanced Higher	(Central)

Feedback to Centres

General comments

On the whole, assessment evidence was well presented.

In most cases, the marking schemes in the NABs had been accurately applied.

In some cases, a lot of unnecessary materials, including course notes and stimulus materials were sent along with assessment evidence. Centres should only submit relevant material as detailed in the NABs.

In some cases, candidates' written responses did not show any evidence of how they had been marked or how marking criteria had been applied.

Intermediate 2

Outcome 3: requires candidates to keep a log of ongoing evaluation of practical exercises. Centres should ensure that this log is included as evidence for verification purposes.

Outcome 4: Candidates must also include an explanation and justification of their ground plan.

Outcome 4: In the Dramatic Commentary, the candidate should refer to their own directorial scene.

Higher

Centres should clearly show how the marking scheme has been applied.

In section 4, candidates should describe the rehearsal process of their *own* directorial section justifying their *own* directorial decisions.

Areas of good practice and areas for further development

As in previous years, there was great variation in the way Centres presented assessment evidence.

In some Centres good detailed log books and student handouts showed clearly how assessments and marking schemes had been applied. An excellent Evaluation Feedback booklet for Advanced Higher had been produced in one Centre.

In other cases only pass/fail checklists were submitted with no markings at all on candidate scripts to indicate how assessments had had been applied other than holistically. This made the verification process very difficult.

Course Assessment: Standard Grade

In Standard Grade Drama, the Course assessment consists of three elements: Creating, Presenting and Knowledge and Understanding.

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General comments

In the 2008 Question Papers overall responses were good, particularly so in the Credit and Foundation Papers. As 2008 is the third year of the new Question Paper structure, this response is very encouraging.

This year there was evidence that candidates were presented at levels more appropriate to their ability but, some centres continue to overestimate students' abilities, resulting in inappropriate presentation levels for some candidates.

Once again, careless reading of questions cost marks. For example, in the Foundation paper, too many candidates failed to read the 'new' information given in Q7.

Some centres continue to instruct candidates to use a different scenario in each paper. Please note that candidates who adopt this approach will not be eligible for the full range of marks. This will result in loss of marks for the scenario, and any ensuing linked questions, in the second paper sat.

Markers noted an overall improvement in candidates' knowledge of vocabulary terms. However, too many are still giving vocabulary answers which are not listed in the Body of Knowledge eg. in Q5b) in the Credit paper, characterisation techniques were given which may well be used in the classroom, but are not listed in the Body of Knowledge. 'Role on the Wall' is an example of this.

All centres are reminded that the Body of Knowledge will continue to be the source of questions and therefore centres' exam preparation should be informed by this document.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Foundation

It appears that centres are preparing candidates well for this paper and candidates coped well with all questions except the ground plan (see below).

General

Scenarios are succinctly summarised by the majority of candidates. However, some are still excessively long. Centres are reminded that this results in a loss of marks, as outlined in the Marking Instructions available on the SQA website.

Credit

Most questions in this paper were well, or very well, done. Q.7 elicited many high quality responses.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Foundation

- ◆ The ground plan question was poorly done. Centres are reminded that the Body of Knowledge contains information on the requirements of a ground plan.

General

- ◆ Some scenarios contain so many conventions that summarising presents real problems for candidates eg. it is not helpful to read “Sc. 3 is a monologue where she explains how she feels to the audience” or “a flashback shows what happened when they were young”. Centres are reminded that a simply constructed scenario gives candidates a better chance of recounting the plot clearly and succinctly. There is also evidence of continuing confusion over the difference between ‘what happens next’ and a ‘flashforward’.
- ◆ With regard to ground plans, please be reminded that ‘opening position of actors’ is a requirement particular to Higher Drama, and does not apply to Standard Grade.
- ◆ Candidates confused role with function/purpose in Q.2 and ‘end-on’ with ‘proscenium’ in Q.9.
- ◆ In Q.8, markers noted a tendency to respond with narrative rather than with the movement ideas asked for.
- ◆ Lastly, a few candidates used the storylines of published or publicly performed plays as scenarios. These are not accepted and the result is a loss of marks for Q.1 and all ensuing linked questions. Scenarios must be original and generated in the classroom.

Credit

- ◆ In Q.3b some candidates confused ‘status’ with ‘importance’ and in d) did not write ‘in role’.
- ◆ The use of characterisation techniques, Q.5b), which are not listed in the Body of Knowledge was referred to above. Unfortunately, when one of these was then selected in response to 5c), further marks were lost.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

1. As mentioned earlier, candidates should prepare only ONE scenario and use it in BOTH papers. Also, excessive use of conventions may disadvantage candidates. Scenarios must be original.
2. Markers noted an increasing tendency among candidates to describe body language as simply ‘open’ or ‘closed’. If this type of term is used, exemplification should follow.
3. Centres are reminded that the vocabulary listed in the Body of Knowledge constitute the only terms accepted in exam scripts.

Appeals – some helpful advice

- ◆ For each candidate, centres should submit both levels of Question Papers sat in Prelim type conditions as Appeals evidence. If there is insufficient evidence for the estimated grade/level, it may be possible to award a grade at the lower level, but this can only happen if both papers are submitted
- ◆ Centres should base their cut-off scores on those published on the SQA website for the most recent years.
- ◆ It is helpful if Prelim Paper totals are given in marks and not percentages and if prelims could be based on the 50, 60, 70 mark pattern for F, G and C in the final exam.
- ◆ Evaluation items are not accepted as evidence. They are used in the grading of the Presenting element, and therefore cannot apply to Knowledge and Understanding.

Course Assessment: Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2

In Intermediate 1 Drama, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and a Practical Examination.

In Intermediate 2 Drama, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and a Practical Examination.

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

Centres were, on the whole, well prepared for both elements of the Intermediate Drama examination.

Texts for the Intermediate 2 Practical Exam were particularly well chosen and appropriate this year. A new text was highlighted as being very suitable “Strawberries in January” by Rona Munro. In Intermediate 1 devised pieces, on occasion, acting candidates have very short appearances and/or appear only once. This is potentially disadvantaging for the candidate and will often mean an Examiner has to ask for the whole piece to be repeated. From next year (2009) the Acting Viva Voce will normally be conducted by the examiner before the exam and only in exceptional circumstances would this happen after the production. Preparation for both Acting and Technical vivas was not detailed in many centres and Examiners found candidates unable to answer questions fully. Technical candidates especially should have access to mark sheets well in advance of the exam to prepare written work and verbal presentation of ideas.

In the Question Papers candidates across both levels were well prepared and answered questions fully. One general point across both papers which markers commented on was some candidates’ failure to delineate the acting area for a ground plan within the box provided thus resulting in a loss of all marks.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In the Question Paper at Intermediate 1 level Question 2 was potentially well answered and at Intermediate 2 level Questions 2 and 3 were well done.

In the Practical Examination at both levels many acting candidates presented detailed complex characters with great maturity and focus. Technical candidates also presented creative, imaginative ideas particularly in make-up, costume and lighting.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the Question Papers the most common mistake was in the ground plan questions where candidates failed to delineate the acting area within the box provided. Failure to do this can lead candidates to losing all marks for this question and centres need to prepare candidates more thoroughly for this type of question.

At Intermediate 2 level responses on lighting and sound were poor in some cases, terminology was vague and states described that would simply look or sound inappropriate on stage in performance.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Preparation for the Practical Exam: ensure that all candidates have early access to the relevant mark sheets and know what will be asked of them both during the performance and the Viva Voce and pre-show checks.
- ◆ Prepare and practice with Actors for the Viva Voce.
- ◆ Be prepared to be as flexible with timings on the day of the exam as possible. The Examiner has many procedures to complete before a performance can start and therefore an audience cannot be in place and candidates 'ready to go' upon the Examiner's arrival.

Try to ensure in devised pieces at Intermediate 1 level that Acting candidates create/devise a character that appears in the action on more than one occasion and has sufficient degree of detail to enable the candidate to be examined fully.

Course Assessment: Higher

In Higher Drama, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and an Acting Examination.

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

The number of entries this year had increased by 110 candidates, which is an increase of about 5%. The number of new or returning centres was 9.9%. This is a regular feature of the Course but it means that it is much more difficult to estimate how the Course will perform from year to year due to the high number of centres who opt into Higher perhaps every second year rather than have the subject as a regular feature in their school curriculum.

As in previous years, *The Crucible* is the most popular prescribed text with other centres choosing *Antigone*, *The Birthday Party*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Lovers* and *Ghosts*. There was also a marked increase in centres choosing *A Taste of Honey* this year.

The general consensus was that the exam was an accessible one this year.

The choice of Contemporary Scottish Theatre (CST) texts remains narrow with most of the country studying *Men Should Weep*. However the popularity of *The Steamie* seems to be waning in favour of *Tally's Blood* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *Passing Places*, *Perfect Days*, and *The Slab Boy Trilogy* are still firm favourites.

Fortunately fewer centres are relying on *The Letterbox* and *Saturday Night at the Commodore* as main texts but *One Good Beating*, *Shanghaied* and *Quelque Fleurs* are still being used despite the advice that these texts should only be used in addition to three full texts. To prepare candidates with these texts seriously disadvantages them, because even if they are told only to use them in addition to two other full length texts, candidates, in the heat of exam pressure, still revert to what they think is an easy option. - the one act play.

The full range of marks were used this year showing that although there are some very able candidates there are also some candidates who are being presented at the wrong level. It is important that candidates pass internally assessed NABs before being presented for a Course award, regardless of their acting ability.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed very well in the practical component of the Course. The average mark for Acting this year was exactly the same as last year - 28.8 out of 40 marks, affirming that the majority of candidates sitting the Course are very talented practically.

Visiting Examiners (VEs) enjoyed the experience and commended centres and staff on their level of commitment and their professionalism. In most centres the exam was an efficiently executed, streamlined procedure and the general standard was high. VEs commented on the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the candidates.

As was stated last year, the advantage of good direction is invaluable and the majority of centres should be commended for this.

Candidates also performed well in Dramatic Commentary showing their ability to cross reference the theatrical skills required to direct characters in performance. Most candidates passed this part of the exam and there were some excellent examples, some of which scored full marks. The average mark for this part of the exam came into the fair category.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The average mark for the Question Paper improved from 25.1 in 2007 to 27.6 this year. This shows that although there is still a considerable amount of work which needs to be done on the skill of essay writing, a considerable improvement has already taken place which is most encouraging. It was considered by all that this year's was an accessible paper.

Section A of the Question Paper was answered better than Section C. In some instances centres seem to have studied more than one prescribed text. This is not recommended and actually disadvantages candidates as in some instances a candidate answered on one prescribed text in section A and did their Dramatic Commentary on a different text. There must be correlation between Sections A and B unless the candidate answers on a Scottish Dramatic Commentary.

In Section C, more than any other, candidates persist in answering the question they want to answer rather than the question which is posed. The introductions to essays need attention as some exceed two and a half pages, giving no information relevant to the question. Higher Drama tests knowledge relevant to the question and for good exemplar essays staff should refer to the SQA Website which is upgraded every year.

Often candidates do not remember the relevance of quotations in their answers. The mantra of make a point, explain the point, give a quotation to back up the point – MEG is as useful to remember as ACE OK is for a ground plan – audience, clear and concise, exits and entrances, opening positions, key.

Section A

Question 1

What aspects of your prescribed text will engage a contemporary audience? Justify your opinions. As a director how will you focus your audiences attention throughout your production?

In this question candidates often made a list of points about their prescribed text but did not say how or why these points engaged an audience.

This was a question with infinite scope for themes, genre and offered the possibility of talking about the historical, social and theatrical context of the play. It should have been a question where candidates scored full marks because of its accessibility, but on the whole it was poorly done.

Question 2

Identify a scene which involves confrontation between two or more characters in your prescribed text. Explain reasons for the conflict. How would you direct this scene?

This was a very popular question and many candidates answered this well, however others needed to be told what constitutes a scene. They began at the beginning of the play and reverted to story telling, often just describing what happened in the play. Others chose their acting piece and

regurgitated a large number of quotes from a comparatively short piece of text but offered little information on what the question asked.

Question 3

You have been asked to design a set for a touring production of your prescribed text. The tour will mainly consist of schools' performances. As a director, explain and justify your staging and design concepts.

This question was attempted by very few candidates and, on the whole, was done very badly. Some candidates forgot to mention the fact that the production had to tour. Others forgot to mention the type of venue they were in or instead suggested The Edinburgh Playhouse. This is the same problem which has continually beset candidates – they choose what they want to answer not what they are being asked.

The first three questions asked candidates to answer the second part of the question from the perspective of a director. Often this part of the question was done in a vague way which needed to be much more specific to the question asked.

Question 4

Choose a character in your prescribed text that you would consider to be manipulative and/or controlling. Give reasons for your choice. As an actor how would you perform this role?

This question was reasonably well answered but some candidates answered the second part of the question as a director and not as an actor.

Section B

Dramatic Commentaries

As has been previously said, candidates scored well in this section of the paper. However, ground plans still leave a lot of room for improvement which is surprising since there is no reason why candidates should not be prepared for this part of the exam. It is a straightforward four marks. The other area which comes into a similar category is the technical part of the Dramatic Commentary. This offers another straightforward two marks. Candidates can be prepared for it, but are still losing these marks through carelessness.

Sometimes candidates do not remember to use theatrical terminology for their moves and interpretative notes, and have to be marked out of 4 instead of 7 marks. Again, this is something for which candidates can be prepared.

Section C

This was the area of the exam which was most poorly done and still causes most concern.

Question 6

Scottish playwrights portray Scotland as a nation of underprivileged people.

This question was very popular and generally well answered but candidates had problems if they did not know the meaning of underprivileged and many did not.

Question 7

Discuss the extent to which Scottish playwrights depict Scotland as an intolerant country.

This question was very badly answered because candidates did not understand the meaning of intolerant.

Question 8

Describe nostalgic features of two or more CS plays and state how playwrights use these features to engage their audience.

This question was very badly done because candidates could not get to grips with nostalgia.

Question 9

Describe and analyse the theatre techniques used by CS playwrights to bring history to life on stage.

Very few candidates attempted this question but many who did either did not understand the question or answered the question they wanted to answer which of course was what theatre techniques are used to bring plays to life by CS playwrights.

Question 10

Compare the men with the women in CS plays. Which is the most powerful?

This was the most popular question along with question 6 and was reasonably well done. Many candidates ignored the first part of the question. Others took powerful to mean *strong* and so lost marks by doing that.

Question 11

Contemporary Scottish playwrights portray young women as being liberated.

This question was difficult for candidates if they did not know what *liberated* meant.

Question 12

Theatre companies often have the remit to work with schools and community groups. Drawing from your experience of a production you have seen, comment on theatre companies targeting these audiences.

This was very seldom done but was sometimes answered as a straight performance analysis so not answering the question asked.

Question 13

Consider the work of a CST company. Describe and analyse the range of productions this company produces.

This was very seldom answered but it was the *range* that confounded candidates.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates for the Acting Exam

A minority of centres still do not supply character notes, which disadvantages candidates as the Examiners are bound to ask the candidate how they intend to play the part. This can add to the stress of what is already a highly charged event.

Centres are reminded that it is their duty to provide a suitable audience for their candidates.

Some Visiting Examiners felt that audiences were not always aware of how they should behave at the exam and need to be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour. It is not the job of a Visiting Examiner to ask members of the audience to behave appropriately.

A wider range of acting texts is now being used for the examination.

It is important that centres remember that a candidate can only play a role of a different gender for **one** character in the exam.

Advice to centres for the preparation of future candidates for the question paper

- ◆ It is important that all candidates pass the NABs before they progress to the external examination
- ◆ Key essay writing skills need to be specifically taught by centres.
- ◆ It is beneficial for centres to access the SQA website in order to see the standard of essays produced from year to year.
- ◆ It is a good idea for a candidate to define the key word in a question as that will help them answer the question asked, rather than go off on a tangent of their own choosing.

Ground plans can be prepared and taught and are a straightforward 4 marks for a candidate to achieve.

Technical effects must be justified and these are a straightforward 2 marks to acquire.

If a Dramatic Commentary is not marked up on the script the candidate will score no marks as the marker is unable to work out the moves.

Candidates should be advised not to do a Dramatic Commentary on an Acting piece they have performed unless it is the same prescribed text as they are studying. There has to be a correlation between Section A and Section B of the paper unless the candidate has done a CST Dramatic Commentary, which very few candidates do.

Course Assessment: Advanced Higher

In Advanced Higher Drama, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and a Practical Examination.

Feedback to centres on candidate performance

General Comments

The news for Advanced Higher Drama is very positive this year.

Although there was a marginal drop in the number of candidates entered for Advanced Higher from 287 in 2007 to 270 in 2008, the number of centres increased from 60 last year, to 66 this year.

This year, there was a change in the way the paper was set, which proved to be beneficial for all concerned. Devising the same two questions in Section A, across all the practitioners, offered a level of parity which made the paper as fair as it could be. The questions also involved less reading which increased their accessibility. Having an Advanced Higher Drama Update event in December 2007 which focussed on the revised question paper, meant that centres had been given additional support and that along with the pack of exemplar essays which were produced, centres were given much more support than they had been given in previous years.

The Grade Boundary marks remained the same as those of 2007 because it was felt that the written exam, although more accessible, was of a similar standard to that of previous years.

See page 6 of this report for full information on course awards and grade boundaries.

The percentage of new or returning centres totalled 24.8% of the cohort, which made predictions very difficult to estimate. The total number of new centres was 27 and there were 40 returning centres.

The Practical marks remained steady but the Question Paper performed 3.6 marks better than last year. Before scaling that mark is out of 40 so the increase in the Question Paper is a 10% increase from last year. All this is very good news.

Areas in which candidates performed well

As ever, the Practical part of the exam performed very well and the average mark was 31.7 out of 45. Examiners enjoyed their experiences and commended staff and candidates for their high levels of professionalism and enthusiasm.

Acting is the most popular specialism and markers commented positively on the wide range of texts they were privileged to see. Occasionally, teaching staff feel it is necessary to perform with a candidate. This should be seen as a last resort, because inevitably, the experience of the teacher can work against the candidate and they can fare worse because of this.

Set Design is the next most popular option and some interesting sets and design concepts were explored this year.

Direction remains the option of lowest uptake. Those candidates who chose that option this year showed great commitment. In this area, as well as Acting, teachers have been known to perform. As with Acting, it should be seen as a last resort to have a member of staff present because it often goes against the candidate. Sometimes they look to the teacher for approval; at other times, they can become so involved in directing the member of staff, the other members of the cast are ignored. It is fair to say that few candidates are as relaxed with a teacher, as they will be with one of their own peers, and this changes the dynamic of the group - for those performing as well as those directing.

Areas where there could be improvement in Practical work

Examiners commented that in many cases they felt the report is not being completed in the specified time. This is a NAB and centres must conform to the conditions for assessment rules set down by SQA. Often reports consist of information acquired from the Internet which has little or no bearing on what candidates have been asked to do.

The requirement is to comment on the academic sources which informed the candidate's performance concept, comment on practical sources which did the same, and then explain how they arrived at their final performance concept. The skill of the report is that it is succinct. It should not be a thesis containing unsourced academic information.

Examiners also commented that sometimes the audience chosen to watch the exam was not appropriate for the level of difficulty it contained. Sometimes audiences behaved inappropriately and centres are reminded that it is a requirement of the centre to choose an appropriate audience who will support their candidates, not work against them.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates are still finding the Question Paper demanding even although measures have been taken to make it more accessible. Frequently candidates do not answer the question posed, and if this is the case, they fail. It is important that their answers refer back to the question.

The average mark for the written paper was almost 23/ 55 which was a three mark improvement from last year. This was very encouraging.

By far the most popular practitioner in Section A is Stanislavski.

Only ten candidates answered the first question in Section A, on an early and a late production. However of those who did, and who answered on Stanislavski, many only seemed to be acquainted with the early part of his life. They had knowledge of *Othello* and some of the Chekhov plays, but they did not seem to go beyond that. Stanislavski died in 1937 and he worked up until the end of his life. Chekhov died in 1904.

140 candidates attempted the second question on influences and responses varied from very poor to excellent. Some marks were low because the majority of the cohort wanted to answer only about the System. Some made fleeting references to Shchepkin, the Meiningen Company and Nemirovich Danchenko, but said little about them. Often no reference was made to texts and candidates liked to write down everything they knew about the practitioner, regardless of the question asked. However it

was also a question which reflected a huge range of ability, and there were candidates who excelled in the 18-20 category.

No candidate responded to question 3 on an early and late production by Craig. Instead, the five candidates who answered on Craig chose to respond to his influences. On the whole they tried to adapt their knowledge to answer the question, and as a result, the average mark for this question was almost 10/20.

No candidates attempted questions 5 – 12 inclusively. No centre studies Reinhardt, Meyerhold, Copeau or Piscator.

Only three candidates commented on Artaud's early and late productions, and scored well in this question. As well as referring to *The Jet of Blood* and *The Cenci* some also spoke about his experiments.

Most candidates who studied Artaud answered on the second question on his influences and some seemed to have problems finding them. Few spoke about Jarry who could have led on to Absurdism, puppets, farce and Surrealism. Instead many felt compelled to talk about the shocking aspects of Artaud's work, which they all found fascinating. Having said that however of the sixteen candidates who chose this question, the average mark was still almost 10/20.

Next to Stanislavski, the majority of centres study Brecht.

Only two answered on an early and a late production, and the average mark was low. This was because, as in the study of Stanislavski, candidates want to describe the System, in the study of Brecht; candidates want to list the aspects of Epic theatre regardless of the question. This was not the question asked and candidates should be advised to read the paper thoroughly. The thirty four candidates who answered on Brecht's influences fared better.

No candidate answered on Brook in Section A of the exam.

There has been a big increase in the number of candidates who answer on Boal.

One candidate answered on an early and late production.

Twenty candidates answered on the second question, but many did not get to grips with it at all. Too many wanted to say everything they knew about Boal but that information and the question often did not coincide. Few wanted to talk about people who had influenced Boal, and most preferred to talk about the personal influences in his life which were given credit, when appropriate to the question.

No candidate answered on Grotowski.

Section B of the paper is always testing and the best way to approach it is as a performance analysis and then comment on the work of the chosen practitioner.

The most common combination is for candidates to answer on Stanislavski in Section A and Brecht in Section B. In this section of the paper, candidates are apt to compare a Brecht play they have seen with a play which Brecht wrote. They then go on to say 'Brecht would like this about the production I saw, and he wouldn't like that'. The candidates are not being asked to compare two productions, they are being asked to comment on the work of the practitioner, not merely one play. Candidates are apt to get very mixed up with Brecht the writer and Brecht the theatre director and what they were asked about is Brecht the practitioner. Often no mention was made of Brecht's plays, only Brecht's devices.

Fifty seven candidates answered the question on the role of the actor but few got to grips with it. Forty five candidates answered question 24 on political theatre. For many, this became a list of Brecht's techniques for Epic theatre when the question demanded a knowledge of Brecht's political theatre. Sometimes candidates chose the wrong plays for this question and were trying to argue that *The Glass Menagerie* and *Waiting for Godot* were political theatre.

Question 25 on visual and aural elements and how they contributed to the creation of meaning, was the most popular question with 120 candidates attempting it, but many candidates only spoke about visual elements and had to be marked accordingly.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The majority of centres use the Sally Mackey and Simon Cooper *Drama and Theatre Studies* book as their principal text book which is excellent for a basic knowledge, but candidates should also look at a range of sources in addition to the main text book.

Some candidates unfortunately did two questions from the same section, so could only be marked on the one which gained most marks. They should be reminded that the exam is in two sections.

It is important that candidates see enough of a range of quality theatre to fit what they have seen, to suit the question. This year there were so many excellent texts with *Black Watch* and *The Bacchae* from the National Theatre, *The Mabou Mines Doll's House* and Tim Supple's *Midsummer Night's Dream* to name but a few.

It is important that candidates are taught to have a through line when they are answering a question. Sometimes they contradict themselves and completely lose the argument they are trying to make. An essay plan is always a good idea. It is also a good idea to teach pupils how to write a good opening and closing paragraph.

It is very important that candidates use live performances. *The Big Picnic* was used by some candidates which was not acceptable.

Time management is still an issue which needs to be addressed with some candidates. It is important that they spend no more than an hour on each question or they will be unable to do it justice. This is not an exam where a candidate can manage with only attempting to do one question well. It is imperative they attempt both questions if they are to pass the exam.