



Course Report 2009

Subject	Drama
Levels	Standard Grade 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

SQA's Visiting Examiners for Drama reported that the practical components of the external examination continue to be areas of strength for many candidates: at Intermediate 1 and 2 and Advanced Higher levels this is the Practical Examination; in Higher Drama this is the Acting Exam. Generally, centres were very well organised for the Visiting Examining event and this high degree of preparation and planning ensures that candidates are able to perform to their true potential in this live examination situation.

In the 2009 examination, and for subsequent years, a new 50.50 weighting was introduced to the external components of the Higher and Advanced Higher Drama examinations to better reflect the importance of the practical nature of NQ Drama and to bring Drama into line with other Expressive Arts subjects. The 50.50 split also operates at Intermediate 1 and 2 Drama.

For Higher and Advanced Higher Drama there are no changes to Arrangements documents, Course content or examination procedures or processes. There are no changes to Visiting Examining or Question Papers and the marks allocated to each of these. The new weightings are calculated by SQA systems. The arithmetical task for centres is in the calculation of the estimate mark arrived at for each candidate. In February 2009, SQA published a detailed update letter about the new weightings and conversion charts are available in the appendix to this letter. This information, in common with all Update letters, is available on www.sqa.org.uk (NQ Drama Update letters).

2009 was the fourth year of the new Question Paper structure in Standard Grade Drama and there is clear evidence that the new structure of discrete Question Papers at Foundation, General and Credit levels has settled in well and candidates are being presented at levels appropriate to their ability.

Support for centres continues throughout 2009/2010 through Update letters, publication of Marking Instructions and the Question Paper exemplification programme at Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher levels. As part of the national training/assessment standards programme, and following the success of the Higher, Advanced Higher and Intermediate Drama events of the past 3 years, it is anticipated that there will be an NQ Update event for Higher Drama in the autumn of 2010 and SQA will circulate details of this to all centres in the spring of 2010.

Entries and Awards

Entries and Awards — Standard Grade Drama

Year	Entries
2009	6,254
2008	6,414
2007	6,343

Grade boundaries for each externally assessed element

Grade Boundaries 2009

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Knowledge and Understanding	70	48	35	60	36	28	50	29	19

Grade Boundaries 2008

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General 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 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

Distribution of awards

	Entries	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	No Award
2009	6,254	23.2%	30.7%	22.7%	14.8%	5.1%	1.3%	0.0%	2.1%
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%

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 1 Drama

Year	Entries
2009	199
2008	213
2007	235

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2009	100	70	60	50	45
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	70	60	50	45

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2009	199	61.3%	24.6%	7.0%	93.0%	0.5%	6.5%
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%

Entries and Awards — Intermediate 2 Drama

Year	Entries
2009	1,276
2008	1,073
2007	986

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2009	100	70	60	50	45
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	76	64	52	46

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2009	1,276	44.8%	27.3%	17.5%	89.6%	4.4%	6.0%
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%

Entries and Awards — Higher Drama

Year	Entries
2009	2,301
2008	2,138
2007	2,034

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2009	100	70	57	45	39
2008	100	70	57	45	39
2007	100	70	57	45	39

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2009	2,301	15.7%	40.3%	30.9%	86.9%	6.8%	6.3%
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%

Entries and Awards — Advanced Higher Drama

Year	Entries
2009	286
2008	272
2007	291

Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2009	100	68	57	46	40
2008	100	68	57	46	40
2007	100	68	57	46	40

Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2009	286	14.7%	30.4%	35.3%	80.4%	9.4%	10.1%
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%

Comments on Verification: Standard Grade

Element / Coursework verified

Creating and Presenting

(Visiting)

Feedback to Centres

General comments:

1. Verifiers found that all centres were well prepared and in the most part candidates were familiar with the routine.
2. There was clear evidence of internal verification in some centres.
3. Verifiers particularly commented on the high quality of work in the Presenting element.
4. Verifiers also commented that candidates at some centres displayed a high level of competence in Lighting and Sound.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Most centres followed the recommended lesson plan outlined in SQA documentation which allowed for assessment in all areas.

It is important that the verification exercise is completed and centres should note that they may have to be flexible in the time allocated.

Restricting the number of stimuli to one or two gave candidates more time to display competency in both Creating and Presenting.

Centres where the lesson was taken by a teacher other than the one being verified ran particularly smoothly. This practice allows time for continuous scrutiny by both teacher and verifier.

Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses

Titles/Levels of National Units Verified

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

Feedback to Centres

General comments:

- ◆ In the majority of cases evidence was clearly presented
- ◆ The majority of centres demonstrated sound understanding of national standards
- ◆ It was evident that the majority of internal assessors in schools/colleges were familiar with the Unit specifications, NABs, etc.
- ◆ The correct documentation was used in most cases
- ◆ It was noted that in a small minority of cases some centres were using earlier versions of NABs
- ◆ There was clear understanding of national standards
- ◆ Most centres were pitching their assessments and judgements at the appropriate levels

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

- ◆ In the majority of centres good practice was observed. This ranged from good written feedback to candidates, detailed marking schemes and good advice to candidates, ongoing evaluation logs and stimulus booklets.
- ◆ In a minority of centres it was not clear from the evidence how marking schemes had been applied. Centres should clearly mark candidates' scripts indicating how the marking scheme is applied in each case.
- ◆ Where scripts have been devised for Intermediate Drama Units they should be included as part of the overall Dramatic Commentary in order to make sense of moves, justifications etc. These scripts should also be annotated.

Course Assessment: Standard Grade

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

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

2009 was the fourth year of the new Question Paper structure and the majority of candidates are now being presented at levels appropriate to their ability.

Once again, failure to read questions carefully and thoroughly cost too many marks. For example, in the General paper, the majority of candidates did not note that the response to Q4 (b) had to be linked to their response to Q (4a) regarding the character's personality. While this is a specific example, evidence exists across all three papers to suggest that candidates are losing marks needlessly. Centres may wish to consider and try to address this in their preparation of candidates.

Markers noted an overall improvement in candidates' knowledge of vocabulary terms.

Markers noted with concern an increase in the number of candidates applying the wrong adjective to a voice or movement term, as in *loud pitch*, *low tone* and *high volume*, and losing marks as a result.

All centres are reminded that the Body of Knowledge (BoK) 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 Question Paper

It appears that centres are preparing candidates very well for this paper and candidates coped well with all questions except the ground plan (see Foundation Question Paper section below). Question 8 was particularly well done.

General Question Paper

Scenarios are succinctly summarised by the majority of candidates. However, some scenarios 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 Question Paper

Most questions in this paper, particularly Question 3, were well, or very well, done. Question 5 elicited some excellent responses.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Foundation Question Paper

- ◆ The ground plan question was poorly done. Centres are reminded that the Body of Knowledge contains information on the requirements of a ground plan, and that these requirements are reflected in the marking instructions
- ◆ The opening position of actors on a ground plan is a requirement for Higher Drama only.

General Question Paper

- ◆ Some scenarios contain so many conventions that summarising presents real problems for candidates. See the Advice to Centres section below.
- ◆ Role and purpose were confused in Q3 (a).

Credit Question Paper

- ◆ Question 4 was not well done. 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.
- ◆ In Question 6, some candidates included ways of creating tension other than through movement and motivation, as asked for. These responses could not be credited.
- ◆ Too many answers to Question 7 were generic and generalised, rather than specific to a particular drama.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ The dramas created by candidates from the scenarios issued annually are, to a large extent, a means to an end in terms of successfully tackling Section A of the Question Paper. Pupils' chances of successfully and succinctly answering Section A questions are maximised when the scenario is short, simple, contains strong characters with varied relationships and opportunities for theatre arts. Conversely, therefore, pupils may experience difficulties with Section A questions if their scenarios contain multiple scenes, multiple shifts in time and place, non-human characters, the over-use of conventions and if characterisation techniques such as *thought tunnel* form integral scenes. Centres are also reminded that a marks penalty is imposed on over-long scenarios.
- ◆ Markers noted an increasing tendency among candidates to describe body language as simply *open* or *closed*. There is a similar problem with *good* or *bad* posture. If these types of terms are used, exemplification must follow to gain marks.
- ◆ A mobile phone as a prop should be explained rather than it being deemed a suitable prop for any and every character.
- ◆ Centres are reminded that the vocabulary listed in the Body of Knowledge constitutes the only terms accepted in examination papers.

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.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Centres were generally well prepared for the practical component of the Intermediate Drama exam. Texts for Intermediate 2 were well chosen and of an appropriate length this year. The quality of candidates responses to viva voce questions had improved from last year and candidates seemed better prepared for this part of the exam. At Intermediate 1, devised pieces were of a good length and candidates played more detailed characters than in previous years. Across both levels the audiences for the practical examination were well chosen and supportive to the candidates.

In the Question Paper candidates at both levels answered the full range of the questions and the majority finished their responses within the time allocated.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In the Practical Examination at both levels acting was of a consistently high standard and commitment to the production process was obvious. Amongst technical candidates there were creative ideas in many areas but particularly so in sound.

In the Intermediate 1 Question Paper, there was evidence of strong imaginative dramas having been created in centres which enabled candidates to answer questions fully.

Question 6 – writing in role – was particularly well answered and ground plans were, on the whole, done well this year.

In the Intermediate 2 Question Paper, the linked questions 1 to 3 were well done and question 5 was particularly fully answered. In question 6 (c) candidates who answered on sound did especially well.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question Papers

Intermediate 1

Question 8 (b) showed a lack of depth in the response.

In Question 1 (a) there were consistently poor responses as candidates repeatedly refer to their drama rather than the theme.

Questions on lighting and sound are not answered in any depth and candidates seem to have unrealistic ideas on the function of stage lighting and sound.

Some candidates showed a lack of detail in writing about voice and movement and using terminology accurately.

Intermediate 2

Question 7 caused most problems. The vast majority of candidates did not seem to know the meaning of the word *venue* and answered about types of staging instead.

In question 2 many candidates did not respond to the “character’s attitude” aspect of the question.

Question 6 (c) was generally answered poorly, particularly by those candidates who chose to answer on lighting: many candidates did not relate their answers to the mood and setting identified in questions 6 (a) and (b).

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ The Practical exam, on the whole, was well organised and ran smoothly in terms of organisation and timing. However, Visiting Examiners commented that in some instances the organisation by Drama Departments was not supported fully by the school as a whole and interruption and problems occurred, which could have been avoided.
- ◆ Candidates tend to do well in the Practical exam if they are involved in a production of sufficient length that enables them to show development and depth of character when acting and have scope for creative ideas when fulfilling technical roles. Some centres persist in presenting a series of repeated scenes with many candidates playing the same character. This inevitably disadvantages both acting and technical candidates.
- ◆ In both Question Papers there is a real need to ensure that candidates do not produce prepared answers without reading the questions and responding to all aspects of them. Many marks are lost by candidates not thinking fully about the task they are being asked to do before beginning to write.
- ◆ Lighting in particular is an area where candidates across both levels are losing marks by describing lighting states and effects that are unrealistic and inappropriate for the drama/extract they are focussing on.

Course Assessment: Higher

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

Comments on Candidate Performance

General comments

There was a slight increase in entries for Higher Drama in 2009 which was encouraging. There were no changes to the course structure, but there was a change in the weighting in that the two external components now have equal weighting. The feedback from the teaching profession has been very positive about the new 50:50 split.

The Crucible still remains the most popular choice of prescribed text but, encouragingly, there is now more variety of texts used than in previous years. *Antigone*, *Twelfth Night*, *Ghosts*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Mother Courage*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *A Taste of Honey*, *The Birthday Party* and *Lovers* are all being used. This is encouraging, as it suggests centres are more inclined to choose a text to suit the range and make up of the group rather than opt for the same text year after year.

Although *Waiting for Godot* is not often studied as a prescribed text, it remains a popular acting choice.

It is also positive to see that centres are also more inclined to suit acting pieces to candidates and we see fewer candidates playing roles of opposite gender which is always challenging.

Few centres use the CST text for the Dramatic Commentary.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates continue to perform very well in the practical/acting component of the course. They are well prepared on the whole, and centres are well organised. Visiting Examiners felt that centres enjoyed showcasing their candidates and, in some instances, centres asked SQA for permission to perform in the evening to ensure an appropriate, encouraging audience for their candidates.

Visiting Examiners praised the excellent performances they saw and commented on the welcome they received from the majority of centres. It is the great enthusiasm of both staff and students for the subject and, for that, everyone taking part in the examination should be commended.

Candidates also performed well in Section B of the Question Paper - the Dramatic Commentary. Here, the majority of centres showed that their students had a sound grasp of stagecraft.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates in the Acting exam

- ◆ Character descriptions should be filled in at the back of the Acting Mark Sheets. Despite numerous reminders in some instances, this often still does not happen and puts the Visiting Examiner at a disadvantage, as the candidate's concept is unknown. Visiting Examiners can ask the candidate to talk to their interpretation before the performance, but many choose not to do this as it unnerves candidates. Visiting Examiners, like teaching staff, want candidates to be able to show and fulfil their true potential under examination conditions.
- ◆ Acting is an area where candidates excel, but it is not in the interests of the candidates to repeat the same scene using the same direction for a range of candidates. Acting pieces are always more effective if they are chosen to suit the candidate concerned.
- ◆ The plays chosen should always offer characterisation opportunities or candidates will be severely disadvantaged. Visiting Examiners felt that some scenes did not offer opportunities to show enough in-depth characterisation. One such scene used was in *The Crucible* Act 1, pages 14-16, where is not enough scope for Mercy Lewis or Mary Warren to acquit themselves well.
- ◆ This year some centres cast very able candidates in pieces which were, in effect, monologues. They fulfilled the criteria by having another character present on stage. This did not show character interaction and potentially severely disadvantaged candidates.
- ◆ If a candidate uses a text they have not studied as an acting piece, it is important that they do enough research into the character to produce a convincing portrayal.
- ◆ This year a number of Visiting Examiners commented about the way prompts are given and taken. A number of candidates came out of character to ask for lines. This needs to be addressed by the centre in a way which suits them best. Some staff direct students to know that if a line is lost, they improvise a way out. This can put the candidate under pressure but, as often as not, they are so used to knowing they will not get a line they ensure they are word perfect.
- ◆ It is important to give Visiting Examiners space to mark. A number complained about the close proximity of staff and pupils. Some Visiting Examiners reported that they were asked to divulge marks and they had to reiterate SQA policy on this matter. Component marks continue to be released by SQA and sent to all centres at certification time each year.
- ◆ Costume can pose a problem if it is not appropriate. Blacks and practice skirts are acceptable throughout if a centre does not want to go to the trouble of costuming in period.
- ◆ Audiences can pose a continuity problem where they are there to watch half of an exam and then have to leave. They can also pose a suitability problem. At times the content of Contemporary Scottish Theatre (CST) may be inappropriate for a younger audience. Centres should ensure they do not disadvantage candidates by having an inappropriate audience in place and should consider and address these issues in advance of the Acting examination.
- ◆ It is disadvantageous for candidates who are being assessed for acting if their partner, who is not being assessed, is still on the book. It makes interaction very difficult.

Areas which candidates found demanding

General Points

Ground Plans are still lacking in accuracy and because candidates continue to make careless mistakes, some scored two marks where it would have been very straightforward to score four: the same is true for the technical column of the Dramatic Commentary.

Candidates can find essay writing a difficult skill. Prescribed text answers are better than those on CST on the whole, but many candidates still pre-prepare answers and try to shoehorn prepared responses into a question.

Introductions to essay responses are often as much as a page long and often tell the story of the play. This is time consuming and no marks are awarded for this.

The majority of candidates are still not addressing the question asked, or they are using the language of the question to help focus their minds on what is being asked. Many candidates are using a poor range of quotations to justify responses.

A large number of candidates answering on *The Crucible* portray Abigail as someone who wears a red petticoat, is lit by a red profile spot, carries a red handkerchief or wears a red flower in her hair. This is inappropriate and should not be encouraged.

Question Paper: Section A

Question 1

Explain the dramatic purpose of who you consider to be the main character in your prescribed text. As an actor describe how this would influence your performance of this character.

Candidates frequently did not address the meaning of *dramatic purpose*. This is something with which all candidates are familiar, otherwise they would not score so highly in the Acting exam. There needs to be more joined up thinking between what candidates do in practical terms and how candidates think and write. The external examination tests what they know and understand.

Question 2

As a director, describe the dramatic impact you wish to create in a key scene of your prescribed text. Explain how your direction of this key scene would lead to your desired dramatic impact.

Some candidates did not refer to *dramatic impact*. Again this is something they regularly create when they are acting. However this was the question which was the most popular, and the one in which candidates achieved the highest marks.

Sometimes candidates did not identify a scene and just described the action of the play. It is very important that they read the question asked.

Question 3

You have been asked to design a set of your production for the National Theatre of Scotland. The production will be presented in large proscenium arch theatres throughout the country. Explain and justify your staging and design concepts.

The design question was not answered well. Most candidates did not even refer to a large proscenium arch theatre. Again, this is the type of theatre with which they are most familiar. They know what needs to be addressed in such theatres because that is where they would regularly attend.

Question 4

Identify two contrasting characters from your prescribed text. Give reasons for your choice. As a director, how would you help your actors to develop these two roles in rehearsals?

This is what most candidates did for their Acting exam. They played one character and their partner played a contrasting character. They then developed these roles in rehearsal.

However, most candidates attempting this question ignored the second part and answered it as if it was for performance. Again, this is about addressing the question asked. Candidates are all familiar with the rehearsal process. They all do it, but most ignored it and made up their own question and answered this and, in so doing, severely disadvantaged themselves.

Question Paper: Section B – Dramatic Commentary

Question 5

On the whole this was well done.

Question Paper: Section C – Contemporary Scottish Theatre

Social Political and Religious Dimensions

Question 6

'Contemporary Scottish plays highlight the need for political and/or social change'. With reference to two or more plays you have studied or seen, discuss the political and/or social changes that Scottish playwrights want us to consider.

The majority of candidates attempting this question did not answer it. Instead, they listed a number of social issues and did not address what was asked.

Question 7

'Scottish plays focus on a negative image of Scots and/or Scotland.' Do you agree with this view? You should illustrate your answer with reference to two or more plays you have seen or read.

Candidates answered this question reasonably well because in most cases they tried to address what was being asked.

Use of History, Nostalgia and Popular Tradition

Question 8

Can you account for the success of Scottish plays, which deal with history or social history? You should illustrate answer with reference to two or more plays you have seen or read.

Very few candidates answered this question but, of those who did, a high proportion mixed up history with nostalgia.

Question 9

'Contemporary Scottish playwrights rely heavily on popular traditional stage techniques, at the expense of character development.'

Do you agree with this view? You should illustrate your answer with reference to two or more plays you have seen or read.

Most candidates answering this question looked at the first part and gave lists of popular tradition techniques. They then went on to ignore the second part or make a cursory reference to it. Many also used this question to answer on nostalgia and so scored low marks.

Issues of Gender

Question 10

Discuss the relationships between women in Contemporary Scottish plays. You should illustrate your answer with reference to two or more plays you have seen or read.

This was a popular question but many did not read the question and wrote about the relationships of women rather than relationships *between* women. Others wrote about how women are regarded by men in CST.

Question 11

Are there any unconventional men in contemporary Scottish drama? You should illustrate your answer with reference to two or more plays you have seen or read.

In this question, candidates did not address what *unconventional* meant. It was changed to *weak*, and often pre-prepared answers were given.

Current Productions and Issues

Question 12

Describe and analyse a performance by a Scottish Regional Company or the National Theatre of Scotland.

Not many candidates answered this question which is unfortunate as the question has the potential for successful responses from many candidates.

Question 13

Consider the work of one contemporary Scottish playwright. To what extent does this playwright focus on Scottish issues? You should illustrate your answer with reference to two or more plays you have seen or read.

A small number of candidates answered this question.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The Question Paper

It is vital that candidates read the Question Paper carefully. This may seem very obvious advice but so many candidates latch on to one word in a question and then start writing what they think is being asked rather than what is being asked.

There are certain key words in every question. It would be helpful if candidates underlined these and then wrote their essay plan keeping these key words in mind.

It is helpful if candidates use words in their essay responses which replicate the question; this helps them focus their thoughts.

The Letter Box, Saturday Night at the Commodore, One Good Beating, and Quelques Fleurs are not full length texts and should only be used as back up material.

Texts used should offer candidates enough scope to be able to answer questions on characters and issues.

It is a good idea to encourage candidates to look at the final section of the paper on Current Productions. There may well be a question there which suits them very well.

Some candidates seem very muddled about the section on history, nostalgia and popular tradition, in that some confuse nostalgia with popular tradition, thinking they are one and the same thing.

Course Assessment: Advanced Higher

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

Comments on Candidate Performance

General Comments

In 2008, the Question paper format was changed to increase accessibility for candidates and this proved to be a positive step. In Section A of the Question Paper, the two same generic questions are set for each practitioner and this helps provide equal parity across all theatre practitioners.

The main difference to the external examination in 2009 was that the weighting of the external components changed from a 45/55 split to a 50/50 split. The Practical component is now worth the same amount of marks as the Question Paper component and brings Drama more in line with other related Expressive Arts subjects. This new weighting had little effect on the A passes, but showed a positive increase at other levels.

The grade boundary marks remained the same as those of the past three years because the exam was of a similar standard of difficulty to those of previous years.

The number of candidate entries for Advanced Higher Drama in 2009 was stable, with a marginal increase from 2008.

Marks remained steady for both parts of the external examination with the average Practical exam mark being exactly the same as last year.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The Practical component of the exam performed very well with an average mark of 31.7 out of 45. This translates to an impressive 35/50.

Visiting Examiners were impressed with the wide range of texts used and the high levels of professionalism and enthusiasm of staff and candidates alike. There was total commitment to the Practical exam event in the majority of centres.

Acting is still the most popular specialism. Candidates who showed character development in acting were commended by Visiting Examiners who were impressed by the quality of the work.

Design is the next most popular specialism. This element was commended by Visiting Examiners, who felt the quality of the work shown this year in design was of an exceptionally high quality.

Areas for improvement in practical work

The Specialist Study Report

- ◆ It is clear that some centres are not following SQA advice and the reports are not being completed in the specified time as they are presented as long, typed dissertations.
- ◆ This is a National Assessment Bank (NAB) instrument of assessment and should be completed in the recommended time allocation. Candidates are required to comment on academic sources which help them arrive at their performance concept, practical sources which helped them arrive at their performance concept and should then assess the influences they used which helped them arrive at their final performance concept. The skill required here is that it is succinct and should be completed within the given time constraint. A mini thesis of unsourced academic information is not helpful to either the candidate or the examiner.

General Points

It is important that the audience chosen for the Practical exam is appropriate for the material being performed and should be support the candidates.

There are still a number of centres who disadvantage candidates by choosing acting pieces which do not show character development.

It is unhelpful for staff to act with candidates or be directed by them except in extreme or adverse circumstances because the experience of the teacher may work against the candidate.

In the area of design, candidates must design for the whole play not one aspect of it or one act. In the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* many designers become caught up in the magical female characters of the play and are apt to ignore the male characters. The Mechanicals are often sidelined.

It is important that if a candidate chooses to direct from a text that they have studied it thoroughly.

With regard to acting it is very difficult to mark the section relating to other characters when the other character is reading in and looking at the script all the time. In fairness to the candidate being examined it is essential that the other actor is totally familiar with the lines.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question Paper: Section A

Stanislavski

The most popular practitioner in Section A is Stanislavski.

The majority of candidates answered Question 1, on the relationship between the actor and the director. Most answered on aspects of the System, some referred to the main Stanislavski texts *Building a Character*, *My Life in Art* and *An Actor Prepares* but most of these references came from the Sally Mackay and Simon Cooper book. While this is a good basis for the course, candidates have to be encouraged to research further in order to gain a wider understanding of the material.

Few candidates mentioned Stanislavski's theatre practice in any detail and few had any relevant information about his writings, hence only attempting half the question asked. It is important that candidates are familiar with the whole body of work of the practitioner they study.

Those who attempted the Question 2 wrote about the theatrical climate but had little to say about the political or social climate apart from the fact that Stanislavski came from a very wealthy family. Unfortunately, a wealth of important political facts was largely ignored and few mentioned:

- ◆ the 1905 Revolution and its effect
- ◆ the 1917 Revolution
- ◆ the deposition of the royal family and how that affected Stanislavski's contemporaries
- ◆ life under Lenin
- ◆ life under Stalin
- ◆ the treatment of Meyerhold
- ◆ how the Arts were portrayed in revolutionary Russia

Craig

For those who answered on Craig, most opted for the first question and, on the whole, it was answered well. Most candidates studying Craig are obviously interested in him as a theatre practitioner and as a personality.

The body of knowledge on Craig is much easier to manage than that of Stanislavski.

No candidates answered on Reinhardt, Meyerhold, Copeau or Piscator.

Artaud

Few candidates answered on Artaud but many of these wrote down everything they knew about him, without addressing the question. This is common to many responses to questions across the paper.

Brecht

When Question 15 was done well, it was done very well, but others fell into the habit of listing the theories of Brecht without referring to Brecht the theatrical practitioner.

Some candidates made a good attempt at answering this question, making adequate reference to the political climate as well as the social and theatrical climates. It was necessary, however, to go beyond the First World War and the writings of Marx to score well in this question.

Brook

Candidates who answered on Brook in this section of the paper chose Question 17, as it gave them a huge amount of scope. Of those who attempted it, most answered well and had a comprehensive knowledge of the work of the practitioner which they applied to the question.

Boal

Those who attempted Question 19 did not seem to have enough background to address what they were asked. Many described Boal's techniques without applying them to the productions he had done and, as with certain other practitioners, candidates are apt to fall into the trap of being anecdotal about Boal rather than answering the question posed.

Question 20 should have been the question where candidates studying Boal could score really well, but too many concentrated on his theories and gave little on his practice.

Grotowski

One centre answered on Grotowski.

Question Paper: Section B

Question 23 dealt with the status of design within a contemporary production and asked candidates to comment on how the practitioner they had studied saw the role of the designer in their work.

To respond well to this question, it helped if the candidate had some knowledge of who the designer actually was and had researched their relationship with the director. A number of candidates described one or two productions they had seen but did not refer to the status of design within the production.

For the second part of the question, many candidates described a production of the same play done by their practitioner. They did not refer to the body of work but to one play. Others listed off techniques of the practitioner and said *Would have liked this about the contemporary production but would have disliked this.* This is not what the question asks and if the candidate did not address the question they were penalised.

Question 24 was the question which was best answered as it lent itself to a performance analysis. This is now an area where candidates are feeling more comfortable and know how to manage the material. For those who addressed the actor audience relationship, they scored well. The hook in the question which helped many candidates was *how the practitioner whose work you studied.....used the audience in their theatre making.*

Question 25 was the most poorly answered of all the questions in Section B. It was as if some candidates did not understand the difference in meaning between the pretext and the performance text. This is a vital part of the Course. Similarly, it is important to know the differences the theatrical practitioner made to their performance texts from the pretexts they used.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Question Paper: Section A

Some general comments on Stanislavski

Some knowledge of the System is not enough to equip candidates for the exam. Every question asks for theatre practice and, in a career which spans more than forty years, candidates need to have a working knowledge of how this career developed. Because the book most centres use effectively stops at *Hamlet* in 1911, it is necessary to look elsewhere for information about what Stanislavski did in the following twenty six years until his death.

Some general comments on Artaud

Artaud had a fascinating personal life, and many candidates cannot get beyond that. They enjoy the fact that he despised the elitist society of nineteenth century theatre goers and wanted to shock. Moving on to his work, the aspects which clearly spark their imagination are those regarding the horrific aspects of his work such as the scorpions in *The Jet of Blood*. Unfortunately, they can get stuck there.

Equally if they refer to *The Philosopher's Stone*, what candidates tend to mention is the dismembered parts of Harlequin's body. The fact that many only refer to *The Cenci* and *The Jet of Blood* means that the body of work they are addressing is very narrow and instead of addressing the question, they get caught up in the sensationalism of the man.

Candidates are apt to make passing statements and references and not follow this through with information. An example is *The Conquest of Mexico* being the pinnacle of Theatre of Cruelty but we are not told why this is the case.

Some general comments on Brecht

Candidates studying Brecht regularly write about Brecht the playwright - not Brecht the theatre practitioner. It is vital that candidates have knowledge of the plays Brecht directed. Instead, many write copious pages on Brecht's plays and theories and do not link them to his productions. This is very similar to the way many candidates approach Stanislavski, ie candidates learn the System but do not apply the system to the plays Stanislavski directed. In the case of Brecht, they learn the techniques but they do not apply the techniques to the plays Brecht directed.

In Section B of the Question Paper, some candidates studying Brecht are apt to compare a contemporary production of a play by Brecht with a production Brecht did of the same text. This limits the candidate to discussing one production in a vast body of work where the rest is often ignored. This is not what candidates are asked to do; it is important they look at the body of work, not one play directed by the practitioner.

Some general comments on Brook

Although there is a vast body of work to study in Brook, the fact that his work can be classified into various areas makes it both exciting to study and manageable. Those who study Brook appear to be interested in the practitioner and often respond well in the exam.

Question Paper: Section B

It is worth remembering that candidates seem to find it easier to address one contemporary production, rather than two. When they are using two, they are apt to lose focus and find the amount of material they have to handle difficult to manage.

It is advisable that candidates read the pretext of the production they are going to use so that they can note and understand the differences between the pretext and the performance text. This is vital in understanding the status of the written word and the performed play.