



Course Report 2016

Subject	Drama
Level	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: Question paper

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

Section 1 has a choice of textual analysis questions from the perspective of a director, an actor or a designer, each worth 20 marks. Candidates choose one question from this section.

Section 2 has a compulsory performance analysis question worth 20 marks.

The question paper performed in line with expectations, and feedback from the marking team and practitioners suggested that it was fair and accessible.

Component 2: Performance

This component is worth 60 marks out of a total of 100 marks (60% of the overall mark for the Course assessment — 10% for the Preparation for Performance and 50% for the Practical Performance in Directing, Acting or Design).

Acting candidates are required to perform two interactive roles, from different plays. Each candidate is required to be involved in an acting contribution of approximately 7–10 minutes for each role. Each role is worth 25 marks.

Design candidates are required to demonstrate their overall design concept for their chosen play and an additional production role. They are required to demonstrate the application of skills in the additional production role. They are required to present their work in a presentation lasting approximately 20 minutes.

Directing candidates are required to have prepared approximately eight pages from their chosen text. On the day of the performance, the visiting assessor selects approximately two pages for the candidate to direct in a rehearsal lasting 30 minutes.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Question 3: This was the most popular question in Section 1. The majority of candidates knew their character well and used the whole play text in their analysis. They structured their responses clearly to support their thinking. They almost always used quotations as textual references.

In this response many candidates gained marks for showing detailed development and understanding. Acting concepts were often described in detail, with appropriate and varied use of terminology.

Question 7: It was clear from many responses that candidates had been engaged and enthused by the production they had experienced. Candidates writing about a production they had particularly enjoyed did well. It would appear that the revised format of the question allowed candidates to scaffold their responses to enable them to access the marks, many gaining additional marks for detailed insightful analysis.

Component 2: Performance

Preparation for Performance: Many candidates demonstrated understanding of their selected texts and a clear interpretation of their role. Many candidates were able to gain high marks while remaining within the 500-word guideline.

Acting: This was overwhelmingly the most popular choice and the majority of candidates were well prepared and committed to their roles. The freedom to select texts to suit candidates' talents afforded them the opportunity to access high marks.

Design: Candidates who had a clear design concept for the whole play and executed detailed ground plans and elevations, as well as demonstrating skill in their chosen production area, performed well.

Directing: Directors performed well when they had a good knowledge of the whole text and a clear concept to explore in their rehearsal. Many directors demonstrated excellent interpersonal skills and communicated effectively.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Question 2: Although the first part of the question was accessible and candidates were successful in attaining marks, some struggled to describe directing concepts and gain the marks for the second part.

Question 5 and 6: These questions were attempted by very few candidates and this remains reflective of the minority of candidates choosing design for Performance. Although candidates could access the first part of the question, they were often unable to describe design concepts in sufficient detail to access marks for the second part.

Often candidates who did not use quotations as textual references were unable to refer to the text in enough detail to gain the marks.

Question 7: Some candidates struggled to analyse acting and resorted to describing the characters or giving an overview of the plot or narrative. A few candidates failed to access the full range of marks as they analysed a musical, a pantomime or a movement piece.

Component 2: Performance

Acting: Some candidates had difficulty if the extract was too long and they were not able to sustain the character. Sometimes, when the extracts were too short, candidates were unable to demonstrate skill in all the areas of assessment.

If the same text was used for all the candidates they were often at a disadvantage, as the character did not always suit their strengths and talents.

Design: Some candidates did not design for the whole play, rather, they applied their design concept to just a single scene. Candidates often channelled all their efforts into their second area of design, neglecting the set design and therefore not accessing the full range of marks.

Directing: Some candidates chose to direct scenes that their actors went on to perform for their own assessment. This was not helpful, and resulted in the candidates not having enough to do to demonstrate their directing skills.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Section 1: Candidates would benefit from support in communicating directing and design concepts.

They would benefit from being encouraged to use quotations as textual references.

Candidates should continue to be encouraged, when describing acting, to consider the whole acting concept. They should not restrict themselves to simply describing the use of voice. They could, for example, describe stage positioning, integrated use of movement, the use of a prop or costume.

Section 2: Candidates who understood the focus of the question, which was 'tension' this year, and kept this as a thread running through their essay, produced a successful analysis. Some candidates were skilled in analysing acting concepts. Some candidates would benefit from support in describing acting concepts. Candidates should be encouraged to access reviews and interviews with cast, actors, designers and directors to support their analysis.

Component 2: Performance

Acting: Candidates need to perform two roles of 7–10 minutes for each role. It is feasible for an extract with, for example, three actors with roles of comparable challenge to fall within this time frame.

It is not advisable for more than four actors to be assessed within one extract at Higher level, as it is the quality of the individual performance and the detailed interaction that is being assessed.

Design: Candidates must design for the whole play text and their presentation must refer to each act/scene and any significant change of setting.

For their additional design role candidates must also design for the whole play, and there should be coherence with the set design.

It is advisable that design candidates rehearse their presentation.

Directing: Candidates must have knowledge of the whole play text. They must prepare approximately eight pages of the text, from which two pages will be chosen by the visiting assessor for their assessment.

It is not advisable for candidates to direct actors who are performing the same scene for their own assessment.

It is advisable that candidates practise rehearsing their selected pages.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	2425
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	3117
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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	45.8%	45.8%	1428	70
B	24.6%	70.4%	767	60
C	18.4%	88.8%	574	50
D	4.8%	93.6%	150	45
No award	6.4%	-	198	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.