Course Report 2017

Subject	Drama
Level	National 5

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

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

Overall this year candidates performed fairly well in the question paper. Most of the questions were answered satisfactorily and had been read accurately and understood.

A mixture of production and acting roles were chosen for Section 1 responses, with the majority choosing acting.

In Section 2, all three stimuli were used, and candidates developed a considerable assortment of dramas in response to their chosen stimuli. Many used the additional pages to note down and develop their ideas.

Candidates responded well to the unseen stimulus and were able to form creative ideas under exam conditions.

Many candidates had created quite complex dramas for Section 2. It did appear that some candidates had pre-prepared a scenario for Section B. This should be discouraged — some scenarios did not suit the stimuli or questions asked of them.

Component 2: performance

Overall candidates did very well in the performance. Most centres had prepared candidates well and chosen appropriately challenging texts. Visiting assessors commented on the positive experience they had visiting centres and seeing work of a high standard. Most centres presented a range of candidate abilities. The collaborative marking model continues to be a very positive experience for both markers and centres.

Visiting assessors praised most centres for the way they were received and for the attempts by many centres to allow more colleagues to act as assessor and experience applying the national standard. The commitment of staff and candidates was praised, and many visiting assessors commented on the high standard of acting and technical roles.

A wide variety of plays were used. Where appropriate texts had been chosen and candidates had been suitably cast, acting candidates overall managed to access the full range of marks.

The number of technical candidates decreased, but some of those presented achieved an excellent standard. Visiting assessors were impressed by not only their creativity and skills in their chosen area, but the knowledge they displayed through research on their text.

Many centres took the option to film their sample of candidates in order to be able to engage fully with the pre- and post-results services.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Question 1(a): Many candidates answered this question well and clearly identified two feelings and/or emotions they wanted the audience to have.

Question 1(b): Many candidates answered this question well and described two points in the drama when the audience would feel these feelings and/or emotions.

Question 2: Most candidates answered this question well, stating a clear genre. Many also gave a clear reason. A minority of candidates did not understand what 'genre' was and instead gave a theme, message or purpose.

Question 3(a): Many candidates answered this question well, stating the main aspects of their chosen character's personality and purpose.

Question 3(b): Many candidates described two rehearsal activities well and justified how they would help their actors understand the characters. Some did not describe the rehearsal activities and/or justify how the activities would help their actors understand their characters.

Question 4(a): Most candidates answered this question well, stating the climax with reason.

Questions 4(b): Many candidates gave a good description of the mood and atmosphere at the climax.

Questions 4(c): Most candidates described the voice and movement they wanted their chosen character to use in the climax.

Component 2: performance

Acting: candidates who had been cast appropriately and had a suitable character in terms of creativity, age appropriateness and challenge, managed to achieve depth and to reference textual clues. Most candidates applied skills with relevant and effective use of voice and movement. Lines and cues were remembered well and characterisation was sustained. Many candidates achieved high marks and had on the whole been directed well by staff, showing a depth of understanding about their character.

Technical: candidates who had clearly documented the process of developing ideas/designs and had researched their skill/design concepts achieved higher marks than those who hadn't. Many candidates had developed effective ideas and demonstrated a high level of skills. Lighting and sound candidates generally were technically knowledgeable and executed their role with a high level of skill. Costume candidates impressed visiting assessors with their creativity. Set design and props candidates were again in the minority, but those with appropriately chosen texts showed a flair for design, originality and imagination.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Question 1(c): Some candidates didn't achieve marks as their answers were not related to the feelings and/or emotions they had identified in part (a) and (b).

Question 3(a): Some candidates struggled to outline the purpose of the characters, instead giving their role, and therefore got 2/4 for an outline of their personality but failed to achieve the other 2 marks.

Question 5: Many candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question due to lack of understanding of stage types — justification was poor and generic.

Question 6: Some candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question as they were unable to describe what the look and feel of their set was as possibly they had not considered this in the initial ideas for their drama.

Question 7: Some candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question due to a lack of correct production terminology used in their answers (make-up and hair, costume, sound and props). Candidates also failed to explain how their ideas would help to achieve their design concept. Some candidates failed to describe what their actual ideas were and gave generic answers about the benefits of using their chosen production skills.

Component 2: performance

Some candidates presented did not possess the level of acting skills required at this level, and some candidates were cast in small/minor roles which did not allow them scope for character development and therefore were unable to access the full range of marks. Some candidates found the challenges of acting certain texts/characters too demanding and failed to achieve depth in their performance.

Some candidates who had been cast in duologues failed to achieve sufficient depth in their performance and were unable to access the full range of marks. A few centres used duologues or very short extracts, which failed to meet the required minimum length for National 5. Also, in some duologues lack of interaction with other characters was disadvantageous to some candidates.

At times, direction of blocking and movement was weak, with lack of consideration to character interaction or understanding of character motivation.

Candidates who were cast in texts which were repeated by all candidates in a centre were disadvantaged due to lack of appropriate casting and repetition of blocking.

Some technical candidates lacked the required paperwork and/or minimum requirements for their role, and seemed to be unaware of what the marks allocation was for their chosen production role — for example, lack of planning sheets, incorrect cue sheets, no designs etc.

Some technical candidates were prepared to demonstrate their skills but there was no performance of the text they had designed for. This meant certain marks were affected as the skills must be applied as part of a performance.

Some centres did not have suitable/appropriate resources to allow technical candidates to fulfil their role, especially make-up, which prevented access to the full range of marks. Some candidates did not have access to theatrical make-up, which affected both their designs and marks. Visiting assessors reported an increase in candidates selecting hair and make-up, though many failed to create hair and make-up designs for every character in the drama or apply these designs to every actor, meaning they were unable to access all available marks.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

In Section 1, candidates should be able to clearly state their own performance or design concept and how it was developed from initial ideas to performance. They should be able to evaluate both the process and the performance. They should be able to state their responsibilities and explain it using correct terminology.

In Section 2 candidates should be encouraged to use the additional space provided to note down their ideas in response to their chosen stimuli. This allows them time to formulate and work through their ideas, and to transfer this information into their answers. Candidates who did not use the additional space tended to have less detailed or fluid answers in Section 2.

Candidates should be encouraged to read all of the questions in Section 2 before attempting to respond to the stimulus. This allows them to see through line of questioning and avoid repetition.

Candidates are expected to use drama terminology, and would benefit from increased knowledge and understanding of all terminology. Although some candidates answered using the terminology, it was clear in a number of answers that they did not fully understand the vocabulary/concept/language they were using. Some candidates used very little or **no terminology** in their answers, especially in Section 2. Lack of technical terminology and understanding of practical application of technical equipment was apparent in these cases.

General question paper advice

♦ Overall, candidates showed a lack of understanding of the uses of rehearsal activities. For example, candidates would say they would use hot seating, but gave no explanation of the activity in practice, making it difficult for a marker to determine their understanding of the activity. Many also gave no explanation of how the activity would help an actor understand their character. Reasons could have included: help develop an understanding of a relationship; help an actor understand why their character feels a certain way about a situation or other character; assist an actor to develop the background and feelings of a character etc. All justification in Section 2 must be specifically related to the candidate's own drama to access the full range of marks.

♦ Overall candidates did not use voice and movement terminology in their answers. Some was used incorrectly, and it was clear at times some candidates did not understand the terminology they were using. Directorial answers using voice and movement terminology were very general and lacked clear descriptions, ie no explanation of what tone they would use or what posture they would adopt. It is not enough to simply state a voice or movement term without a clear description and understanding of how it would be used. For example, volume should be described as 'loud' or 'quiet'. 'Higher volume' or 'lower volume' did not receive marks as these adjectives are used for pitch and a marker must be able to distinguish which voice element a candidate is discussing. Some candidates stated that their voice 'would increase and get higher'. This received no marks as it is unclear if they are talking about volume or pitch. Similarly, the use of body language was unclear. Candidates stated they would use closed or open body language, but this was then not defined. Did closed body language mean arms folded across chest or in the foetal position? Candidates must define all movement terminology to allow the marker to visualise clearly their ideas in practice. Vague explanations did not receive marks.

♦ Some candidates used a predetermined response to stimulus or had a cinematic rather than theatrical idea which did not allow them to fully respond to the requirements of this paper.

♦ Some candidates were unable to provide an imaginative response to the stimuli (these included copying stories from television or films, reproducing the plot of a play they had read — including character names — or simply continuing to answer on the performance they had identified in Section 1).

♦ The picture stimulus was the most commonly used, although this prompted a number of creative responses — many used ghost/horror scenarios. This isn't inappropriate on its own, but the repeated scene of someone being attacked did suggest that the candidates were demonstrating no awareness of how this could be practicably staged (indeed, in some cases the candidates actually described their piece as a 'movie'). Perhaps centres need to place greater emphasis on encouraging candidates to develop storylines in which they can demonstrate a clearer vision of how the response itself could be theatrically performed.

♦ There was a clear lack of production terminology, as well as appropriate use of production roles. In some cases, production terminology was not only poor but incorrect. For example, when answering on lighting, a candidate would be expected to accurately identify the type of lantern they would use (eg Fresnel, profile, flood etc) and how a specific colour would be achieved (eg gel or LED). When answering on sound, a candidate would be expected to identify the type of sound being used (live/pre-recorded music/sound effect), with a more detailed description of the effect itself. When answering on make-up and hair, a candidate would be expected to accurately identify the theatrical products they would use to create the effect. When answering on costume, props or set, a candidate is expected to provide sufficient descriptive detail (eg material, condition, size, colour, period, positioning etc).

Component 2: performance

Preparation for performance responses can be written or typed and should not exceed 400 words. These should be written in open-book conditions, and must be completed and

marked by the centre assessor before the visiting assessor arrives. The visiting assessor should not be given a folio of work instead of the preparation for performance response.

A private, quiet space must be provided for the visiting assessor to read the preparation for performance responses, and for the visiting assessor and centre assessor to discuss national marking standards and decisions. This space should be for the sole use of the visiting assessor and centre assessor, ie not a school staff room accessed by others during the assessment process.

Plays must be published and be of a suitable standard for National 5. Again, some iconic Higher and Advanced Higher texts were used and this was not always appropriate for National 5 candidates. Some visiting assessors commented on pupils struggling to interpret their role adequately where these texts had been used.

Centres that had selected suitable texts and cast appropriately provided candidates with opportunities to achieve excellent marks.

Some productions were too short. Centres should make sure minimum and maximum time limits are adhered to. Some centres chose Higher duologue acting pieces which were too short and did not allow candidates to access the full range of marks. Duologues are not advisable to be used for all candidates in a centre.

Some centres chose to repeat texts (especially duologues). Repetition of scenes with similar/same blocking is disadvantageous to candidates.

Acting candidates should be cast in only one role.

All paperwork (Candidate mark sheets and sample sheets) should be completed and ready when the visiting assessor arrives. It is advisable for the teacher/centre assessor to have their own copy of the paperwork to record marks. The centre assessor must ensure photocopies of the relevant paperwork can be made before the visiting assessor leaves. The visiting assessor will bring the EX6 on the day of the examination.

Some centres asked visiting assessors to mark only one or two candidates in each performance and to watch every group in the centre. This is not appropriate. Visiting assessors, as a guide, should watch between 2–4 performances during the examination day, marking between 2–6 acting candidates and 2–4 technical candidates, depending on group size, during each performance. When the visiting assessor has left, the centre assessor should then continue the examination, marking the remaining candidates — as soon as possible and within two working weeks. The visiting assessor is not at the centre to watch all candidates being presented. The sample of 12 should be made up from between 2–4 groups wherever possible.

Centres should allow one full day for the examination to be carried out.

Centre assessors should not operate sound/lighting, cameras or deal with pupil issues which detract from them fully engaging in the assessment process.

Centre assessors should be familiar with SQA marking instructions and have a copy of the relevant grade descriptors ready for the assessment.

A suitable audience should be provided and be available for the duration of the examination. Some visiting assessors were left waiting for long periods of time before the next class arrived to form an audience. This is not acceptable.

Technical candidates must design for a production that is going to be shown in a performance and must carry out their pre-show checks in front of the visiting assessor.

Technical candidates must share their folio of work with the visiting assessor to allow them to mark cue sheets/designs/lists/charts. Minimum requirements set out by SQA for their chosen role must be met. This material should also be referred to during the assessment by the candidate as a working document.

Make-up and hair: candidates must design for all actors, and apply theatrical make-up and hair to all actors. The visiting assessor will observe make-up designers applying their make-up and hair design to one actor, but all other actors must have had make-up and hair designs applied in advance for the production, otherwise the assessor cannot fully mark the effectiveness of the make-up and hair design and its application in the performance. Theatrical make-up must be used.

Costume: candidates must have a design and costume(s) for all actors so that the visiting assessor can mark the effectiveness of the costumes in performance. They should also have made or adapted one costume in line with their design.

Lighting: candidates must use and have access to eight lanterns. A minimum of seven lighting cues and five states should be designed. The candidate should produce a detailed lighting plot and create a lighting cue sheet (this includes an annotated script). The candidate should operate the equipment on cue and at the levels specified in the lighting cue sheets during the performance.

Sound: candidates must have a minimum of six different sound effects and eight sound cues. The candidate should source and edit music and effects and provide a back-up plan. The candidate should produce a sound cue sheet detailing volume, duration and type (this includes an annotated script). The candidate should operate the equipment during the performance in accordance with the sound cue sheet.

Set Design: candidates must have working designs and plans for the set covering the whole production, including an elevation. Detailed ground plans must be produced. The final set should reflect the candidate's own creative design as well as being functional in performance.

Props: candidates must have a minimum of eight different props from two of the three areas of personal, pre-set or hand props. One fully functional prop should be designed and created for use in the performance. The candidate should produce a master props list. The candidate should label and store props effectively. The candidate should organise the props table for the performance.

Please check the SQA documents *N5 Drama Course Specification* and *Coursework Assessment Task for National 5 Drama* for guidance and examination requirements.

Whilst it was pleasing to see that the conditions of assessment for coursework were adhered to in the majority of centres, there were a small number of examples where this may not have been the case. Following feedback from teachers, we have strengthened the conditions of assessment criteria for National 5 subjects and will do so for Higher and Advanced Higher. The criteria are published clearly on our website and in course materials and must be adhered to. SQA takes very seriously its obligation to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates in all qualifications through consistent application of assessment conditions and investigates all cases alerted to us where conditions may not have been met.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	4589

Number of resulted entries in 2017	4474

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	53.3%	53.3%	2384	70
B	25.2%	78.5%	1129	60
C	13.9%	92.4%	620	50
D	3.8%	96.2%	170	45
No award	3.8%	-	171	-

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.