

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Physical Theatre: Skills for Devising and Performance

Unit code: DG46 34

Unit purpose: This unit is intended to enable students who wish to develop devising and/or text-based performance abilities by identifying and applying the skills of theatre where the physical performance text is central.

It seeks to give the student an experiential understanding of how the human body can perform in the rehearsal and performance space, utilising the full range of physical theatre competencies.

On completion of this Unit, the candidate will be able to

- 1 Explore fundamental physical theatre skills.
- 2 Develop elements of exploration and play to devise physical performance.
- 3 Demonstrate physical theatre skills through a devised or text-based performance.

Credit value: 1 HN Credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access will be at the discretion of the centre and the following recommendations are for guidance only.

Where a candidate has achieved the course entry criteria for HNC/D Acting and Performance, they will have shown sufficient knowledge and skills for access to this unit. For this unit, candidates should have some experience as performers in theatre, dance or music and an interest to explore what they can do physically. BTEC or National Certificate performance, dance or puppetry experience and any workshop based theatre training would be helpful.

Core skills: There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards core skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components.

Context for delivery: This unit is included in the optional framework of HNC/D Acting and Performance. If this Unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: This Unit requires the ongoing assessment of developing practical knowledge and/or skills through observation checklists. Assessment could be combined for Outcomes 1-3 as part of a single event. This could be a performance(s) that synthesises all of the input for all 3 Outcomes, sampling where appropriate. It would also be possible to assess Outcomes 1 and 2 separately, as an in-house performance(s) led by the student work, if devising were not required to figure in the performance-assessment for Outcome 3.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Explore fundamental physical theatre skills.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Sustained observation assimilated in the physical representation of character
- ◆ Understanding and demonstration of suspension, fixed point, major-minor, élan and focus
- ◆ Sustained physical characterization
- ◆ Understanding and analysis of complicity with performers and audience
- ◆ Demonstration of complicity in exploration, rehearsal and performance
- ◆ Understanding and demonstration of the nature of continuous play in exploration
- ◆ Safe working practices

Evidence requirements

Candidates will need to demonstrate all aspects of their knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome.

Each item needs to be explored and developed in practical class work and rehearsal and must be assessed by observation during that work. Candidates must demonstrate understanding and skills development in each area listed during the exploration, rehearsal and formal performance opportunities.

Assessment guidelines

Assessment should be by observation checklist. The assessment of this Outcome can be combined with Outcomes 2 and 3 as part of a single assessment for this Unit, details of which are given under Outcome 3 below.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Physical Theatre: Skills for Devising and Performance

Outcome 2

Develop elements of exploration and play to devise physical performance.

Outcome 3

Demonstrate physical theatre skills through a devised or text-based performance.

Knowledge and/or skills for Outcomes 2 and 3

- ◆ Practical devising and editing skills OR Developing physical theatre through text
- ◆ Sustained observation assimilated in the physical representation of character
- ◆ Sustained physical characterization
- ◆ Understanding and analysis of complicity with performers and audience
- ◆ Demonstration of complicity in exploration, rehearsal and performance
- ◆ Understanding and demonstration of the nature of continuous play in exploration
- ◆ Safe working practices
- ◆ Physical theatre in context
- ◆ The ability to appropriately select and incorporate four items from the following list:
 - ground-based acrobatics and tumbling
 - basic un-armed stage combat – blows, kicks, chops, slaps, falls
 - blunt instrument blows
 - physical comedy timing and slapstick skills
 - find the life in the object
 - object or puppet manipulation
 - physical character rhythm
 - physical imagery
 - physical expression of character condition
 - defining relationships through physical means
 - the body as an object
 - demonstration of suspension, fixed point, major-minor, élan and focus
 - selection of appropriate text
 - application of music to develop and create mood and atmosphere
 - scenographic elements

Evidence requirements for Outcomes 2 and 3

The evidence will be generated during the exploration, rehearsal and performance phases of the candidate's physical work. Each candidate will need to show that they can, in the context of the agreed performance parameters, select and incorporate four of the items for selection listed in knowledge and skills.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Physical Theatre: Skills for Devising and Performance

Where an item is sampled, a candidate's response can be judged to be satisfactory where the candidate is able to:

- ◆ justify inclusion of the item within the parameters of the performance text
- ◆ incorporate the item into the exploration, rehearsal and performance work safely effectively and within the agreed artistic aims of the piece
- ◆ co-operate with ensemble to ensure the best possible performance result for the item.

During the exploration and devising/text-based process, the candidate must:

- ◆ offer ideas, alternatives and practical solutions in devising physical theatre characters, scenarios and performances
- ◆ work in a spirit of positive criticism to develop work within the ensemble
- ◆ work as part of the ensemble rather than as an individual (this should not preclude solo work)
- ◆ edit and revise work for the good of the company performance
- ◆ choreograph safe, effective and accurate physical theatre movement or action
- ◆ take direction.

The final performance must be videoed as supporting evidence.

Assessment guidelines for Outcomes 2 and 3

The instrument of assessment should be observation checklists. The assessment of these Outcomes can be combined with Outcome 1 as part of a single assessment for this Unit. This could be a performance(s) which synthesises all of the learning from the Unit. It would also be possible to assess Outcomes 1 and 2 separately, as an in-house performance(s) led by the student work, if devising were not required to figure in the performance-assessment for Outcome 3. This would require assessors to judge carefully which items from the knowledge and skills list would be shown in which Outcome.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DG46 34
Unit title:	Physical Theatre: Skills for Devising and Performance
Superclass category:	LC
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Physical Theatre: Skills for Devising and Performance

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

The Unit is primarily intended to prepare candidates for a broader experience and opportunity as performers, directors or facilitators by giving them the essential underpinning knowledge and skills for Physical Theatre through devising or working with text. Although it is a stand-alone unit there are opportunities for it to operate in conjunction with a performance unit where the text selected would fall under the heading of Physical Theatre. If this is the case, then the student groups may select to focus their attention on extracts from the given text as part of a classroom presentation which may then be further developed in the performance unit with the Director of the production.

At best, all theatre is physical and compartmentalising inevitably leads to creative restriction. Work done in this Unit must crossover into movement, acting, production, voice, circus skills, music theatre and so on. This Unit could well be helpful in encouraging candidates to branch out into other areas of theatre, to widen their horizons and perhaps increase their chances for employment. Candidates should be encouraged to consider the Unit as part of the integrated whole rather than a separate skill.

Given that the nature of the work in the Unit relies on spontaneous play and improvised response to discovering the world and its characters, candidates may feel an initial anxiety. It is important to relate the work to a context which is familiar to them and, since the terminology employed can be used across the spectrum, remind candidates of the work during study of complementary Units. Success for the individual depends on pleasurable experiential learning in which the discoveries made are celebrated and expressed within a recognized vocabulary. Given that there is often an understandable reluctance to give oneself over to physical theatre, the rewards can be significant for performers who are unable to get beyond a traditional approach to character or those who cannot normally lose their own idiosyncrasies and failings.

It is essential that candidates and staff delivering the Unit explore and develop within safe working practices and that safety is a paramount consideration at all times.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Physical Theatre: Skills for Devising and Performance

Outcome 1 looks at overtaking and then implementing the fundamental skills of physical theatre. It sets the scene, establishes the physical vocabulary and a nomenclature, which allows candidates to discuss the work appropriately, and must lead to an understanding and demonstration of the nature of continuous play in exploration. This ‘play with a purpose’ demands a mixture of freedom and holding back. The candidate must give unreserved effort to their own work and enthusiastic support for the work of others, as a parent might encourage a child to walk or talk or discover the world. Being able to ‘play in the moment’ must also be developed alongside analytical skills, which review the work and place it in the context of the given parameters, the showing or the performance. Developing the confidence to work with the performing body minus the safety net of the text can be liberating and may allow the performer to take time and be silent in the textual performance. Careful observation

leading to sustained physical characterization and the understanding and demonstration of suspension, fixed point, major-minor, élan and focus could all avoid employing regular speech. Adopting the ‘grommelot’ or gobbledegook beloved of European physical companies frees the candidate from the need to intellectualise or be clever with story-lines and encourages the body to tell the story.

Outcome 2, candidates seek to apply skills in physical performance derived from the exploration and play of Outcome 1. The candidate becomes the chef, exploring the dozen or so ingredients and choosing from amongst them to create a new dish. Each will need sympathetic and positive support to offer ideas as they demonstrate, in the context of the agreed performance parameters, how they will incorporate four of the items for selection listed in knowledge and skills alongside the essential practical devising skills and editing requirements. Small group projects are probably the most practical, with regular production meetings/ tutorials to smooth the way towards the goal. Setting limits and fulfilling targets is likely to be the most important area of support required – everyone will play happily for hours and talk about what they could do for even longer – the tutor must drive the work to a conclusion. While there is much in the list of ingredients, candidates should be encouraged to choose less rather than more – a significant music track, a single important lighting effect, a simple effect of puppetry, a chair or a wardrobe for the set. Audiences delight in the simplicity and familiarity of physical performance and the candidate should be encouraged to follow this.

Finally, the emphasis of the unit must be on effective ensemble work with individuals justifying the inclusion of material to the satisfaction of their peers and co-operating with company members and, if appropriate, technical crew and director to ensure the best possible performance result for the item. These skills of negotiation and artistic compromise are vital. Respect and the spirit of positive criticism have to be the watchwords given by staff delivering the Unit.

Outcome 3 builds on the skills developed in Outcomes 1 and 2 and should be videoed as evidence of work done.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Physical Theatre: Skills for Devising and Performance

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is likely to form part of a group award, which is primarily designed to provide candidates with technical and professional knowledge and skills for use as theatre practitioners. Since the skills covered are fundamental to physical theatre work and can be developed and applied across the range of practical Units, this Unit should be offered in Year One.

The assessment of this Unit requires observation of each candidate at work, supplemented by tutorial and the production meeting. The centre may choose to combine all three Outcomes as part of a single assessment for this Unit. This could be a performance(s) that synthesises all of the input for the three Outcomes, sampling where appropriate. It would also be possible to assess Outcomes 1 and 2 as an in-house performance(s) led by the student work, if devising were not required to figure in the performance-assessment for Outcome 3. Whatever the method, combining the Unit with Acting and/or Production hours allows for more timetabled time to overtake the Outcomes and for individuals to develop.

Open learning

The Outcomes in this unit rely on developing skills through interaction with a lecturer and/or fellow candidates, and so the opportunities for distance learning are very limited. Centres may, however, find it possible to develop solutions, provided all unit and moderation requirements are met in full. Technological advances may make the possibility of such creative solutions more widespread in the future.

Because of the intensive nature of the training and the rehearsal requirements for this unit when taken as part of a course, part-time provision would be most unusual and difficult to achieve.

For information on normal open learning arrangements, please refer to the SQA guide *Assessment and Quality Assurance and Distance Learning (SQA 2000)*.

Special needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering special alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment Arrangements (SQA, 2001)*.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Physical Theatre: Skills for Devising and Performance

This Unit is designed to enable you to develop devising and performance abilities by identifying and applying the skills of theatre where the physical performance text is central. It seeks to give you an experiential understanding of how the human body can perform in the rehearsal and performance space, utilising the full range of physical theatre competencies.

On completion of this Unit, you will be able to implement the fundamental physical theatre skills through an established physical vocabulary and an understanding of the nature of continuous play in exploration. This ‘play with a purpose’ demands you give unreserved effort to your own work and enthusiastic support for the work of others, as a parent might encourage a child to walk or talk or discover the world. Being able to ‘play in the moment’ must also be developed alongside analytical skills, which review the work and place it in context. Developing the confidence to work with the performing body minus the safety net of the text can be liberating and may allow you, the performer, to take time and be silent in the textual performance.

In Outcome 2, candidates seek to apply skills in physical performance devised from the exploration and play of Outcome 1. You become the chef, exploring the dozen or so ingredients and choosing from amongst them to create a new dish. With tutor support, you will incorporate four of the items listed for selection with the essential practical devising skills, in small group projects. The emphasis of the unit is on effective ensemble work with the skills of negotiation and artistic compromise being vital. Respect and the spirit of positive criticism have to be your watchword.

Outcome 3 offers you the chance to perform the work explored and discovered.

In order to complete this Unit successfully, you will be required to work steadily through the skills and knowledge, led by your tutor and developing alongside your peers. Assessment of this Unit requires tutor observation of each candidate at work, supplemented by tutorials and the production meeting.