



Course report 2019

Subject	Drama
Level	National 5

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

Candidates performed fairly well in the question paper. Most of the questions were answered accurately, with candidates demonstrating a clear understanding of what had been asked.

There was a mixture of production and acting roles chosen for section 1 responses, with the majority choosing acting.

In section 2, all three stimuli were used, with stimuli A and B the most commonly selected. Candidates developed an assortment of dramas in response to their chosen stimulus. Many candidates did not use the space provided for rough working 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 created quite complex dramas for section 2. It appeared that some candidates had pre-prepared a scenario for section 2. This should be discouraged as some scenarios did not suit the stimuli or questions asked of them.

The majority of candidates developed a response to their chosen stimulus that was entirely suitable for a live theatrical performance.

The majority of candidates completed the question paper in the allotted time.

Performance

Candidates performed very well in the performance. Most centres had prepared candidates well and chosen appropriately challenging texts. Most centres presented a range of candidates as part of the sample of 12 candidates jointly assessed by visiting and centre assessor. Visiting assessors commented on the high standard of performances and the positive experience they had visiting centres. The collaborative marking model continues to be a very positive experience for markers and centres.

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

A minority of candidates chose production roles, however a number of them achieved an excellent standard. Visiting assessors were impressed by the creativity, skills and knowledge these candidates displayed through research on their text.

Many centres filmed their sample of candidates to be able to engage fully with the pre- and post-results services.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(a): some candidates answered this question well and clearly described the scene that they found the most difficult when carrying out their role.

Question 1(b): most candidates answered this question well and gave two reasons why they found this scene the most difficult.

Question 2: some candidates answered this question well, fully describing two activities they carried out to prepare for performance, although some candidates described a group activity and not an individual one.

Questions 5(a): most candidates gave a reason for the main purpose they had selected.

Questions 5(b): most candidates identified an appropriate target audience for their drama, with justification.

Question 6(a): most candidates answered this question well and stated a time and/or place they would set their drama, with justification.

Question 6(b): some candidates answered this question well and described a prop they would use to highlight the time and/or place to the audience, with justification.

Question 7(a): most candidates answered this question well and clearly identified the genre of their drama.

Question 7(b): many candidates answered this question well and described a key moment that highlighted their chosen genre.

Question 7(c): many candidates answered this question well and clearly described the ways in which they would direct the actors to use four of the given voice and movement terms to highlight the key moment.

Question 8(a): most candidates identified a character in their drama with a high status and gave a reason for their answer.

Question 9(a): most candidates described an important relationship between two characters in their drama, with a reason.

Question 10(a): most candidates answered this question well and described the mood and/or atmosphere of the opening scene of their drama.

Question 11(a): most candidates answered this question well, stating the type of staging they would use for their drama.

Question 12: most candidates answered this question well and described two reactions they wanted the audience to have in the final scene of their drama, with justification.

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 reference textual clues. Most candidates applied skills with appropriate and effective use of voice and movement. Lines and cues were remembered well, relationships were conveyed through interaction, and characterisation was sustained. Some candidates had a superb impact on the audience. Many candidates achieved high marks and had been directed well by staff, demonstrating a depth of understanding about their character.

Centres that had chosen appropriate and interesting texts specifically for their candidates, which allowed for creativity and challenge, did better than centres where scenes were repeated by a number of candidates, or where candidates had been allocated unsuitable roles.

Production

Candidates who had clearly documented the process of developing ideas or designs and had researched their skill or design concept(s) achieved higher marks than those who had not. Many candidates developed effective ideas and demonstrated a high level of skills. Lighting and sound candidates generally were technically knowledgeable and executed their roles with a good level of skill. Set design, props and costume candidates impressed visiting assessors. Those with appropriately chosen texts showed a flair for design, creativity, originality and imagination.

Centres that chose texts that enabled design candidates to make a significant creative impact did better than those that chose scenes specifically for the acting candidates and had limited opportunity for creative input by designers.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(a): some candidates only achieved 1 mark as they did not describe the scene in enough detail and only stated problems they had, which was not asked for.

Question 2: some candidates only achieved 2 marks as they did not describe the activities they had carried out in sufficient detail. Some candidates described the activities from a group perspective, rather than an individual one, so could not access the full range of marks.

Question 3: some candidates did not achieve marks as they did not evaluate the effectiveness of their individual contribution to the final performance, but instead stated or described their concepts.

Question 4(a): some candidates did not achieve marks as they did not evaluate another candidate's contribution to the rehearsal process, but instead stated or described their contribution.

Question 4(b): some candidates did not achieve marks as they did not evaluate the effectiveness of another candidate's contribution to the final performance, but instead stated or described their concepts.

Question 6(b): a significant number of candidates simply identified a prop, rather than offering any form of description, and therefore could not access the full range of marks.

Question 8(b): some candidates did not access the full range of marks as they justified their use of a production skill rather than describing the way they would use it.

Question 8(c): some candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question because they did not understand what a convention is.

Question 9(b): some candidates did not achieve marks as they gave a different rehearsal activity to that stated in the question, due to lack of understanding of improvisation or role play. Many candidates offered hot seating as the activity, when the question clearly stated improvisation or role play.

Question 10(b): some candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question because they did not use correct production terminology in their answers (make-up and hair, costume, sound, lighting, set design and props). Candidates also did not explain how their ideas would help to highlight the mood and/or atmosphere in the opening scene.

Question 11(b): some candidates only achieved 2 marks as they did not describe their set design using the correct production terminology. Many candidates were unable to describe set design on a basic level, or show an understanding of set design. Many candidates did not use terminology (areas of the stage) to explain where on the stage their set would be.

Performance

Some texts chosen were unsuitable for National 5 and were too challenging for candidates.

The length of some acting pieces varied from the recommended duration. A few pieces were too long, but many were too short and did not meet the minimum 10-minute requirement. Some centres chose to present candidates in duologues, which were not long enough to meet the minimum time requirement.

Some candidates cast in duologues often failed to achieve sufficient depth in their performance and were unable to access the full range of marks. In some duologues, lack of interaction with other characters was detrimental to the acting candidates involved. Some centres repeated two- or three-hander texts, which did not give candidates the opportunity to develop their own individual performance or design concepts.

At times, direction of blocking and movement was weak, with lack of consideration to character interaction or understanding of character motivation. Candidates cast in texts that were repeated by other candidates in the centre were disadvantaged due to lack of appropriate casting and/or repetition of blocking.

Some texts, with larger casts, were challenging to mark. Some actors with smaller parts were not on stage for the required time and lacked adequate interaction with others; their roles gave them significantly less opportunity to access the full range of marks. Some production candidates did not meet the minimum requirements for their role, for example, they:

- ◆ did not create a design for every character
- ◆ omitted certain information from cue sheets (such as duration on sound cue sheets)
- ◆ did not include ground plans or elevations
- ◆ did not use appropriate resources to fulfill their role, especially make-up and hair — some candidates used cosmetic make-up in place of theatrical make-up

A small number of technical candidates were prepared to demonstrate their skills, but the text they had designed for was not performed. These candidates were unable to access the full range of marks because at National 5 they must apply the skills as part of a performance. Visiting assessors reported an increase in candidates selecting make-up and hair, though many did not create make-up and hair designs for every character in the drama, or apply these designs to every actor, meaning they were unable to access all available marks. Some candidates were also unable to access marks as they had not been informed of the requirements for their role in relation to the use of appropriate resources.

Make-up and hair candidates are expected to use theatrical make-up. They must have carried out a patch test at least 24 hours before application to determine if the model is allergic to the products. For hygiene purposes, lipstick and mascara must be applied with disposable applicators or the model's own can be used. Theatrical make-up can be supplemented with cosmetic make-up when a candidate wishes to achieve a particular effect and they have taken into account the performance space and lighting conditions they are designing for.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

In section 1, for questions on self and others, candidates should be prepared to evaluate both the process and the performance. At this level, all answers should use correct drama terminology throughout.

When evaluating their own work, candidates should be able to comment on their individual preparation and/or final performance. Candidates must make an evaluative statement on their preparation and/or final performance. Candidates who do not make an evaluative statement will not be able to access the full range of marks.

When commenting on preparation, candidates should be able to provide a description of the activity they participated in (answers written from a group perspective will not access the full range of marks). When commenting on performance, candidates should refer to their performance concepts (actor) or design concepts (production role), using appropriate terminology for their role.

When evaluating someone else, candidates can choose another student they have worked with in their own group, or a student they have observed within another group. Candidates must be able to evaluate the student's individual contribution and/or final performance (answers written about a group will not access the full range of marks).

Candidates should always write their responses from an individual perspective and not from a group perspective.

In section 2, candidates should be encouraged to use the space provided for rough working to note down their ideas in response to their chosen stimuli, for example with mind maps or plot ideas or character information. This allows them time to formulate and work through their ideas and transfer this information into their answers. Candidates who did not utilise this, tended to have less detailed or fluid answers in section 2. Many candidates did not use the space this year and their dramas were simpler and lacked coherence as a result.

Candidates should be encouraged to read all the questions in section 2 before attempting to respond to the stimulus. This allows them to see the through line of the questions and avoid repetition. Most questions have more than one part, (a), (b), (c) and so on, and each part is connected to the previous part. Candidates should be encouraged to read all parts of a question to avoid duplication and consider the question as a whole before they answer.

Many candidates did not understand the command words used in questions, for example describe, explain, evaluate. Many candidates gave reasons and justification when the question asked for a description. Many candidates did not use the wording of the questions, making their answers more ambiguous and at times not addressing the question asked.

Candidates should use drama terminology and would benefit from increased knowledge and understanding of all terminology. Although some candidates answered using drama terminology, it was clear that they did not fully understand the vocabulary, concept or language they were using. Some candidates used very little or no terminology in their

answers, especially in section 2. Candidates also used inaccurate adjectives in relation to voice, movement, mood and atmosphere. Lack of terminology for production roles and understanding of the practical application of technical equipment or resources was especially apparent in these cases.

General

- ◆ Overall, candidates demonstrated a lack of understanding of role play, improvisation and conventions. They also did not include production, voice and movement terminology in answers throughout the question paper. Some candidates did not relate their answers to the stem of the question; instead, they offered generic answers.
- ◆ Candidates' use of production terminology was, in some cases, incorrect. Many candidates supplied generic answers with no real understanding of the application of the production role. Candidates should remember that the drama must be suitable for a live theatrical performance; therefore, their ideas must be able to be realised. For example, sound cannot be described as wind and rain or sad music; this achieves no marks as the answer does not specify whether the sound effect is live or pre-recorded and does not state the level it should be played at. Similarly, lighting cannot be described as bright or dull, as this does not indicate how such an effect would be created (type of lanterns used, specific colour and how this would be achieved, or specific intensity).
- ◆ Although many candidates could state the type of staging they would use, most could not give a clear description of their set. Candidates lacked the vocabulary (areas of the stage) to describe what was on their stage, and many confused set and props.
- ◆ Some candidates were unable to provide an imaginative response to the stimuli. Many had very simple plots with only two characters that lacked any depth. Some simply continued to answer on the performance they had identified in section 1. Some copied stories from television or films, which are not suitable for a live theatrical performance. The candidate's drama in section 2 of the question paper should be an individual response to their chosen stimulus and must be suitable for a live theatrical performance. All of the above should be strongly discouraged.

Performance

Centres should remind candidates that preparation for performance responses can be written or typed and should not exceed 400 words. Reviews that are not relevant and concise will not be able to access the top marks (9 to 10 marks). Candidates should state the word count of their preparation for performance. This should not be a folio of work.

Centres should remember that the selected text must be a published play (not screenplay) and be of a suitable standard for National 5. Higher and Advanced Higher texts are not always appropriate for National 5 candidates. Candidates can struggle to interpret their role adequately where these texts are used.

Some performances were too short. Centres should make sure candidates adhere to minimum and maximum time limits. Each performance must last a minimum of 10 minutes and must not exceed a maximum of 50 minutes. Duologue acting pieces more suited to Higher level, and which are too short, do not allow candidates to access the full range of marks.

Some centres chose to repeat texts (especially duologues). Repeating scenes with the same or similar blocking disadvantages candidates. Similarly, ensemble pieces can be detrimental to some candidates, as the balance in casting is not always guaranteed. This leads to some candidates not meeting the minimum time requirements.

Centres should only ever cast acting candidates in one role.

A suitable audience must be provided and be available for the duration of the examination. Performances should take place during the school day and not in the evening. Parents and/or carers are not a suitable audience for a national examination.

Teachers and lecturers must read the requirements for each production role in the National 5 Drama Course Specification to ensure that they are preparing candidates accordingly.

General

- ◆ Preparation for performance: some candidates ignored the recommended word count, and some did not fully show the process or include comments on performance. In a number of centres, the standard was very poor, with candidates writing 1,000 to 2,000 words, meaning that they could not access the full range of marks.
- ◆ Assessment arrangements: where a centre believes a candidate is entitled to special arrangements or additional support, arrangements must be made in advance through SQA. In a couple of cases, candidates with additional support needs were presented in the visiting assessment sample without assessment arrangements in place.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	4507
Number of resulted entries in 2019	4866

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	58.8%	58.8%	2861	70
B	21.4%	80.2%	1043	60
C	13.3%	93.5%	647	50
D	4.7%	98.3%	231	40
No award	1.7%	-	84	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.