

Drama

2011 Assessment Report



Government
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DRAMA

2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

OVERVIEW

Assessment reports give an overview of how students performed in the school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Group Presentation

The group presentations were diverse and illustrated students' learning in the areas of *knowledge and understanding*, *application*, and *analysis*. The presentations varied from performances of texts to explanations of performance styles, acting techniques, design elements, and how they related to the area of study; to conversations between actors, designers, and directors in interview/panel situations; to students speaking about elements of the studied text or an innovator; and how they would apply this knowledge as a theatre practitioner. More successful presentations were those in which the *application* was clearly evident in a dramatic product. Groups that relied upon a 'head-and-shoulders' lecture style tended not to demonstrate *application* as creatively.

Students fared better when they provided clear evidence of their learning in the presentation. This evidence may have taken the form of a dramatic product alone – for example, a performance that ably revealed knowledge, understanding, and clear analysis through staging choices, design elements, or performance techniques – or it may have also been in the form of a presentational style address to the audience. The key element was for students to ensure that each of the specific features could be assessed through the final product. Careful planning of the presentation itself is paramount. Students could also use their supporting evidence to demonstrate that which might otherwise be missing in the presentation. For example, actors might choose not to speak directly about their performance during the presentation, but use written material to present their analysis of a role, style, and staging applications.

The record of evidence can be used to provide clarification of a student's learning for the teacher and the moderator. The students whose record of evidence was most helpful clearly stated 'how and why' they designed their final product, and how it related to their studied text or innovator, while also defining their involvement in the final product. The most useful support material was student-generated and supplied evidence of their thinking and the reasons used to reach the final product, as well as focusing on the dramatic elements applied.

A challenge in the moderation process emerged when there was no clear identification of students on the DVD. Supplying photos of the sample students on the computer-generated lists, or ensuring that students clearly announce their SACE number, are helpful strategies.

The moderation is supported when distractors in the DVD are avoided by ensuring that the sound quality is good, and students are clearly visible. Teachers and students need to understand the guidelines and subject requirements in relation to time limits and the size of groups.

Assessment Type 2: Folio

Most folios submitted for moderation followed the format of two reviews of live performances of up to 1000 words each, and a production report of up to 2000 words. There was evidence that some students varied the length of the three pieces of writing although they kept to the 4000 word total. Students can experiment with different types of reflective writing, choose to write more than two reviews of varying lengths, or write a report of less than 2000 words.

A few students selected a theme for their review writing, such as the effectiveness of the set in conveying a theme, or the contrast in costuming choices in a variety of productions, and wrote their analysis and evaluation of several productions focusing on this one idea. Such an approach takes advantage of the flexibility in the new course.

For students who wrote about film, those who included the film techniques of the director and cinematographer in their discussion, were able to meet the performance standards at a higher level.

Comments:

- full production information should appear at the beginning of each review
- students who analysed the reasons for the decisions made by various practitioners achieved at a higher level
- the students are encouraged to put their registration number on each page of each document
- teachers and students are encouraged to check the exemplars on the SACE Board website; they provide suggestions for structuring both reports and reviews.

Assessment Type 3: Interpretative Study

A majority of students chose to write a 1000-word essay on their chosen text or innovator. The assessment criterion of *application* was less frequently addressed when a dramatic product was created; instead it was generally demonstrated through a drama-centred communication that involved appropriate language and terminology.

In this written form students found it straightforward to display knowledge and understanding of the chosen text or innovator. The more successful students clearly went beyond recount of information, and provided an analytical discourse in a structured argument that addressed the set question. Some students chose to submit work that included illustrations, diagrams, and design concepts, and they annotated these as a way of demonstrating their learning. Where these aided communication they were appropriate additions to the document.

Students who had not developed a clear focus for their study did not create questions that stimulated independent research or structured responses, and they were not as successful in engaging with the intent of the study. Conversely, students who were

given the opportunity to investigate questions about their chosen text or innovator (which varied from others in their cohort) were able to demonstrate greater variety and original ideas in their responses. In these cases teachers had provided the foundational information on which individual students could build a personal approach, and then generated diversity in the range of questions students set for themselves.

When investigating the work of an innovator in particular, the more successful students maintained a greater dramatic focus by exploring the techniques used by this practitioner – analysing the theatrical or cinematographic approaches, rather than writing a more formal essay on themes.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Performance

Creating a product is at the heart of the study of Drama, and it is clear that students and teachers alike view this assessment type as an opportunity to be original, imaginative, and resourceful. This task allows teachers and students a creative opportunity to produce performances of a highly professional level. This component of the course requires and develops team-work, problem-solving, artistic vision, and passionate commitment. The changes to assessment processes this year were ably handled and professionally managed by the majority of teachers. Although post-moderation discussion was missed by some, most teachers were appreciative of the need to preserve the integrity of the examination model, and were aware of the increased value given to their mark in the new system. For professional feedback and advice the Clarifying Forums provided an opportunity to 'benchmark' and develop an understanding of the standards applied in the assessment.

Hub groups and feedback from colleagues also assisted many teachers in developing an objective approach to the evaluation of individual student achievement and the production itself. For assistance in understanding the application of the performance standards in the assessment, the document entitled 'Indicators of Specific Features of the Assessment Design Criteria' for actors, crew, and students who choose the individual performance or presentation, is available in the support materials for Drama on the SACE Board website.

The majority of teachers clearly followed the guidelines in the *Learning Area Manual* by providing a predicted marks sheet (in a sealed envelope) as well as performance notes. It is important to provide this information in a manner that makes clear the identity of each student, and the role, or roles they are performing. Organising students in order of appearance on stage, photographing them in costume, and noting other identifying features makes the assessment process more manageable. Similarly, organising a quiet, uninterrupted location for post-production marking is essential in facilitating a smooth assessment process.

It is important that teachers select an appropriate vehicle for assessment in this section of the course. The more successful group productions involved the selection of material that balanced limitations – such as class size, student abilities and experience, school and community context – with the potential to challenge students and provide ample opportunities for them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of theories, concepts and roles, and to apply their skills in creative and stimulating ways.

It is particularly important that all performers have the opportunity to develop sustained moments on stage that allow them to explore characterisation, demonstrate a range of dramatic skills, and exhibit stage presence. Plays that are limited conceptually, or that provide little chance to develop creative staging choices, or that involve shallow or clichéd characterisation, do not allow students to meet the performance standards at the highest level.

In order to achieve at a high level in the specific features of *knowledge and understanding* and *application*, it is vital for teachers to inform students about the dramatic style, context, and approach of the text with which they are working, and to develop a clear directorial intent which is then clearly communicated to actors and crew alike.

It is appropriate, too, that teachers select work that is commensurate with the 30% weighting of the assessment component, and to realise that overly-long productions that place undue demands upon students may create disadvantages rather than opportunities. Shorter works can provide students with an opportunity to develop greater depth of understanding in rehearsals, and to explore characterisation and more complex ideas. In order to reduce the demands of stage time and the impact of lengthy rehearsal sessions on students, it is appropriate to adopt such approaches as: editing and thereby shortening texts; having two or more students play the same role; and/or selecting a few shorter pieces to provide a range of opportunities for the whole class.

The change from the 'interview model' for the assessment of off-stage students, to a presentation-based model which creates an equitable and consistent forum for assessment, has been embraced well. Off-stage students are able to demonstrate evidence of their skills and understanding in three central ways: through the dramatic product itself; through that which is verbally communicated in the presentation; and through the physical evidence shown in the course of the presentation (artefacts such as design drawings, prompt copies, photographs of process work, and videoed evidence of construction). Those students who understood the need to provide evidence against the specific features were more appropriately selective and organised, and therefore fared better than students who adopted a casual and unplanned approach to the presentation.

Students who were analytical about the application of their skills – exploring the reasons *why* they made various choices rather than just describing *what* those choices were – also demonstrated a higher level of achievement against the performance standards. Appreciating the directorial intent, stylistic features, and dramatic context of the play and production is vital in developing useful knowledge and understanding, and appropriate application for the off-stage crew in particular. To facilitate this, and also to provide the cast with insight into the collaborative design process, teachers are encouraged to convene regular production meetings.

Few students chose the option of an individual performance or presentation; those who did obviously appreciated the opportunity to pursue an area of Drama that was of particular interest to them. Film-making, scriptwriting and directing are popular areas of individual study. Students with obvious passion created outcomes that were imaginative and engaging, and ably used the presentation mode to address the specific features that were not always obvious in the product itself.

In particular those students who presented monologues for assessment fared best when they considered carefully whether *all* specific features were evident in the

performance itself; and where this was not the case added elements to the presentation – such as a verbal deconstruction of the performance – that complemented the dramatic outcome. Furthermore, it is essential that students relate each aspect of the individual presentation to Drama, and not allow it to develop into a study of another field – fashion, hair and make-up, or history. The option to focus on an individual area of study provides a flexible option to the external in the assessment component, and broadens the possibilities within Drama significantly.

Drama
Chief Assessor