

Drama

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Group Presentation

The group presentation is essentially creative and students achieved best in this assessment type when they presented an authentic product, rather than a conceptual or hypothetical conversation. The group presentation must be dramatic in its intent.

This year students demonstrated an assortment of inventive responses, displaying a growing confidence in the scope of creativity, experimentation, and synthesis of play-scripts and innovators in this assessment type. Students achieved well in the knowledge and understanding assessment and design criterion; however, they generally required more scaffolding and depth of focus in the application and analysis assessment design criteria.

Those students who studied a play-script often presented a small scene and then discussed their dramatic decision and choices as a practitioner, actor, director, or designer. Students achieved best when they clearly adopted a defined practitioner's role to help to focus the study. Developing a focus and commitment to one role, rather than spreading their knowledge over two or more roles, gave students optimum opportunity for success. Students who studied a dramatic innovator generally presented a short performance in the style of the innovator; this helped to clearly demonstrate application of the practitioner's theories and ideas. These presentations included stage performances, instructional videos, and short films, where students took the role of actor, designer, writer, and director.

Teachers are encouraged to select an innovator or play-script that will ensure students' optimum success. Careful planning of the presentation is vital to ensure that performance standards are met, and that the presentation adheres to the time limit. Some students produced a product and then spoke to it, the two presentations thus exceeding the time limit. Teachers and students need to understand that the presentation is the product.

Students may choose to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, application, and analysis solely through a performance, without speaking directly to camera about their choices. Alternatively their performance may be shorter and they can speak to camera, explaining their role; this must, however, all be within the time limit.

The record of evidence is not assessed; teachers can refer to it to verify the student's knowledge and understanding, application, and analysis, and to confirm the assessment decision. If this is the case, the record of evidence is submitted with other moderation materials. The record of evidence can be a detailed explanation of planning and student choices, or brief notes on group decisions.

It is important that teachers identify each student, preferably on the recording as well as on the written documentation. It is helpful if teachers submit a photograph of each student, and indicate the student's role, SACE registration number, and the time he

or she appears on the DVD. All DVDs need to be checked to ensure that they are accessible on different devices, recorded in the correct format, clearly labelled, and safely packaged in the bag, to avoid damage.

Assessment Type 2: Folio

As in previous years, most of the submitted folios (maximum of 4000 words for a 20-credit subject) followed the format of two reviews of live performances (maximum of 1000 words each) and a production report (maximum of 2000 words). Students can experiment with different types of reflective writing, and choose to write more than two reviews of varying lengths, or write a report of less than 2000 words.

Students achieved well in their reports when they used specific and detailed examples of how they had developed their character or off-stage role during their production, rather than giving a recount and review of the final result. Formulaic responses limited students' ability to discuss their knowledge and understanding and evaluating moments, which should ultimately culminate in an integrated analysis.

Some students selected a theme for their review writing, such as the effectiveness of the set in conveying an idea, or the contrast in costuming choices in a variety of productions, and wrote their analysis and evaluation of several productions, focusing on this one theme.

Students were most successful in their theatrical reviews when they integrated key staging moments, vividly described these moments, and included insightful deconstruction and analysis, using theatrical terminology.

Students were able to meet the performance standards at a higher level when they wrote about film and included the film techniques of the director or cinematographer in their discussion, demonstrated knowledge and understanding of how cinematic techniques are used to create the theatrical effect, and used cinematic language. All films reviewed must have been released during the current year of study. This includes films of theatrical productions.

It is recommended that full production information appears at the beginning of each review, including the name of the production, the venue, the company presenting the performance, and the date.

Teachers understand that the grade awarded is for the entire folio.

Assessment Type 3: Interpretative Study

The interpretative study is to be a maximum of 1500 words if written, a maximum of 9 minutes if oral, or the equivalent in multimodal form. This year it was noted that most students chose to present their study in written form.

Students achieved best in this assessment type when the teacher selected the play or innovator and workshopped concepts and ideation with the class as a whole, establishing a broader range of depth to the students' understanding. Students were less successful when a class was given free choice of texts or innovators. Teachers who choose this approach need to support student learning across each text and innovator.

Students who presented the most successful studies of a play-script adopted the hypothetical role of a specific practitioner and developed a clearly described and illustrated production concept, demonstrating page-to-stage understanding, using theatrical terminology. Students who explored a play-script as a practitioner achieved best when they demonstrated dramatic application not only through words but also through diagrams, illustrations, sketches, and photographs.

Students who studied a film innovator achieved best when they demonstrated a strong understanding of the innovator's film technique. These students used cinematic language to discuss the exploration of dramatic techniques.

Students create a focus when shaping a question for this assessment type. A specific question with scope that is tailored to the student's strengths gives the opportunity to explore the text or innovator. Clear and concise questions allow students to create clear and concise arguments in response. Students and teachers can consult past examination papers as a source of ideas for question design.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Performance

This external assessment task has unique features in giving students the opportunity to develop work that is collaborative, practical, creative, and delivered to an audience. The process and product are imitative of those achieved in the theatre industry, and many classes produce work of a high professional and artistic standard.

Two factors significantly affect the task design in this assessment: the choice of play and the role of the director. Choosing and casting an appropriate text are perennial challenges for teachers because, unlike the usual process in the theatre industry, teachers are provided with a cast in the form of enrolments. The play therefore needs to be chosen for the actors, not the actors for the play. It is important that teachers consider the skills, experience, and aptitude of the class and select a work commensurate with these factors. Lengthy works that are not accessible to students, selected with the intent to 'stretch the class', often inhibit rather than develop potential. Conversely, works that offer limited opportunities for character development, and that do not present possibilities for creative staging, also inhibit students from reaching their potential.

The best choices are plays that are well written, explore appropriate and accessible themes, allow actors to develop nuance and subtext in characterisation, provide an opportunity to explore theatrical styles and approaches, and give designers a context in which to create interesting and artistic products. Teachers should avoid presenting overly lengthy productions in which actors find it difficult to sustain energy. It must be remembered that the performance is an assessment, and so optimal conditions for successful student achievement should be considered. Teachers should keep in mind that on-stage performers are required to 'present a focused performance of between 10 and 15 minutes'.

The role of the director is similarly vital in developing the performance. Taking a play from the page to the stage is an imaginative, experimental journey of both cognitive intent and creative accident. This task is organic, involving problem-solving, trial and error, and collaboration between students and teacher. Teachers/directors share this creative journey with the students by explicitly articulating their directorial vision,

facilitating regular production meetings, and allowing appropriate reflection on the process. Not only is this a dynamic approach to teaching the subject, but it also gives actors an understanding of the 'big picture', off-stage students foundations on which to build designs, and all students appropriate material for writing the report as part of Assessment Type 2: Folio.

Teachers should develop fluid scene changes during performance, as lengthy blackouts and complex set changes can interrupt the flow of a production for the audience and make it difficult for actors to sustain concentration and cohesion. Casting is another important feature of a production: although it can be useful to cast a performer in a range of roles that allow for diversity in acting approaches, it is important that each actor has the opportunity to develop nuanced characterisation, and that the allocation of more than one role does not lead to fragmentation.

Student actors achieved the greatest success when they had clearly worked on the basic elements of stagecraft, including voice projection and modulation, awareness of audience, and the physicalisation appropriate to the theatrical style, character, and direction. These students worked consistently, creatively, and appropriately in ensemble with others, developed subtext, explored inventive stage business, and maintained consistency in the presentation of character, whether in or out of dialogue. These students sustained controlled stage presence that engaged the audience throughout the production.

Students in off-stage roles achieved the greatest success when they demonstrated and verbalised: understanding of the style and thematic concerns of, and the director's intent for, the production; understanding and application of the appropriate design processes relevant to their role; creative products that worked in ensemble with others and contributed to the intent of the production as a whole; appropriate skills in achieving a dramatic outcome. Off-stage students fared best in their presentations when they had considered the content of their talk, ensuring that they demonstrated and verbalised those specific features that would not have been evident from the on-stage product alone. These students had prepared and practised their presentations and understood that assessment is based on that which is evident in the product, that which is presented as an artefact within the 15-minute presentation (evidence of process, sketches, prompt copy, patterns, documentation, images etc.), and that which is explicitly verbalised.

Teachers can prepare for the performance by ensuring that students are identifiable on stage, and that photographs in the performance notes sheets show them in costume and in order of appearance. Teachers identify students who have more than one role and, if students are similarly costumed (or masked), develop a set of identifying symbols.

Teachers ensure that off-stage students have one specific role, and provide them with an appropriate quiet area in which to make their presentations, shortly after the conclusion of the production. Teachers may need to delegate responsibilities to other staff members in order to facilitate the smooth running of this process. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to arrange for presentations to take place before the performance. This should be organised in consultation with the designated contact external marker.

The performance notes sheets are an essential tool in assessing each student. These notes should reflect the performance standards, provide examples where possible, and contain detail about the students' achievements. All three markers (the teacher and the two SACE Board assessors) complete these notes during and after

the performance, using the language of the performance standards to capture the quality of work of each student.

Only a few students chose an individual performance or presentation for their external assessment. Students who succeeded in this assessment had selected the role of a practitioner in a specific area, developed a clear focus for their study, and worked towards an appropriate dramatic outcome, ensuring that they addressed the designated specific features in their presentation. The teacher gives these students a level of support equivalent to that given to students involved in the group performance.

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