

Drama

2016 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## Overview

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their 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 Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Group Presentation

The group presentation, which is weighted at 20%, is undertaken in groups of between two and five students. The time-limits are determined by the number of students in the group: two students have up to 8 minutes; three students have up to 10 minutes; four students have up to 12 minutes; and five students have up to 15 minutes.

As a class, students study either a play-script or the work of an innovator, and use their learning to develop an outcome in which they apply their knowledge, understanding, and analysis. The teacher acts as a facilitator in this process of application. Students maintain a record of evidence during the process and this may be used to assist the teacher in determining a final result. While the group works collaboratively in developing a dramatic application of their learning, each student is marked individually by the teacher and the work is submitted for moderation.

**The more successful responses**

* Were founded upon good classroom practice in which the teacher had clearly explored the innovator or play-script with the whole class, providing a rich breadth to the students’ understanding. From this foundation, the most successful students had further explored the innovator or play-script from the point of view of the particular practitioner they had selected, approaching the task with analytical intent.
* Were ones in which the analysis was the foundation for developing a dramatic outcome that had the production qualities of a performance.
* Involved clear collaboration between a range of practitioners who had clearly brainstormed, planned, experimented, rehearsed, and shaped a final outcome that was creative, imaginative, and theatrical in nature.
* When students approached the task as an actor: analysed the role of the character within the context of the play or the style of the innovator; considered vocal and physical approaches to present that character on stage/film; explored the effect of stage business, ensemble, and blocking; considered the nature and influence of the style in which they were performing; and made deliberate interpretative choices in their characterisation.
* When students approached the task as a designer: had a clear dramatic product and were able to contribute to the whole group presentation in the practical application of that product (for example, actors performing on their set; actors wearing the costumes that they had designed; their soundscape contributing to the filming of scenes). In the assessment of designers, teachers and students should consider whether the analysis and knowledge and understanding are evident in the product alone, or whether the student should provide commentary within the presentation itself (speaking to camera in a lecture-style fashion, or providing subtitles in a film, or being written into the script as a character, or projecting information in the background of a performance, etc.), or whether the supporting material is the best medium through which to display analysis and process.
* When students approached the task as a director: demonstrated an understanding and interpretation of the script or innovator through the various elements of production. These students had clearly developed a director’s vision for the presentation and made decisions that contributed to the creative flavour of the outcome and enhanced the audience’s understanding of the scenes being performed. The *ideas* of the director should be clear in the final outcome and the more conceptual the approach, the more dynamic and creative the product.

**The less successful responses**

* Were ones in which students adopted a lecture-style approach, speaking about, rather than creating, a product
* Involved students presenting individually and therefore not displaying a dramatic outcome that was the result of a collaborative approach. The assessment task is a *group* presentation and the application of the learning should therefore reflect this.
* Were ones where students demonstrated knowledge, understanding, and analysis, but not application.
* Involved groups in workshop presentations using others in improvisation tasks and then presenting work that was predominantly the product of those improvisations. In these cases, the application was not the work of the students within the group, but rather that of others.

**General information**

It is important for the purposes of moderation that each student is able to be clearly identified in both the presentation and any supporting material provided. Teachers should also confirm that filmed material is of a quality reasonable enough to validate assessment decisions and that electronic devices are not corrupted.

Assessment Type 2: Folio

The folio, which is weighted at 30% and may be up to 4000 words in length (or the oral or multimodal equivalent), involves a reflection upon dramatic works, both the products of others and the student’s own experiences of making dramatic work. The majority of folios once again followed the format of two reviews of live performances and a report, and were predominantly written, although students who chose an oral or multimodal form were also able to creatively represent and explore their own and others’ work.

**The more successful responses**

* Selected particular moments to illustrate ideas, and presented these with appropriately vivid detail while also analysing the intent of the moments selected.
* Were structured around ideas, where each paragraph explored a theatrical concept.
* Integrated a range of dramatic elements in the discussion, displaying an understanding of the interdependent nature of drama.
* Involved an appropriate use of nomenclature and terminology, whether the discussion was about stage productions or film.
* Emerged when students had the appropriate language and analytical awareness of how to describe and deconstruct the choices made by actors in particular.
* In oral presentations, involved students exploring the potential of the form — delivering presentations that were visually and aurally interesting and informative, rather than just the result of reading written material to camera.
* Were the product of students understanding the complex nature of evaluation. In the folio, sophisticated evaluation emerges from an analytical awareness of the intent of the practitioner, not from a simplistic visceral or personal reaction to the work. After analysing the choices of practitioners, students are then in a position to evaluate the nature — and even success or failure — of the various outcomes.
* Demonstrated an understanding of the director’s intent in a response in the report that contained a line of reasoning about the holistic nature of the production.

**The less successful responses**

* Relied upon recount and description.
* Involved unsubstantiated judgments that were personal and not analytical.
* In the report, involved a diary-like account of problems, people, and processes that did not involve a conceptual focus.
* Were structured in a fragmented manner, often dividing the discussion of the dramatic product into constituent components (set, lighting, costumes, etc.) and therefore misrepresented the holistic and collaborative nature of dramatic works.
* Relied upon describing the physical elements (set, costumes, multimedia, etc.) rather than analysing the intentions and decisions of the various practitioners.

**General information**

Films that are reviewed must have been released during the current year of study.

Assessment Type 3: Interpretative Study

The interpretative study, which is weighted at 20% for a 20‑credit subject, should be a maximum of 1500 words if written or a maximum of 9 minutes if oral, or the equivalent in multimodal form. The study is based upon the work of an innovator or the study of a play-script. Students who investigate and respond to a play-script adopt the role of a director, actor, or designer and explore the dramatic choices that they would make for a hypothetical production; students who investigate and respond to a dramatic innovator create a question that they answer through their study.

**The more successful responses**

* Were founded upon good classroom practice in which the teacher had clearly explored the innovator or play-script with the whole class, providing a rich breadth to the students’ understanding. From this foundation, more successful students undertook further research and reading, supplementing their learning in order to inform the particular approach they had adopted.
* In oral presentations, involved students exploring the potential of the form — delivering presentations that were visually and aurally interesting and informative, rather than just the result of reading written material to camera.
* Incorporated appropriate referencing and bibliographies.
* In the study of an innovator, involved a well-developed question that led to the analysis of the stylistic features of the innovator. These questions resulted in an essay/presentation in which a clear line of reasoning was maintained and an accessible argument was established with clear, vivid references to the works of the innovator.
* In the study of a play-script, involved a well-considered staging concept in which the role of a particular practitioner was assumed. Choices were explored with specific reference to the play itself, and also justified with reference to appropriate dramatic principles and concepts.

**The less successful responses**

* Were ones in which students described their staging ideas for a play-script with little conceptual intent, and only cursory references to the play. In many cases, these students had not selected a particular practitioner role through which to explore the play and thus presented a series of choices that were disconnected from the intent of an actor, designer, or director.
* Were ones in which students writing on an innovator — particularly a film-maker — described the works of that artist, producing a recount rather than an argument in response to a question.
* Were ones in which students writing on film-makers focused on the themes of various films, thus presenting work that was more appropriate as an English essay, rather than being a Drama essay with a focus on the innovator’s use of medium and techniques.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Performance

The external assessment task for Drama, weighted at 30%, gives 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. On-stage performers are required to present a focused performance time of between 10 and 15 minutes, while off-stage presentations are to be a maximum of 15 minutes, presenting evidence relevant to their specific off-stage role to the three markers only (teacher and two SACE markers). Students completing an individual presentation adopt the role of a practitioner in developing work that is presented to an audience of peers, other classes or schools, parents, or the wider community, and is also marked by the SACE markers. This presentation is a maximum of a 15-minute overview to demonstrate their application of the knowledge and skills they have acquired through their area of study.

**In the more successful responses**

* Teachers considered the skills, experience, and aptitude of the class and selected a work commensurate with these factors when choosing an appropriate text to perform.
* Plays chosen were well written, explored appropriate and accessible themes, allowed actors to develop nuances and subtext in characterisation, and provided an opportunity to explore theatrical styles and approaches.
* The performance text was chosen to give possible off-stage designers a context in which to create interesting and artistic products.
* The teacher took a play from the page to the stage, displaying an imaginative, experimental journey.
* Students and teachers embraced the organic, problem-solving, trial-and-error, and collaborative nature of the process.
* Teachers explicitly articulated their directorial vision to the students.
* Teachers and students together explored and deconstructed each of the specific features so that the students understood the basis on which they were being assessed.
* Each actor had the opportunity to develop nuanced characterisation and depth of subtext.
* The basic elements of stagecraft had been taught well by teachers and then demonstrated by the student, including voice projection and modulation, awareness of audience, and the physicalisation appropriate to the theatrical style, character, and direction.
* Students sustained controlled stage presence that engaged the audience throughout the production.
* Students worked consistently, creatively, and appropriately in ensemble; developed subtext; explored inventive stage business; maintained consistency in the presentation of character (whether in or out of dialogue); and contributed to the intent of the production as a whole.
* Off-stage students considered the content of their presentations, ensuring that they demonstrated and verbalised those specific features that would not have been evident from the on-stage product alone.
* The oral presentation for off-stage students was conceptual as well as practical.
* Off-stage students had prepared and practised their presentations and understood that assessment is based on what is evident in the product, as well as what is presented as an artefact within the 15-minute presentation.
* Off-stage students demonstrated evidence of process, sketches, prompt copy, patterns, documentation, and images, and these were explicitly verbalised within the oral presentation.
* Designers, stage managers, and dramaturges were aware that they needed to demonstrate the ways in which they had experimented with a variety of ideas, applied the appropriate methods for their role, and developed creative solutions.
* Teachers ensured that off-stage students had one specific role as their primary focus.
* Individual performance students chose to pursue a field of strong interest or ability, for example, directing or scriptwriting.
* Individual performance students demonstrated a clear theoretical understanding of the role they chose and then applied that understanding in a precise dramatic outcome, to demonstrate appropriate dramatic processes, create skilled dramatic products, and understand the role of the audience in delivering that product.

**The less successful responses**

* Resulted when lengthy works that were not accessible to students were selected with the intent to ‘stretch the class’; these often inhibit rather than develop potential.
* Were produced when works chosen offered limited opportunities for character development, and did not present possibilities for creative staging.
* Occurred when actors found it difficult to sustain energy when presenting overly long productions. It must be remembered that the performance is an assessment, and so optimal conditions for successful student achievement should be considered.
* Were interrupted by lengthy blackouts and complex set changes affecting the flow of a production for the audience, making it difficult for actors to sustain concentration and cohesion.
* Came from off-stage students who had more than one role for which they were responsible and then they needed to divide their 15-minute presentation across the roles.
* Resulted when plays chosen restricted the students’ ability to develop depth, subtext, and moment-to-moment reality of a role — either by the role being too short or by the student not having enough stage time to develop adequately for success in the performance standards; for example, appearing in a tableau, in a chorus scene, or as a background extra. While these approaches may demonstrate some dramatic skills, they do not provide students with a range of opportunities to address the performance standards at the highest level.
* Came from students who took on more than one role, and who then had difficulty transitioning between their roles, being unable to show equally convincing, fluent, and consistent interpretations of each character.
* Emerged when actors were allocated unrelated sections from a play that prevented them from exploring the full development in their character and therefore the opportunity to present a range of emotions or reactions.

## Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

In preparation for the external assessment, teachers should:

* Communicate with the assigned contact marker after receiving the official SACE Board documentation and provide details about the production closer to the event.
* Prepare for the performance by ensuring that the predicted marks sheets are filled in and sealed in an envelope, performance notes sheets are filled in accurately, students are identifiable on stage, and photographs on the performance notes sheets show the students in costume and in order of appearance.
* Identify students who have more than one role and, if students are similarly costumed (or masked), develop a set of identifying symbols to ensure ease of process for the markers.
* Reflect on the students’ performance immediately after the performance, using the performance notes sheets — describing the students’ performance from what was seen, using the identifiers and language from the performance standards, and providing examples of when and how these were demonstrated by the student during the performance.
* Ensure that markers are given an opportunity for a small break time when the marking schedule is particularly long due to multiple off-stage presentations and a long performance.
* Ensure that markers are allocated two reserved seats, each in a position that would allow a view of all students and stage aspects being assessed.

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