

THEATRE

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 11	12 – 22	23 – 36	37 – 50	51 – 62	63 – 75	76 – 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 9	10 – 18	19 – 29	30 – 42	43 – 56	57 – 69	70 – 100

Independent Project Portfolio

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 6	7 – 13	14 – 19	20 – 26	27 – 32	33 – 39	40 – 50

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 14	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 40

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Generally speaking, there was a greater sense of independence woven into the projects at both higher and standard level. Candidates, to a greater extent than in past sessions, seemed

to initiate a topic of interest and pursue their chosen area with clear goals and a better understanding of the demands of the task or role. Many projects represented influences from the course but were clearly motivated from an independent interest and quite often a theoretical underpinning. Though a theoretical underpinning is not a requirement at standard level, it was encouraging to see the number of candidates that chose to base and develop a project on a sound theoretical and/or practical research base. This not only contributed to increased levels under criterion A for initiative, but also an ability to demonstrate and further develop knowledge and skills. At higher level, there were more and better quality projects for option B. Candidates are clearly approaching this task with the respect and understanding required to excel in this option. The projects more often reflected a sincere interest in an exploration of theatre practice, rather than what in past sessions read like misunderstood option A projects. It was quite obvious that an increasing number of centres understood the significant difference between options A and B – this is fundamental in achieving success at higher level. The most consistent difficulty with the projects chosen at both higher level and standard level was rooted in candidates' choices of tasks. Candidates are frequently taking on too many tasks/roles for an independent project and therefore struggling to demonstrate convincing skill development during the project and within the portfolio itself.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A – Preparation

The portfolio must demonstrate evidence of initiative and perseverance; an implicit reference is not sufficient nor is a statement indicating that initiative or perseverance has taken place. **Initiative** can be defined as going beyond the predictable to examine areas that are relevant and illuminating. **Perseverance** can be defined as working systematically and thoroughly in the achievement of goals. The issue of relevance is worth mentioning under this criterion as it differs to “relevance” under criterion D. Relevance under this criterion refers to the relevancy of choices made in the development of the project.

Criterion B – Process

This criterion addresses specifically the evidence found within the portfolio of skills in theatre practice. In other words, does the candidate demonstrate the skills he/she acquired during the course of the project? There needs to be evidence of skills related to production/performance elements and theatre practices within the portfolio. The most glaring difficulty in this area was in candidates' inability to even identify the skills relative to a particular area; for example, what are the specific skills necessary in being a designer, director or playwright? This difficulty was often connected to poor or even no sources influencing the project. Candidates, when

approaching a project, need a sufficient grounding in production and performance elements and theatre practice in order to identify the necessary skill-base of a chosen area. It is highly recommended therefore that such grounding exists within the course.

Criterion C – Reflection

Candidates need to approach reflection with a more evaluative and analytical consideration of learning and development. Emotional and descriptive accounts were still a problem, though not nearly as much as in past sessions. It was encouraging to see the number of candidates that made connections to the course in terms of inspiration or even simply a starting point that led to an independent interest. Once again, it is worth noting that the choice to section the portfolio into headings based on the dynamic stages of the creative process (preparation, action and reflection), although not directly penalised, tended to limit candidates' ability to reach the upper bands in some criteria, specifically criterion C. The subject guide indicates as a formal requirement that the portfolio must have clear headings; the guide does not, however, indicate that they must be based on the three headings listed above. To do so in many instances meant that evidence of independence and research was limited to the opening section and that reflection was contained within a final section rather than throughout, as indicated in the assessment descriptors. It is recommended that candidates section and title their headings based on whatever is appropriate to the particular project/portfolio.

Criterion D – Presentation

There were some concerns with the relevance of materials submitted within the portfolios, in many instances, representing a final outcome of the project (DVDs of productions or workshops, final scripts etc). It is worth noting once again that the focus of the portfolio is to demonstrate evidence of the learning and development that took place **during** the project and therefore the final product will rarely represent the evidence required, though images and excerpts may. The subject guide indicates that the word limit is 2000 words at standard level and 3000 words at higher level. **There is no leeway in the application of the word limit requirement.** In addition, there must be some evidence of sources used to inform the project. The use of appendices was, generally speaking, not appropriate to the portfolio; appendices may form a supportive role, but the portfolio cannot be dependent upon them, nor should they introduce new information or content. There is no reason that visuals should be contained within an appendix; if the visual is useful in demonstrating evidence of learning and/or skill development, then it is better placed within the main body of the portfolio and its source acknowledged. Candidates need to apply more rigour to the attribution of sources.

Criterion E – Application of research and practice (higher level only)

Despite the very encouraging signs from work submitted, there were still many candidates who did not approach the task at higher level with a theoretical underpinning into theatre practice. The project at higher level must be underpinned by theatrically-based research; social/cultural/historical/political research is certainly valid for contribution to the project but should not represent the only theoretical underpinning. Moreover, candidates need to understand that there is more to this aspect of the task than simply doing research; there must be evidence of both integration and application of research throughout the project/portfolio. It is also important to note that using research gained from the course does not represent the sense of independence required for the project.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

The most important recommendation for future teaching is to acknowledge and incorporate other areas of the course into the planning and the development of the project: the core components, skill areas, specific tasks and the influence of other assessment criteria. For example, the use of action plans, visual materials and application of research, as well as reflection that incorporates analysis and synthesis in ongoing journal work with connections to prior learning. Teachers should also consider more opportunities for practical application of theory. The most successful projects were those where the candidates established clear objectives and made reference to those objectives throughout the portfolio. The structure and development of the projects should be heavily influenced by planning, exploration and discovery, and candidates should be given an opportunity to take part in similar “mock” projects and portfolios earlier in the course. Also, at various stages throughout the course, it is worthwhile involving candidates in the assessment of their own work using the assessment criteria and wording in the descriptors.

Further comments

It was clear from the comments and the marks awarded that some teachers are still assessing the project rather than the portfolio. Teachers must objectively assess each candidate’s work based on the evidence found within the portfolio. Teachers also need to be more rigorous in the application of the criteria, and comments should be based on the content of the portfolio, influenced by the wording in the assessment descriptors.

Practical Performance Proposal

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 2	3 – 4	5 – 8	9 – 12	13 – 15	16 – 19	20 – 25

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 1	2 – 2	3 – 4	5 – 8	9 – 13	14 – 17	18 – 25

General Comments

Many candidates presented work which initially excited with a 'pitch' full of imagery evocative of an onstage vision and then, in section 2, supported this opening gambit with material which communicated an appreciation and knowledge of the use of production elements clearly based on practical experience. At higher level in section 3, the stronger proposals openly displayed how a comprehension of concepts can lead to choices and 'practical effects' onstage. However, work presented which fell at the other end of the marking spectrum often suggested a lack of understanding of the demands of the task with a basic narrative constituting a 'pitch' followed by a few non-annotated downloaded computer images, as section 2 development material. The weaker higher level proposals tended to use section 3 to reiterate much of what had been hinted at in section 2, with little or no reference to conceptual considerations. At higher level the general standard of the practical performance proposal has improved with less protocol problems suggesting a clearer understanding of the task. However, at standard level many proposals lacked depth of content expected of an assessment task spread over four weeks and based on learning from a two-year IB theatre course.

At higher level, the music stimulus Mood Indigo proved to be the most popular choice closely followed by the nonsense poetry, Jabberwocky. The Planetary system and The Easter Island Stones were the next most chosen by candidates, with the Yoruba Death Mask being the least popular choice. The standard level proposals were more evenly distributed in choice

with Mood Indigo, Jabberwocky, The Planetary system and The Easter Island Stones all proving equally popular with candidates. The Yoruba Death Mask was the most infrequently preferred as a stimulus by standard level candidates. Examples of weak and strong proposals were seen in the use of all the stimuli at both levels. Teachers must ensure that the candidate chooses only **one** of the **IB stimuli prescribed** as instructed in the subject guide, and work on this **independently for a four week period.**

With regard to formal examination requirements, the majority of teachers correctly completed the appropriate forms although, at times, there appeared to be discrepancies between the entered word count and the actual word count. At both higher level and standard level, any words exceeding the limit in section 1 were disregarded by the examiner. As marked proposals may be returned to schools with examiner annotations it facilitates writing these comments if the presented work is not in separate plastic folders. Clear sectioning of the proposal into pitch, commentary and report as required in the subject guide was occasionally an issue.

Strengths and weaknesses in the treatment of individual questions

The writing of an effective pitch (section 1) which focuses on communicating a vision of performance in a 'dynamic manner' seemed to prove a difficult task at both higher level and standard level. Those which were successful clearly conveyed through simple but graphic language a guiding principle (performance concept), a space for performance, onstage action, design ideas and an enthusiastic involvement in the process of creation. Some of these also included comments on target audience, themes and other relevant concepts but the clarity of the vision conveyed stemmed from the concrete descriptions of a piece of theatre. The weaker 'pitches' focused heavily on narrative or detailed descriptions of process rather than the sharing of a developed theatrical idea. At higher level the stronger proposals already showed an integration of the concepts which would later be discussed in section 3.

Section 2 seemed to offer few difficulties as much of the presented proposals at both higher level and standard level offered some evidence of 'explanatory, visual materials to illustrate the candidate's understanding of the intended process of realization'. However, two types of section 2 supporting materials scored poorly against the criteria. These could be termed 'imbalanced' and 'incomplete' work. Imbalanced work tended to focus heavily either on design, narrative or product and so did not offer material to 'convey the essence of the proposed performance, and the practical preparations necessary to realize it'. Balanced section 2 work, which scored well, explored the stimulus for dramatic potential; clarified a performance concept; used this concept for artistic choices; showed a possible process from inspiration to artistic choice to realization in both design and action and clearly conveyed what

happened onstage. All these aspects were transmitted using a subtle balance of annotated images, explained sketches and considered text. A further 'imbalance' which attracted examiner attention was the overuse of text in this section of the work which, according to instructions, **'must not** be written in a formal essay style'. The 'incomplete' section 2 work consisted of partially developed material which either ended at the inspiration stage as a series of downloaded generic images e.g. costumes or space choices; or proposed some unexplained images of certain aspects of design or onstage action as final visions. Complete section 2 work outlined a process of exploration/inspiration; justified artistic choices in design/onstage action; which, in an illuminating manner, led to a lucid, developed vision of an onstage theatre event.

The stronger section 3 commentaries showed clear understanding of the theories of a practitioner or practice, then integrated this into the entire proposal process and supported these considerations with practical examples of how the theory had been used in the performance and so, scored well. So also did those candidates who used either historical or cultural supporting knowledge then clearly **integrated and applied** this information into choices in their performance to create **practical effects**. Those proposals which generally referred to theory or research, with no direct explanation of **'practical effects'**, did not score well in the criteria. Although no penalty is applied for lack of source attribution it is expected that candidates will attribute sources used in the proposal in line with the IB policy on academic honesty. Those candidates who discussed the intended impacts and resonances of their performance often did so without really explaining how they intended to make those impacts/resonances possible through their practical artistic choices.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- The practical performance proposal is best learned through practical experiences which should allow the candidate to actually follow the process during the two-year course.
- The relevance of the core component experiences to the practical performance proposal needs to be constantly stressed and the links clearly affirmed.
- The teacher must understand the task description and the marking criteria in the subject guide and share with candidates so that the formal requirements of the task can be met. **It is highly recommended that the teacher attend a workshop on the theatre course which offers the opportunity to investigate the potential of the syllabus and, through sharing with other teachers, gain a deeper insight into the assessment tasks.**
- Skills specific to the practical performance proposal should also be integrated into regular class work. Pitch writing must be practiced and exploration of a performance concept and

how it can be applied needs to be explained and experienced throughout the course. How the production elements practically function and why must be explained and accomplished through regular class activity. Different ways of recording and clearly communicating theatrical visions and ideas must be investigated and experienced by the candidate.

- For higher level candidates, the application of theory/research to theatre performance and production must be modeled by the teacher and so practically assumed by the candidate in class. This will lead to a more natural integration of theory into practice necessary for all the IB theatre assessment tasks.

Research Investigation

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 4	5 – 9	10 – 14	15 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 40

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 16	17 – 19	20 – 30

The areas of the programme in which the candidates appeared well prepared.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated varied considerably. Where the candidates had developed an investigation that they were genuinely interested and passionate about, and had put the time and effort into the research required, there was a high level of knowledge of the practice, an understanding of the relationship and interaction between the aspect and the play/piece of theatre and skill in presenting how this could contribute to the realization of the performance. In general, most candidates fulfilled the requirements of finding a suitable practice to research, and tied their findings to a play/theatre piece that belonged to that practice. They tended to engage with unfamiliar practices and there is a diversity of world theatre research.

Generally, candidates formulated a research question and included the three elements of practice, play/piece, and aspect. Candidates showed knowledge of a theatre practice and most demonstrated at least some skill in the use of citation and bibliographic practice. Those candidates who planned questions carefully and restricted the breadth of the question clearly scored more highly. They were able to crystallize research, focus their writing and achieve an in depth study and application.

Stronger candidates maintained a steady focus on the research question and dealt evenly with all aspects of the research investigation, i.e. they discussed the practice, introduced the play and gave an overview of it and spent an adequate time addressing the particular area of practice being researched. They consistently referenced sources, even when paraphrasing and used a standard referencing convention.

Areas of the programme which proved difficult for candidates

Dramaturgy continues to be a challenging area of the course. While some research investigations demonstrated depth of academic research, the majority made accurate but not very perceptive observations on theatre practice. Many candidates also had difficulty making links between the practice, the aspect and the theatre piece. The weaker research investigations tended to include less relevant material including extended plot summaries, general theatre history, and literary research. Applied research skills seem to be an area that needs a stronger focus by teachers and candidates.

Being consistent in the attribution of sources and in particular the presentation/attribution of visual evidence was problematic for some candidates.

Many candidates still found it difficult to frame suitable questions and got themselves into confusing scenarios by asking long questions which were multi focused and had a number of different parts to them. This made the job of research so much more complicated. The broader the question, the more difficult the process: describing how a director deals with actors, costume, scenery etc immediately widens the focus and makes the research investigation very general and non-specific. These candidates often made the research investigation a narrative or descriptive piece which meant that the register was not appropriate. The choice of question is fundamental to a candidate's success and needs careful consideration.

Candidates sometimes tried too hard to demonstrate how much they knew (or could gather as research material) about, for example, the history of the period, theories, synopses of the play, rather than how that knowledge might be used and applied to production of that piece.

They sometimes tended to show that they had researched, for example, Brecht's theories of alienation but without a context as to what they had chosen to investigate specifically regarding this aspect. As a result, there were many context-poor essays that jumped from idea to idea without a focused structure. There were also a number of 'how to' essays which described, for example, how to apply makeup for a particular practice without connecting it to the play/piece of theatre.

The weakest questions were those where candidates asked how a play might be staged for a modern audience. The answers to questions of this nature were often vague and lacked depth. These ended up being creative interpretations and adaptations and did not fulfill the requirements of the task. This was also the case when a play was not selected from the practice itself. Adaptations are not acceptable or appropriate if the play/piece of theatre is not from the practice.

Some research investigations also functioned more as a study of a particular play from a social, historical or literary perspective and did not fulfill the requirements of a task.

A significant number of candidates failed to fulfill the required number of words for the research investigation and some had clearly included their quotations as part of the word count and, sometimes at higher level, their critique of sources was also included in the word count.

The strengths and weaknesses of candidates in the treatment of individual areas

Criterion A - Research skills

The range and quality of sources varied enormously. Some candidates showed difficulty in finding a varied range of sources to support their essays, generally relying on the internet and sometimes providing little else. Some candidates used sources of limited reliability to support their observations.

Candidates who cross-referenced, always attributed observations, visuals and focused on research into a practice that was not based on simply the history of or development of the practice but on more practical information about the practice were the most successful. Weaker papers only used the bibliography as a way to source. Images and observations were not sourced or inconsistently attributed, research became about the life and times of the playwright, or practice. Some candidates did not consistently attribute their sources. Every piece of research and information provided must be attributed.

Visuals were sometimes not regarded as sources and were not attributed. This counts as non-attribution of sources.

Some candidates had chosen a practice without identifiable techniques or conventions that were recognizable and transferable and therefore the research investigation ended up not being research focused.

Criterion B - Task relevance

Some candidates tended to be over descriptive, analytical and less evaluative and presented unsubstantiated opinions rather than applied research. Two types of research investigations tended to have poor task relevance: ones that analyzed a past performance of the theatre piece and ones that provided a creative interpretation of the piece. Some practices seemed to lead toward more creative interpretations particularly where the 'aspect' was quite general or ill-defined. This led candidates to treating either all or part of the paper as a place to provide creative suggestions on how to stage the production. They provided costume and set designs, treating themselves as director or designer. Some of the candidates also spent too much time and detail discussing the plots/social/historical aspects of the play in the question rather than application of research to piece of theatre. These types of research investigations should be avoided.

Some candidates found it difficult to select a play/piece of theatre from the SAME practice and there was often not consistent reference back to the play.

Choosing and composing a suitable question is one of the key elements regarding success at this task and this sometimes seemed difficult for some candidates. Poor research questions did not always allow the development of sufficient information in the research investigation. Questions need to be sufficiently focused to allow the research to have meaningful outcomes and should address practice, piece of theatre and aspect in their wording. These should be organic and can be altered and developed as the candidate discovers more information. The research investigation should be a response to the question the candidate has set themselves. The wording of the question is key - for example "The role of make-up" is not how make-up is applied.

Candidates also, at times, did not focus on an aspect of the play/theatre piece in their question or their paper. Sometimes they focused on many different aspects, at other times they did not select one at all but rather analyzed the play or gave an overview of the theatre practice. Often the aspect was therefore either inappropriate or too broad or was not sufficiently focused.

Biographical details regarding theorists and playwrights should be avoided unless they are directly relevant.

It is also best to avoid focusing on particular productions by particular companies as these become descriptions of a piece rather than research into a practice.

Literary interpretations of plays or discussions regarding, for example, the role of symbols in the text, are not appropriate and should be avoided.

Criterion C – Presentation

Successful candidates demonstrated much skill in writing a formal essay, which was very well structured, which flowed well, and which was easy to read. They maintained a formal tone throughout, generally speaking in the third person and using a proper register. The research investigation should have a clear argument and should address the question in a structured and coherent manner.

Some candidates had difficulty in writing a formal essay in the appropriate style. Some addressed the research to a specific artist, such as a designer or director. The research investigation should be written as an essay and addressing it to a particular practitioner had a significant impact on the register which ended up not being appropriate as it was advisory rather than investigative.

Some candidates included visual and textual material but did not label them or discuss them so they did not serve to illustrate points made as effectively as they could have. Some research investigations, particularly those focused on a design area, would have benefitted from carefully selected images.

In some instances, candidates had difficulty presenting the visual material adequately. Instead, images were simply placed throughout and without any form of annotation and explanation. The examiner had to assume their function.

It is necessary to check that words have been counted and that there is an accurate entry regarding word count. Neither quotations nor the words in the critique of sources (higher level only) are part of the overall word count. These should NOT be included in the word count.

Some candidates tended to be over descriptive and less evaluative and analytical and this affected the register and structure of the essay.

Research investigations are sometimes padded out with textual material such as play synopses, biographies of directors/practitioners/playwrights etc. These are often in the appendix and unless directly related to points in the essay or referred to they are considered irrelevant. Candidates need to ensure that their research investigation is not distracted by gathering large amounts of irrelevant visual or textual information.

Titles of books, plays, pieces of theatre and practices should not be abbreviated.

Criterion D (HL only) - Critique of sources

This criterion provides 25% of the marks of the research investigation and should be given the appropriate amount of attention.

This criterion should form a critique that addresses the relevance of the source to the candidates' own work but also a critique that covers areas such as the origin of the source, its reliability and the criteria employed to assess this, what the source offers, how it was used, why it was used, how someone else might use it, its style, its helpfulness, its purpose in general, which parts were used and why etc.

Many critiques tended to primarily provide either an objective critique of the source or a subjective analysis of how the source was used in the research investigation; few provided both consistently. Some critiques did not mention reliability at all, even where unreliable sources were used and candidates employed statements such as 'it seemed reliable'.

Some candidates only gave a subjective response for criterion D. Few candidates focused on how a particular source could be used or how the resources might be used as a guide for any practitioner who wished to research further into the practice or a particular aspect of the play or piece of theatre.

In some cases candidates would discuss the reliability/credibility of written sources and interviews, but would not discuss websites and internet resources with the same detail.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers should make candidates aware of what the criteria mean and how they can be met. A checklist may help candidates to ensure that they have met the minimum requirements: practice/play/aspect/question/bibliography etc.

- Teachers need to demonstrate the value of the research process and then give candidates the skills to research thoughtfully, academically and in a structured way. Candidates then need to be able to sift what is relevant and what is essential and how to apply this research to a piece of theatre/play. Teachers might want to show exemplar material, for example, that would give the candidates valid models to use as a basis for their own explorations.
- Some time should be spent helping candidates learn how to synthesize the three areas of the task rather than carrying out general studies on a practitioner or play.
- Candidates need to be given support and the appropriate skills to help them to find a suitable practice that is truly unfamiliar to them, as well as help them develop the skills into preliminary research that would lead them to the identification of a play/theatre piece that belongs to that practice.
- Candidates should also be encouraged to identify a varied range of sources that would enrich their investigation and at higher level they should be given the skills to critique and recognize the usefulness, reliability, function and relevance of a source.
- Special attention should be paid to a register which is appropriate to formal essay style. This is not only about tone, style and language but also about structure and organization of ideas.
- Teachers and administrators need to ensure that candidates have access to quality materials for theatrical research.
- Candidates need instruction and practice within the course in evaluating and critiquing the appropriateness, reliability and usefulness of research sources.
- Candidates should be encouraged to complete a research plan and to investigate the availability and suitability of sources BEFORE they start writing the first draft.
- During the course candidates should have the opportunity to complete mini research papers so that teachers can 'teach' and 'model' the research process, its pitfalls and requirements.
- More guidance should be given on the demands of the criteria, and more help in the early stages when questions are being chosen.
- Attention needs to be paid to word count. Quotations are NOT part of the overall count, nor are the words involved in the critique. It would be beneficial for teachers to highlight the importance of the word-count to candidates. In many cases, the word count was simply not met, resulting in a low mark for criterion C.
- Teachers need to give clearer guidance to candidates in preparing appropriate research questions reminding them that the research investigation should inform a production. The aspect of the investigation needs to have a clear focus and not be so broad as to make the research investigation unwieldy. Candidates should be encouraged to keep it simple and focused.

- Candidates should be provided with experiences in writing formal research papers that include visual and textual material.
- Impress upon candidates that the writer needs to help the reader with a clear introduction, logical paragraphs in order to follow the argument, and a conclusion that is related to the introduction.

Theatre Performance & Production Presentation

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 16	17 – 21	22 – 25	26 – 30	31 – 40

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 10	11 – 14	15 – 18	19 – 22	23 – 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The assessment task once again attracted a wide range of responses from the candidates ranging, as you would expect, from the mediocre to the brilliant. In this assessment task there are some simple procedures that, if carried out properly, will enable even a struggling candidate to achieve an interesting presentation if the work has been put in.

Images must be used to accompany the presentation of a selective analysis of the candidates' experience of theatre over two years. Emphasis is given in the criteria to the candidate's ability to analyze, to synthesize and to reflect on theatre from a variety of traditions, on diverse performances seen, including those created from within the ensemble, and in the case of higher level candidates to apply research in a practical fashion to their work.

The best way to do this, as recommended on p.29 of the study guide is to “focus on one or two experiences/productions from the course that enable them to reflect on the course in its entirety”. In doing so they ensure that their focus is sharp, that they are dealing with the specific, not the general, and that any more expansive view they may take has a solid foundation in concrete experience. Part of the structure of their presentation is dictated by content and focus, but this must be complemented by the visual image. Many examiners made the point in their feedback to centres that the careful choice of images, their sequencing, and the way they are verbally annotated in the presentation may be useful to illuminate key areas under discussion, as structural devices to help the candidate order the presentation and as suggestive cues into more profound understandings. To use them in a haphazard fashion in a merely illustrative way is to waste what can be superb visual points of synthesis. Many candidates did not use them at all.

The successful candidates understood the criteria and had obviously gone through these in class with their teachers so the content of the presentation was shaped around a response to the demands the criteria make. It was predictable that many potentially very effective candidates produced indifferent presentations because they ignored the criteria, narrated rather than analyzed, spoke about as much as they could, rather than what was of value, did not mention the images at all, and made no attempt to look at the course holistically. Much of these weaknesses had clearly got their roots in a poor first year where making, performing and looking at theatre in the world had been done in a superficial way. The use of a journal was again a characteristic of the successful candidate.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A – Analysis

Those who did not refer even implicitly to the images could not move beyond the second achievement level under this criterion. The explicit referencing of properly sourced and sequentially numbered images, (7-10 at higher level and 5-7 at standard level) in hard copy, one image per A4 sheet is a requirement of the assessment task. Many candidates had difficulty with one or other of these simple prerequisites.

The candidate is required to analyze not narrate. With analysis there is an obligation to validate ideas, to look closely, to relate and compare, and to understand in a more complete way than is encouraged by a sequential narrative of the course. There are effectively three demands contained within criterion A. One connects back to theatre in the world and looks for the candidate to look critically and (hopefully) practically at the performance and production processes of theatrical traditions from more than one culture. Many candidates responded to

this by relying on Europe or the USA to provide the traditions for study. It was no surprise that those who explored more widely usually discovered passion and difference. They experimented within profoundly different cultures and theatres and were enthusiastic about the discovery of what was vivid and new for them. The tired old clichés that accrue to more familiar practices was entirely absent from presentations that really embraced the international spirit of the course. Too often candidates responded to the challenge of unfamiliar traditions by reciting facts about them. This was also true about practitioners and theory which was too often limited to basic entry points with nothing to follow. Brecht alienates, Stanislavski uses emotional memory, Artaud shocks the audience and Boal involves the audience. What is required is to test this theory by practically applying it, an issue that becomes acutely important for higher level candidates grappling with criterion D.

Many candidates entirely omitted to place themselves in the role of the spectator and made no reference to diverse performances. Others simply reviewed two plays; whether the performances could be regarded as even faintly diverse did not preoccupy them. Here the candidates need to search out performance which helps their own development, or challenges it, or illuminates it. The diversity of the performances is important but their location is not. A candidate can learn from watching the ensemble and can review their practice or his own as criterion C indicates.

A performance and production process is a term which is used in the criterion. Many candidates were hypnotized by their own school production, often a musical, rarely a production that emerged from the stuff of the course, too often a stand-alone experience which fatally drew the candidate away from the course and the criteria towards a world of auditions, personal anecdotes, and sermons on self-esteem and monologues on injustice. If the mega-performance has to exist it needs to emerge from the course, not stand outside it.

The issue of production skills and the opportunities an immersion for a time in theatre production can offer the candidate to understand the most basic form of synthesis in theatre (how lights complement costume, make up etc) was often lost as the course was delivered in autonomous units of work, so the roles were circumscribed from one another and not seen as complementary.

Criterion B - Synthesis

This was a challenging criterion for many. The importance of accepting that a process of understanding in the arts is grounded on comparison, on relatedness and on the complementation of different skills is crucial for success in this part of the task. If you are not taught to see that there are many different ways of performing theatre, radically different

approaches to design and direction, to what theatre should be asked to do etc, then you will see theatre as one thing and be entirely lost when asked to compare one form to another. Many candidates shied away altogether from an encounter with tradition and practice in this context and drew comparison between performance styles rather than different traditions or practices emerging from different cultures. This resulted often in work that lacked breadth of understanding. The experience of the ensemble is a crucial basis for response to this criterion and it was not surprising that the better candidates emerged from this approach rather than the “star system” of competitive theatre and big shows which produced individuals who had journeyed across the fault lines of their own ego but had moved not an inch across the world of theatre. One examiner used the word “synergy” to release a bit of dynamism into the term synthesis and this may be helpful for teachers. The need to release a particular kind of synergy in the way candidates apprehend, do and reflect upon theatrical experience is what we need to celebrate.

Criterion C - Reflection

When it is grounded, specifically directed, connective, it can be very powerful and can lift the whole presentation. When it is general, value judgmental and opinionated it can as quickly sink the enterprise. The use of the journal can help to objectify powerful experiences that if passed unmediated into a presentation can upset structure and balance. We all know how powerful theatre can be but also how crucial for understanding and the shaping of that experience into coherence can be the journal which is a scrapbook of instinctive responses, and more dispassionate thoughts. An excellent basis for mature reflection on your work and the work of others; the candidate needs to strategically place him/herself in relation to that work in order to gain the best from it. Too overbearing a presence and the presentation becomes an account of the candidate, a removal and it is a summary of the work. It needs to be a reflection on both candidate and work related to each other.

Criterion D - Applied research

This higher level criterion requires that candidates ensure that they make explicit their research and the application of it in their presentation. Too often this is barely implicit in what they present. It is also crucial that they do not simply list practitioners but ensure that they put theory to the test. A description of epic theatre is not required. What is required, should a candidate choose to discuss epic theatre, is an analysis of how aspects of it have formed part of theatrical development, how it has been integrated into the work of the candidate. One examiner remarked on the overwhelming focus on research into 20th century theatre. There is no doubt, once again, that the path least taken, can yield the highest rewards and candidates

who were brave enough to research earlier theory or traditions often added zest to their presentations due to their intellectual curiosity.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Ensure a thorough and practical grounding in theatre in the world, theatre in the making and theatre in performance.
- The candidates need to keep a journal and draw from it for this exercise.
- They need to work within an ensemble not as individuals.
- The “school play” needs to function within the course not outside it.
- The images need to be numbered. Sources are not mere illustrations, they should illuminate, be an active dynamic in the presentations..
- Candidates need to address the criteria and for that they need to be well versed in them which is the responsibility of the teacher.
- The candidates should not read their presentation. The teacher should not interrupt the presentation unless the candidate is in genuine difficulty and if this does happen, the teacher should not ask a leading question.
- The candidates need to speak for the full allotted time to make the most of the task; too many spoke for far less than their allotted time. Candidates need to practice this task, it is complex, and they need to practice their presentations.
- The candidates should make no reference to other assessment tasks; they have already been assessed and cannot be re-assessed. This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed.
- In the teaching of the course as a whole, the holistic nature of theatre, its relatedness across traditions and cultures should be celebrated and understood. This extends to the inculcation of production skills which should not be seen as autonomous. The focus on two key experiences with a consequential branching out to embrace other parts of the course is an efficient way of grounding the candidate in serious discussion and reflection; a thematic treatment of one aspect of theatre (e.g. masks) may be a different way of arriving at the same goal. A summary of the course needs to be avoided along with the narrative discourse that invariably accompanies such an approach.