

November 2014 subject reports

## THEATRE

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Higher level

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

#### Standard level

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

### Independent Project Portfolio

#### Component grade boundaries

#### Higher level

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

#### Standard level

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

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

The teachers' comments appeared to be more detailed than in past sessions with consistent references to criteria descriptors, thereby supporting the marks they awarded. There also appeared to be a more, and better, range of projects attempted at both SL and HL, including significantly more explorative-based projects rather than the high number of performance-based that have appeared in years past; as such, a greater range of Option B projects were attempted. This is an indication of confidence with the assessment task as well as a willingness to take risks with projects.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A – The work this session represented more and better indications of independent work, with fewer candidates relying on the teacher or school to provide the context in which the projects happen. Candidates appeared to be engaging with the nature of the task, as in pursuing an independent interest in an area of theatre practice. Also, it was encouraging to see more examples of explicit evidence of perseverance and initiative rather than candidates simply mentioning that these qualities were evident during the development of the project. In many instances they demonstrated details and then evidence in the form of visuals or written accounts throughout the work.

Criterion B - Candidates for the most part identified the skills required of the chosen role and then applied the development of the skills to the demands of the role. However, some candidates are approaching projects in the role of designer without any indication or understanding of the skills particular to that role. As such, when the demands of the chosen role were identified, including its specific skill-base, and evidence was provided of how those skills were developed, candidates did extremely well overall.

Criterion C - Reflection, like other aspects of the portfolio, appears to have improved this session, as there were fewer examples of descriptive, narrative-type accounts of what the candidates did, but instead reflection on the quality of their progress and learning with direct evidence in the form of visuals and written descriptions. This was particularly effective for candidates who showed sustained reflection throughout the portfolio. Candidates should also be encouraged to make connections to the course, and at the very least to indicate the project's starting point or influences.

Criterion D - Requirements for this criterion were generally met, with the word limit in most instances under the limit; portfolios over the word limit could not achieve higher than a 4 for this criterion. All visuals must be properly sourced, particularly those from the Internet; failure to do so represents academic malpractice and will be forwarded to the academic panel for review. Images taken by the candidate or class members should also be acknowledged. Sources were more consistently and accurately attributed and the range of sources improved during this session – this practice is to be commended as range and quality of sources quite often determined the depth and scope of a project. It is recommended that candidates title and section their headings based on whatever is appropriate to the particular project/portfolio

and ensure that evidence of research, independence and reflection is apparent throughout the portfolio.

Criterion E (HL Only) - Although some candidates still approached this part of the task as a preliminary research stage, the majority were authentically integrating and applying research to the development of the project. In addition, it is worth reiterating the importance of the underpinning as being fundamental to the development of the project; in order for this to happen, the research must, at least to some extent, be referred to throughout the portfolio. In these instances, it was clear that the underpinning was truly fundamental to understanding the development of the process.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It was clear from the work sampled that the very best portfolios developed from creative and effective use of the journal. Too often the structure of the project and portfolio did not represent the type of work taking place in schools. More consistent contributions to, and editing of, the journal would better prepare students for the demands of the portfolio.

## Practical Performance Proposal

### Component grade boundaries

#### Higher level

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

#### Standard level

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

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

Broadly speaking, this N14 cohort at both HL and SL, have shown a firm grasp of the task. The great majority of proposals presented an envisioned piece of theatre based on the stimulus with varying degrees of depth. The top band proposals described detailed stage action and a clear mise-on-scene supported by a process of creation from stimulus to product. The HL section of the stronger proposals evidenced a thorough understanding of

how research in the prescribed broad areas could be applied as 'practical effects in performance' or how 'practical effects in performance' could be used to bring about intended impact and resonances. The work quality ranged from limited (Band 6-10) to excellent (Band 21-25).

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Section 1: The Pitch.

The pitches fell along a spectrum of either giving clear indications of action, space and design (describing an easy-to-envison entity) or outlining the creative process followed with considerations of themes, etc. The top band proposals managed to balance these extremes to convey both a journey and an exciting artistic product.

### Section 2: Supporting materials.

The stimulus – There were very few proposals which failed to mention the prescribed stimulus although the depth of explorations took place to varying degrees. Those who displayed a 'genuine response' to the stimulus had gone through a process of brainstorming, research, personal reflection, linking to secondary stimuli, etc. These proposals tended to be in the higher bands as they clarified a solid starting process that then developed into a concept, onstage action and a clear mise-en-scène. Middle band stimulus work was represented by a couple of general brainstorms that usually led to some plot and character development. There were some proposals which did not balance out the content but spent too much time on plot and character development and less on the mise-en-scène process. These proposals tended to fall into the middle band category. There were some schools where all candidates used a published script. This approach is acceptable if the link to the script is a result of a 'genuine response to the stimuli. In some cases the link to the stimulus was tenuous and the choice of script seemed to be pre-determined rather than as the result of an exploratory creative process. These proposals did not do well in terms of 'imaginative interpretation of the stimuli.

Performance concept – HL/SL candidates, overall, appeared to find a general concept relatively easy to apply. In most cases this was a production concept based on a theory, genre or style of theatre guiding a set of coherent design choices. The top band work was able to widen the concept application into considerations of the onstage action through movement or blocking detail. Middle band work often suggested a coherent concept based on practical reasoning, e.g. this character is a cook so is dressed like a cook, with occasional aesthetic and/or symbolic considerations.

Onstage action – The better HL/SL proposals often offered a plot/action synopsis (storyline) supported by an annotated storyboard showing how space and production elements were considered. Sometimes a script extract (or, occasionally an entire script) gave evidence of an understanding of how stage instructions helped communicate action qualitatively. Weaker proposals sometimes only vaguely mentioned (or sometimes not at all) a storyline or stage action i.e. a 'what' happened but not a 'how'. In those proposals that chose predominantly movement or Physical theatre, strong work described shapes, rhythms, tempos and qualities of movement as well as sequences of events.

Production elements - The better HL/SL proposals showed a practical understanding of choice of performance space, use of design principles in several areas and combinations of

production elements to create desired effects communicated in visuals, annotations and text. In work at the lower end of the assessment spectrum, most stage spaces (in particular a proscenium arch stage), were chosen regardless of intended style and only a few even considered alternatives. A number of candidates used GoogleSketchUp for their set design, which helped them to demonstrate their creative ideas very clearly. In middle and lower band HL/SL work there seems to be a trend in the areas of costuming and set design of using downloaded images from the internet as "final designs", often with minimal comment, explanation or justification. This work does not do well in assessment, as it does not **convey** understanding of the mise-en-scène process (even although the process may be understood). Lighting and sound ideas, in poorer example work, were often inadequate, revealing a lack of understanding of how these elements are used to direct the audience's attention by the director and employed in the creation of atmosphere on stage. Better HL/SL proposals showed an understanding and use of theatrical terminology to describe events and intended effects. There were many proposals that chose to focus on 'Poor theatre' or some form of minimalism and so hardly described the use of production elements. This approach, whilst artistically acceptable, makes it very difficult for examiners to find evidence of understanding of production elements if they are very briefly mentioned e.g. "I am not going to use lights, sound, a set or costumes". Some discussion around the reasoning of these choices and impact on the audience are necessary to convey understanding of this area of theatre.

**Despite warnings in the last two year's Subject reports, stressing in PD workshops, being highlighted and signed about on form 6/Proposal (HL) +(SL), there is still some work which uses extensive internet downloading of images without proper sourcing or attribution. This is considered academic malpractice and will result in action being taken by the IB Assessment Centre. \***

### **Section 3: The Report (HL only).**

Most HL candidates focused Section 3 on research/theory application into the work of a theatre practitioner usually already introduced in Section 2. The better proposals then developed this theory to show how it had led to specific practical effects in their performance – in some cases the ideas presented showed innovation and offered a fresh slant on both theory and application. Proposals which took this risk scored in the top band. Many other pieces of work drew on the theories of several practitioners sometimes with conflicting theories of theatre practice intent. If solid arguments were presented as to how these theories could be compatible then the proposal scored well. If however, as in many middle band work cases, there had been convention 'cherry picking' i.e. taking one single convention from one practice and then a convention from another without any real explanation or reasoning, e.g. one actor will break the fourth wall so this is Epic theatre, then the candidate did not score highly as no real understanding of the theory was evident. Some proposals tried to focus on intended impact and resonances but then did not offer examples of the 'practical effects in performance' that were used to bring about these intents and so scored in the middle bands. Some HL candidates used Section 3 to reiterate what had been already explained in Section 2 as a general creative choice (i.e. not really based on specific research/theory) and so did not score well in this final part.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Although the most effective approach to acquiring the skills for the PPP is practical in-class experience in creative play development there are three (HL+SL)/four (HL only) areas which would benefit from a focus of attention in the drama studio.

(HL+SL) **A genuine engagement with the stimulus** – the prescribed stimulus is the starting point on the creative journey. Students need hands-on experience in how to unpick dramatic potential; research and respond to theatrical inspirations and communicate a creative journey from a stimulus to a product to be successful in this area of the PPP.

(HL+SL) **Communication of on-stage action** – Many candidates have ideas about what will happen on-stage in their created piece of theatre but fail to communicate with clarity how the action will happen. There are many different ways of presenting this aspect of the task, the most effective being an annotated storyboard. Work in class on sketching and description (in a theatre storyboard format) of how blocking/space/movement shapes etc. happens would enhance the quality and clarity of this area of the PPP.

(HL+SL) **Communication of production elements choices** – Most candidates make clear choices for what they consider appropriate costumes, scenography, lighting, music, props, etc. and try to communicate these with annotated sketches and/or download. What is often lacking, to move work into the top bands, is justification of choices. Whether a choice is practical, aesthetic and/or metaphorical offers clear insight into revealing an understanding of the mise-en-scene process.

(HL) **Application of research/theory** – HL candidates, in class, would benefit from a clear comprehension of how theory/research can be applied in performance (praxis). If the work of a theorist is being explored in class then hands-on experiences of how these concepts would lead to practical effects on-stage would enhance understanding and quality of the commentary.

Most of the official documentation was carefully completed with the forms containing all relevant information. However, a couple of schools did not enter school/candidate numbers or had wrong or partial word count box entries. Checking this information is the responsibility of the teacher and should be completed before final signing of form6/T proposal (HL) + (SL).

## Further Comments

Examiners are committed to giving clear feedback on work by annotations throughout proposals based on the marking criteria. Some schools send work in plastic folders. Whilst this protects the material it makes annotation unwieldy and time consuming. It would be appreciated if this practice were avoided.

## Research Investigation

### Component grade boundaries

#### Higher level

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

#### Standard level

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

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The Research Investigations were generally consistent with previous sessions with a range of work submitted. Some candidates produced high quality work which met all the requirements of the task and was written in an academic register. Most candidates understood the nature of the task and it was clear when a student had really engaged with and understood a theatre practice.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

#### CRITERION A

Generally candidates are attributing sources but there are still often lapses, particularly when students rely on the bibliography as their main form of attribution. All research information, however simplistic it might appear, needs to be attributed. There were a number of candidates who did not attribute consistently. They are using a range of sources though few are inventive in their choice of source material. Information regarding suppliers of materials or training courses is neither required nor relevant. The research investigation is not advice to a particular local artist but an academic essay for an international theatre making audience.

#### CRITERION B

One the main issues with this criterion is that candidates do not provide research evidence for some of their observations and conclusions. Some candidates are not meeting the requirements of the task either by not choosing a play from the practice they have chosen or

by not applying research to the play. This was particularly the case with candidates who chose to focus on 'training' or 'preparation' as this sort of focus encouraged them to be very general rather than to apply research to a play/piece of theatre. Candidates who focused on how to apply makeup or on the construction of puppets found it more difficult to apply research to a play/piece of theatre. These research investigations ended up with a 'how to' guide which did not meet the requirements of the task and which were too general, simply presenting information rather than applying to specific moments of action. The formulation of a good focused question is really important as this encourages the candidate to apply research and to address the practice and the play with depth. The most successful research investigations demonstrated close reference to the play/piece of theatre, using quotes from the play or referring to specific moments of action

### CRITERION C

The register in most essays was generally appropriate for an academic exercise. Candidates who offered advice or addressed the essay directly to a practitioner did not write in the appropriate register of an academic essay. The essay should not be addressed to a practitioner - it should be a piece of applied research that could be useful to a wide range of practitioners- performer, director, designer etc. More care needs to be taken with the presentation and size of visuals - some are poorly reproduced or too small to illustrate the detail referred to in the essay.

### CRITERION D (HL only)

Some candidates wrote excellent critiques of sources which raised their marks substantially. There are two strands to this criterion;

1. An evaluation of a source in terms of its reliability, credibility and purpose
2. An evaluation of the source in terms of its relevance to the candidate's research and the way it has been used.

Some candidates are still simply describing the source without demonstrating any judgment.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- It might be advisable for candidates to keep a source log in order to track their research and ensure that all sources are attributed.
- Every observation should either arise from research or to be reinforced by research. All evidence and information presented must be attributed. It is better to attribute as much as you can either through footnotes, endnotes or within the body of the text.
- Candidates should ensure that play/piece of theatre selected is from the theatre practice being researched.
- Candidates should avoid extensive focus on training or preparation for playing a role as it is often generic and does not provide an opportunity for application to a play/piece of theatre.
- Subheadings in drafts are useful for the organisation of ideas but it would be a good idea to remove these for the final draft as they often impede flow and coherence. Candidates, where possible, should be encouraged to avoid bulleted lists as these are written in note form which is not appropriate for the academic essay format required.



- The quality of visuals is important. They need to be clearly reproduced and of an adequate size so that any points made can be clearly seen. If colour is significant then the visuals should be in colour.
- Students need to include visuals especially in Research Investigations that focus on design.
- The word count should be checked by teachers for accuracy before the cover sheet is signed.
- The candidate selects the research area and should not, therefore, begin their essay by making excuses for the lack and scarcity of source material. Candidates are in a position to select theatre practices that have adequate sources that they can access. They should not choose a theatre practice that does not allow them to fulfil the requirements of the task.

## Theatre Performance & Production Presentation

### Component grade boundaries

#### Higher level

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

#### Standard level

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

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The November session always produces some welcome variations on by now familiar themes and this year was no exception. The tendency to cleave to European practitioners or the method men and women of the USA was not entirely ignored but there is a greater susceptibility to the traditions of the Far East (most often Japan), the indigenous theatre making of Latin-America and the Aboriginal practices from Australia.

It was gratifying to note how important theatre going is to the theatre students of countries like Chile and Peru. Latin American schools are often wonderfully open to the “vanguardista” role of theatre as a change agent in society in a way that is less explicit in other cultures. The work of young theatre students was very interesting in how they understood and connected the diverse performances they saw to their own work. The function of theatre as a social force was also clearly felt in Australia where the forthright work of contemporary Aboriginal

dramatists raised awareness of serious issues in the recent history of the country. The maturity of the candidate response testified to the impact of these plays. The Bell Shakespeare productions in Sydney still provide a basis for the appreciation of more standard plays invariably produced in thought provoking ways that helped the candidates to discover a centre in their own production work. The high level of work from the Oceania region testifies to some outstanding teaching.

The fascination with the Theatre of the Absurd continues to be a characteristic of both May and November sessions and the joyful abandon with which Camus is cited, not entirely correctly as a progenitor of this style, continues as one of the partial truths of the exercise. Ionesco and Beckett are spoken of as indivisible and this examiner is left to wonder how these views and assumptions have spread across the globe.

The candidates generally presented well and had respect for their chosen images, or at least enough respect to actually mention them! Few were the candidates who used them as illuminating features of their analysis, they were more often reduced to a signpost which was a pity given what they can be and do in the hands of the more enlightened candidates who appreciate how they can structure and illuminate a presentation.

The criteria which tend to cause most problems in terms of response (B and D) remain too nebulous for some to decipher. The term “synthesis” evidently does not help and the double duty of the candidate to research and apply research can sometimes be too much for some. The explicit cuing of research is now more effectively done with the candidate making sure the examiner is told when research is happening often with texts quoted and titles highlighted. That is a helpful aid.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Analysis.

The more sophisticated response to the task will start from the logical assumption that two or three pivotal experiences should form the core of the presentation. This requires some strict selection and editing of the course and some forethought in structuring the presentation, but the preparation is worthwhile because a carefully regulated TPPP allows for analysis and a pattern of responses to the task. A multiplicity of units of work is usually handled by a sequential narrative that tells but does not provide analysis, does not allow for synthesis (one thing after another rarely can), and encourages reflection to be about “what” we did, not the point of the exercise. Candidates can find many different ways of telling the examiner what they did and the most repetitious of the presentations start from the premise that everything must be included. Not true, a more deft approach is to look for the relationships between the work, to set research against practice in order to test claims made by practitioners for their theories, to see theatre in order to be influenced by it or disagree with it. Such an approach makes the work new, provocative and interesting. The distinction between analysis and narrative may actually be an issue for teachers to focus on. If the course is taught sequentially as a chronological narrative with an historical basis then the result may be predictably discursive. If the teacher can set out schemes of work that look at patterns rather than

sequences the analytical response is perhaps more logical, the exploration of synthesis most certainly is.

#### Criterion B: Synthesis

The most basic aspect of this is to look at theatre production (in the western style) and see how one role functions as a part of an assemblage for the finished product. The stage manager is an example and many thousands of words have been expended on “how I stage managed the school musical”. This may have its place, though it is a thankfully small one. What looms larger and makes this criterion interesting might be the comparison of how western theatrical culture might choose to synthesize its approach to playmaking and how, say, Japanese culture might approach the same task. This sadly is too often the road not taken but what treasures are yielded to the teachers and students who embark on this exploration. Bunraku was a popular theatre practice and some of the work on it was superb in its appreciation of the figure in space ritualized through face paint, costume minimized and cleaving to the moving body. The appreciation of theatre as form was particularly exciting in this respect and the sense for movement as a synthesis for feeling and expression added new dimensions to this criterion.

#### Criterion C: Reflection:

To reflect in an interesting way you have to have approached the work in a thought provoking manner. The better and riskier the work, the more disputatious, the more exploratory, the more subversive, the greater the likelihood that the candidate “thinks” and “reflects” in an exciting way. Teacher led work does not stop reflection but it relegates it to a secondary skill applied to received rather than discovered knowledge, not the best encounter with theatre. Reflection is not an institutionalized response to pre-ordained or predictable experience yet too often this was the case. That is one more reason why the adjective “diverse” is placed before performances since the diverse is new and demands a new kind of reflection if it is to be properly explored. The better candidates used reflection as a kind of exploration not as a conclusive ordinance which every piece of work was required to submit to. The growing attraction to devising theatre, perhaps a harbinger of the new course, is certainly a tremendous aid to reflection since it is always so much more passionate if the candidates are looking at their own work, escaping from the temptation of indulging oneself in that work being a clear prerequisite for saying something insightful about it.

#### Criterion D: Applied research

The research approaches are very often textual which always surprises me in a composite art form that can be so stirringly visual in its primary effect. The attachment to the book when so much documentary evidence is available and so many performance styles can be researched through film seems a little too narrow. I don't think I have ever noted a photo being analyzed as an artifact or a painting, and surprisingly few live performances from the past are used. The center for performance research which now has its archive in the west of England is a wonderful resource too few schools even know about. There really is little excuse now not to really cross boundaries in researching theatre. This is not a criterion that is about only practitioners.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Take risks in what you teach.
- Look to explore theatre in the world by comparing traditions which really are different to one another.
- Challenge your students to be independent thinkers and groundbreaking researchers.
- Challenge the aesthetic and theatrical claims made by theatre practitioners, use practical applications of their ideas to establish a relationship between their work and the work of the students. Do not however rely on practitioners to tell you how to make theatre.
- Always encourage your students to specify their focus when they are dealing with broad topics and go for detail rather than generalization.
- Take the opportunity the accompanying images give you to make the presentations evocative and exciting.
- See as much live theatre as possible and be proud of the theatrical traditions in your own country while maintaining a healthy suspicion of their effect on you.
- Engage with the shock of the new but realize too that the older traditions can be shockingly relevant.