

2012 HSC Notes from the Marking Centre – Drama

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Introduction

This document has been produced for the teachers and candidates of the Stage 6 course in Drama. It contains comments on candidate responses to the 2012 Higher School Certificate examination, indicating the quality of the responses and highlighting their relative strengths and weaknesses.

This document should be read along with the relevant syllabus, the 2012 Higher School Certificate examination, the marking guidelines and other support documents developed by the Board of Studies to assist in the teaching and learning of Drama.

General comments

Teachers and candidates should be aware that examiners may write questions that address the syllabus outcomes in a manner that requires candidates to respond by integrating their knowledge, understanding and skills developed through studying the course.

Candidates need to be aware that the marks allocated to the question and the answer space (where this is provided on the examination paper) are guides to the length of the required response. A longer response will not in itself lead to higher marks. Writing far beyond the indicated space may reduce the time available for answering other questions.

Candidates need to be familiar with the [Board's Glossary of Key Words](#), which contains some terms commonly used in examination questions. However, candidates should also be aware that not all questions will start with, or contain, any key word from the glossary. Questions such as 'how?', 'why?' or 'to what extent?' may be asked, or verbs that are not included in the glossary may be used, such as 'design', 'translate' or 'list'.

Practical examination

Group performance

The group performance must be an entirely original group-devised piece of theatre. Class work on the group performance should not begin before the commencement of Term 2 in the HSC year. Each performer in the group performance is marked individually. It is important for examiners to be able to differentiate between candidates. If all candidates are wearing similar costumes, a distinguishing ribbon or other indicator should be worn. Live performance is a dynamic medium. Candidates should perform their piece for an audience before the examination to ensure they are aware of audience responses to their work and that their work, when performed with audience reaction, will not run over time and be stopped. This is also

important to ensure that the intention and dramatic meaning of the performance is clear to an audience.

Sophisticated performances encompassed many of the features referred to below but also demonstrated the interrelatedness of all aspects of a dramatic performance. Performance style, conventions, form, structure, dramatic elements and theatrical choices were made to complement and enhance the content of the performance.

Better group performances:

- presented a clear and fully developed concept derived from a sophisticated understanding of thoroughly researched and explored ideas
- engaged the audience at every moment throughout the performance
- employed an appropriate and effective structure that supported a coherent dramatic and theatrical journey
- demonstrated a unity of purpose, by which each dramatic moment contributed to the meaning of the piece
- performed as a highly polished ensemble with sophisticated manipulation and control of the elements of drama (eg focus, tension, symbol, space and mood)
- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding and manipulation of performance conventions and the techniques appropriate to the style of the piece
- created defined and sustained role(s)/character(s) with a physical, psychological and emotional truth that demonstrated clarity of intention and motivating action
- presented defined characters/role relationships that developed and realised character journeys
- harnessed the performance skills of the candidates appropriate to the dramatic and theatrical demands of the purpose and style of the performance.

Weaker group performances:

- presented an incoherent and/or superficial performance with unexplored ideas in underdeveloped scenes
- lacked a developed concept
- demonstrated a lack of understanding of dramatic structure by presenting disconnected and often unrelated scenes with awkward, unmotivated and superficial transitions (eg blackouts or entrances and exits) that halted the action and engagement for the audience
- demonstrated minimal reference to the chosen style, the meaning of the piece or character/role being performed
- created character(s) or role(s) that lacked clarity in identity and motivation, often displaying little physicality and a one-dimensional life that changed little throughout the piece
- performed characters who lacked purpose and dynamic, who engaged in limited interaction with other characters/roles and had an inconsistent ability to work as an ensemble
- created performances lacking integrity because of their over-reliance on sets, props, music, sound or lighting special effects, exits and entrances, or other production elements.

Individual project: performance

The individual performance is a complete theatrical statement for the stage. The process of developing the performance requires the candidate to be not only an actor but also a director and dramaturge. A successful individual performance demonstrates the candidate's understanding of the dramatic and theatrical context of the piece. A sophisticated performance will be further shaped by the candidate's directorial choices into a meaningful dramatic and theatrical experience that will engage an audience. If using material not originally intended for theatre, candidates need to be mindful that the piece is carefully crafted to satisfy the needs of a stage performance. Candidates who choose to self-devise an individual performance must direct and structure the piece to create a fully realised character with a clear character journey and dramatic shape.

In better individual performances, candidates:

- presented well-rehearsed, complete and clear theatrical journeys for their characters, derived from a thorough action/objective analysis of the text
- demonstrated an understanding of the role of the audience in the performance and manipulated that relationship purposefully
- performed using a clear style, demonstrating an understanding of the conventions of that style
- demonstrated an exemplary ability to realise their characters in each moment with absolute conviction, clarity and truth
- presented a dynamic character journey of intensity with subtly defined complexities
- utilised sophisticated and effective choices that employed dramatic elements such as rhythm, pace, timing, mood, atmosphere and dramatic tension
- selected pieces that suited the performance skills, abilities and strengths of the candidates.

In weaker individual performances, candidates:

- presented performances with little theatricality, which were often simplistic and without a clear or complete theatrical shape or structure
- performed scripts that demonstrated minimal or no analysis by the candidates in terms of their dramatic elements, including language, rhythms, moments and turning points
- presented performances that, because of timing issues, remained incomplete
- selected pieces that did not allow the strengths and performance skills of the candidate to be evident
- demonstrated little or no awareness of the audience
- created performances where style was not considered or was not sustained or where material from different mediums, such as film or television, were presented without alteration to suit a theatrical performance
- were over-reliant on song, dance or production elements, eg music, lighting effects and props
- lacked spatial awareness, which resulted in unmotivated movement, aimless wandering or inappropriate use of the space
- presented one-dimensional, unmotivated characters with little internal or external energy or belief
- read scripts or improvised pieces that demonstrated a lack of directorial choices.

Submitted projects

Individual project: critical analysis

Portfolio of theatre criticism

Projects in this area critiqued a diverse range of theatrical productions and exhibited a clear knowledge and understanding of the purpose of theatre criticism. Candidates undertaking this project are encouraged to select productions for review that allow them to articulate their response to the manipulation of theatrical elements to create dramatic meaning. Candidates are encouraged not to narrow their focus in terms of dramatic style or form. While candidates are encouraged to read professional reviews and supporting material, such as promotional material, they are reminded that their theatre reviews must be their own work and not plagiarised, reworked or paraphrased from such sources. The logbook is an effective tool to demonstrate the originality of the candidate's work.

In better projects, candidates:

- identified, selected and evaluated how particular theatrical elements (which may have included the play's ideas, directorial choices, acting, performance style, set, costume, lighting or sound design) created dramatic meaning for the audience
- supported, substantiated and justified evaluations with specific reference to key moments from the performance viewed
- integrated research and theatrical knowledge in producing perceptive and sophisticated reviews with flair, control and, at times, wit
- used an appropriate and authoritative reviewer's voice employing evocative and engaging language devices.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- recounted performances, retold the plot or relied on a literary discussion of the play – these projects often lacked evidence of analysis or research, or were of insufficient length
- made broad generalisations and often provided simplistic, hyperbolic or inappropriate justification for their evaluations
- did not create an appropriate reviewer's voice, control the language, style or the structure of the project, or were over or under the word limit.

Applied research project

Candidates are encouraged to focus on developing a coherent and effective hypothesis from the question posed by their extensive initial research, demonstrating insight into an area directly related to drama and/or theatre. Candidates must submit projects that are entirely their own work, accurate and have the correct length when citing references and sources. Additionally, logbooks should contain copies of research material, annotations, notes and rough drafts of the project.

In better projects, candidates:

- demonstrated a breadth and depth of initial research that led to an original, focused and manageable hypothesis
- sourced, analysed and synthesised a substantial range of resources and effective research tools, using primary and secondary sources and, when appropriate, their own practice
- demonstrated sophistication, confidence and authority in the use of language, style and structure.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- presented an inappropriate, broad or unmanageable hypothesis that was difficult to research and/or prove
- relied on irrelevant, minimal, incomplete or inappropriate data or research that often did not substantiate the hypothesis
- presented projects that lacked attention to detail, such as formatting, editing, footnoting and proofreading.

Director's folio

Candidates should focus on developing an understanding of the function of the director and the process of analysing a play from a director's perspective. They should carefully read and adhere to the requirements of this project as specified in the syllabus. Candidates need to be able to visualise their production of the play on stage, as opposed to examining the literary or thematic merits of the script. They are encouraged to work with a play they appreciate, identify with and can develop a practical directorial vision/concept for.

In better projects, candidates:

- developed and presented directors' visions that were effective, practical and inspired by the play rather than imposed on the play
- demonstrated extensive knowledge and understanding of the play's ideas, dramatic elements, style and staging demands by producing a highly effective realisation on stage
- demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of how elements of drama can be manipulated through directorial and design choices to create engaging theatre
- clearly articulated the intended audience experience through all areas of this project and used effective rehearsal techniques with actors to support this intention.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- demonstrated a superficial engagement with the play and presented an undeveloped, inappropriate, impractical or imposed directorial concept that may have disregarded the historical, social and political context and stylistic demands of the play
- lacked an understanding of the practicalities of staging the production, providing inappropriate or impractical design concepts that may not have been supported by the directorial concept of the play
- lacked specific analysis of the text such as how the ideas and characters in the play would be realised according to the director's vision or suggested changing the content/dialogue of the play
- provided a superficial approach to working with the actors which stated the obvious, eg actors would read the play.

Individual project: design

Lighting

In better projects, candidates:

- presented an insightful concept for their selected play, deliberately manipulating audience engagement through highly appropriate atmosphere and mood choices that transported the audience into a world appropriate to the play

- presented a unified design that was clearly evident in all aspects of the work, from the candidate's vision for the lighting rig plan, choices and colours on the rigging sheets, articulated time cues and accurate, easy-to-follow running script
- presented well-plotted cues that demonstrated – through the running script, cue sheets and overlays, and clear choices in establishing the dramatic action – the mood and setting of the chosen scenes
- submitted support material that demonstrated clear links between the intended lighting states and the equipment selected to deliver these design choices.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- presented a poorly articulated directorial vision of lighting design choices for the chosen play
- made inappropriate and/or impractical technical choices when selecting lanterns (especially regarding the strength of chosen lights to cover key staging requirements), rigging positions, angle and direction, circuit loads and channel allocations
- demonstrated a lack of understanding regarding appropriateness of colour choices and/or employed overly simplified symbolic colour gels without taking into account the mixing of colour on stage
- used a few varied lights that would leave areas of the stage in darkness – as a substitute for a full, well-justified rig – or presented their designs using simple washes or strong colour. This misunderstanding of lighting conventions for a play sometimes culminated in the use of lights and lighting that overwhelmed or worked against the dramatic meaning of the chosen scenes.

Costume

Candidates are advised to present their work flat – not rolled – and to avoid the use of perspex or glass. Wooden frames are also not acceptable.

Candidates are reminded of the requirements of the project, especially the requirement to present four preliminary drawings for other characters and the minimum and maximum rendering size.

In better projects, candidates:

- presented a clear vision of the chosen play as a theatrical performance
- conveyed their vision effectively so that it could be visualised on stage
- understood the individual costume requirements of each character within an overall concept
- used colour and texture effectively to enhance the themes and reflect the mood of the chosen play
- provided strong support material that was consistent with their designs and reflected the fabric and texture shown in their projects
- presented their designs clearly and allowed the renderings to 'speak for themselves'
- chose to design costumes for characters that reflected the central themes of the play
- displayed evidence of a thorough and well-researched design process
- chose rendering techniques that were appropriately theatrical
- showed the journey of the play through their selection of characters and scenes.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- presented work that was undersized and/or incomplete
- presented projects that were not theatrical and presented as 'fashion design'

- presented projects that contained an inappropriate selection of characters and/or scenes that did not reflect the journeys of the chosen play
- lacked a cohesive concept or imposed a concept rather than developing one from a study of the play
- did not present FOUR additional costumes for the play as stated in the project requirements as the preliminary sketches
- did not present evidence of reading and responding to the set plays at HSC level
- did not provide adequate support material
- did not use fabric swatches or used fabric swatches that did not connect with their renderings
- did not differentiate between the various characters in the play or ignored aspects of status and context
- did not take into account the needs of, and requirements for, actors wearing the costumes.

Promotion and program

General comments

Candidates should keep in mind that this project reflects the journey of a potential audience member who is persuaded and informed by the marketing and publicity materials generated by the theatre company and other media. By viewing the project, we should feel excited by this fictitious production and want to see it on the stage. It is not sufficient to have the director tell us they are excited about doing the text. Candidates should also remember that a project that has unity or a unified concept does not just repeat every image across the items without making clear choices. In addition, the casting of an ‘actor’ who is used in photographic images (eg the poster) to represent a character from the text is important.

The inclusion of a 500-word media feature story is an important component of this project. It should aim to reach a wide audience and inform the reader about the play and its production. It can be in the form of an interview transcript. A media release is not an appropriate format to use.

In better projects, candidates:

- demonstrated an insightful directorial vision that captured the atmosphere of the world of the play on stage, which was clearly communicated through visual design choices carried through the director’s notes and media feature story
- were able to take the audience on a carefully sequenced and believable marketing/publicity journey, starting with the poster, enhanced by the flyer image and written copy, strengthened by the media feature story and fully completed by the program
- presented a unified design for their poster, flyer and program, with subtle variations in their visual selections that demonstrated a clear design vision and insightful interpretation of the chosen set text
- demonstrated layers of meaning (using subtle and strong imagery)
- achieved a balance between aesthetics and functionality
- used appropriate ‘actors’ who were the right gender and age for characters in the play, and costuming that was convincing for the image/concept. The pose and setting of the photographic image also had integrity and belief
- demonstrated a well-researched knowledge of the world of the play and a thorough knowledge of the chosen theatre company’s profile to appeal to an appropriate target audience

- used appropriate and current chosen theatre company branding
- demonstrated flair in the written material, making sophisticated language choices, incorporating appropriate sales and/or marketing language to promote and attract potential audiences
- understood the chosen existing professional theatre company's profile and demonstrated this implicitly throughout the project
- who created their own theatre company developed a convincing profile through the use of an appropriate name, logo, location, target audience and personnel
- demonstrated a clear and appropriate use of the 'voice' of the chosen director in the program's Director's Notes
- demonstrated attention to detail in the program, taking the reader on a journey on each page through the manipulation of colours, images and layout
- presented images of cast and crew in the program that were appropriate to the theatre company profile, the chosen play and selected character(s)
- presented only one copy of the program and flyer for marking in their appropriate format (eg program folded and not stuck page by page, flyer printed or stuck back to back), demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the function for audiences.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- presented a limited design vision, displaying a limited knowledge of the chosen set text and the practical role of designing promotional material in engaging the target audience
- used multiple simplistic, cluttered, clichéd images and/or images from past productions without manipulating them to present a unified directorial vision for the production, often making visual choices based only on the title of the play rather than a well-researched directorial vision
- included inappropriate visual and written choices that reflected little understanding of the world of the play, their chosen theatre company and the intended target audience
- demonstrated a lack of understanding of the purpose of each element of the project and/or provided incomplete or minimal written material, often tending to review, rather than promote the play
- lacked an understanding of the profile of the chosen established theatre company and its stylistic promotional approach
- demonstrated unrealistic and inconsistent images of cast and crew in the program that were inappropriate to the theatre company profile, the chosen play and selected character(s)
- did not construct a sequential order of material in the program providing a clear journey through the production. Candidates should carefully research the sequence of items in a program and use the format of the chosen theatre company as a guide, eg the cast list of characters would not be on the back page
- were superficial in their choice of play for the project, making choices based on shorter length or subject matter without consideration of the themes and issues in the play that needed to be carefully dealt with
- used large images and text of poor resolution on the poster/flyer making it difficult for the viewer to read the title of the play or clearly see what the image was. This is often a result of pixelation when images are blown up
- did not present the program or flyer in the appropriate form (eg a flat unbound program does not function appropriately)

- presented a general design concept rather than a director's concept
- repeated written material across all areas
- wrote flyer copy that was significantly less than 150 words and wrote a media article that was significantly less than 500 words
- presented a media release rather than a media feature story.

Set

In better projects, candidates:

- presented a sophisticated concept for the whole play, which evoked a clear theatrical experience through highly appropriate design/visual choices in the context of their chosen theatre
- extensively researched historical period and style, extending research beyond the internet and photos of past productions
- constructed sets that supported the dramatic action, mood and setting of the chosen scene, while still considering the whole world of the play and later scene changes. These were clearly documented and often showed lighting states of key dramatic moments in the play
- selected appropriate building materials to support their concepts
- submitted support material with clear floor plans and scene changes, which included detailed prop placement, a 1:25 scaled figure, sightlines for the audience and a scenic breakdown
- used the elements of drama, such as space, mood and atmosphere, to create tension in all their design choices, evoking both an emotional and physical space
- understood the form and style of their plays
- demonstrated a strong understanding of how proxemics could be used in their sets and how a director could use them for status, time and relationships
- understood that the model box and descriptions that form this project are intended to communicate to a theatre workshop department, actors and a director
- realised the logistics of the whole play, such as WH&S, exits and entrances
- designed their sets in the context of a specific theatre with special consideration paid to the actor–audience relationship and sightlines
- completed sturdy and well-finished set models that fulfilled all the project's requirements, especially regarding scale, and had all components of the project clearly labelled.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- presented an isolated scene without providing a clear intention for the use of the stage space to create a theatrical experience appropriate to the world of the play
- imposed a design that was not supported by the ideas and/or issues in the play or the play's style
- did not consider the manipulation of the actor–audience relationship in the location of key playing areas
- did not consider the practicalities of the set within the space of the theatre
- created dioramas rather than sets, indicating a lack of understanding of theatrical context

- gave floor plans that did not provide sightlines (specifically from the audience's perspective) of stage properties within the space and were not within the context of the theatre space chosen
- made poor choices in the selection of construction materials that did not clearly communicate what they imagined the stage design to be, eg pencil colouring to suggest dirt or road rather than using a textured surface
- lacked detail in their documentation, such as measurements, descriptions of where the action for each scene would take place and how set pieces would be moved
- did not choose a mode of presenting their design that was appropriate to their skills, eg choosing to build a model set when computer-aided design may have been a stronger or more appropriate choice for their skills
- demonstrated minimal ability to realise a set designed for the practicalities of performance, eg lacking an actor entrance and exit space
- used models that were not constructed to a 1:25 scale and made of inappropriate materials, demonstrating an insufficient awareness of colour and texture
- did not check the project specifications, which stated that they were NOT to use dangerous materials when constructing a model
- did not include the CD as well as any printouts of the set design when submitting a computer-generated design.
- had minimal research, often drawing on past productions/films for their inspiration rather than engaging directly with the text and examining the appropriate historical period
- had not read the play.

Individual Project: Scriptwriting

General comments

Candidates are reminded that they are writing for actors as well as a director and that, ultimately, their objective is to create an engaging, live theatrical experience for an audience. To this end, candidates are encouraged to workshop their play in order to refine and enrich the theatricality of their script and to experience their concept and characters on stage.

Similarly, candidates are encouraged to experiment with a wide range of dramatic forms, styles and conventions in the realisation of their dramatic vision. Originality of concept can be attained by presenting a new or individual interpretation on universal themes or concepts. Candidates are encouraged to find their own individual voice while using style and conventions in a coherent and controlled way. To support this exploration of their world, candidates are encouraged to read widely and research their idea as part of the creative process. Sustained audience engagement is achieved through a sophisticated knowledge and manipulation of dramatic elements and theatrical moments.

In better projects, candidates:

- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the scriptwriting process and product, clearly engaging the audience in an authentic and believable theatrical experience according to their chosen style
- developed a sustained theatrical vision, creating a coherent world with a clarity of purpose through an engaging journey for the characters and for the audience
- manipulated dramatic action with flair and precision, displaying both control and insight in the use of mood, rhythm, tension that is appropriate to style and narrative resolution

- displayed a sophisticated use of language to create visual and verbal images, and appropriate and distinct character voices and relationships
- clearly wrote for the stage, taking advantage of and manipulating the unique qualities of live performance and appropriately manipulating production elements, technical aspects and the practicalities of acting
- used technical effects such as sound, lighting and projection in a judicious way that was connected to the world of the play and served the concept and chosen dramatic form.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- submitted projects that lacked structural and/or thematic complexity and/or coherence
- presented scripts that contained dramatic action lacking in direction and/or resolution, paying insufficient attention to the needs of the audience, the actors or director, and that contained action hindered by poor transitions and impractical stage requirements (such as restriking of the set and costume changes)
- presented concepts, plots, characterisation and/or scene structures that were more suitable for television or film productions than live theatre, and were essentially screenplays ineffectively and superficially written for the stage
- made an overuse of narrators, voice-overs and/or off-stage action, technical effects (such as projection and film) and set and/or prop changes, which adversely affected audience engagement or assumed they would solve staging, episodic or time problems
- dealt with issues, concepts or topics in an unoriginal or overly derivative manner, and in a manner which did not reflect the student's individual voice
- did not follow specified conventions of layout, length, formatting, etc, suggesting a lack of careful editing and proofreading.

Individual project: video drama

General comments

Candidates must remember that in this project area they are creating stories for the screen. It is essential that they develop and structure a dramatic narrative that can be communicated through the manipulation of the dramatic elements and deliberate use of the conventions of visual language. The candidate must be the writer, cinematographer and editor of the film. Candidates should not outsource post-production to companies or individuals as this breaches the requirement that the project is entirely the work of the candidate. Candidates may seek advice or training in areas of film making where they lack expertise and this should be fully recorded in the logbook.

Candidates are reminded that a dramatic narrative in this project area is a series of events driven by characters and linked through cause and effect to engage the viewer in a coherent journey.

The best projects demonstrated the candidates' considerable skill at telling their stories through the framed *mise-en-scene*. These candidates used visual language to invite us into the world of the characters and, through their careful shot selection, positioned the audience to empathise and build meaning from the images.

Candidates need to submit their final film in a format that can be played using a conventional DVD player.

In better projects, candidates:

- had a clear understanding of the story they wanted to tell and where the audience was placed in relation to that story
- had an understanding of the conventions and screenwriting demands of a short film
- had control of the elements of drama (including character, tension, focus, mood, pace, time, space and symbol) in the narrative
- had an understanding of *mise-en-scene*, paid attention to detail and made choices about everything the camera saw, eg location, costume, casting and lighting
- were able to relate the story/narrative using images – the visual elements supported the dramatic narrative
- directed actors who had some skill and were believable in their roles
- carefully controlled camera shots to reveal and create dramatic meaning
- used a tripod where appropriate
- used post-production elements to enhance and layer meaning
- had control of the pace and timing of the film in the editing process
- used music skilfully to enhance the dramatic meaning rather than to drive the narrative.

In weaker projects, candidates:

- presented an unclear dramatic narrative or relied on music and lyrics to drive the narrative
- displayed little or no control of the elements of drama (including character, tension, focus, mood, pace, time, space and symbol)
- demonstrated poor understanding of the conventions and screenwriting demands of a short film
- created derivative works based on recent television programming
- used the camera as a recording device without exercising control of shot size, length and angle
- demonstrated an over-reliance on wide shots
- used hand-held camera shots without a clear dramatic purpose
- shot footage that was out of focus or difficult to see due to poor lighting
- recorded poor quality live sound
- paid little or no attention to the *mise-en-scene*
- made inappropriate choices with regard to casting or used actors with little or no dramatic skill
- used a collage of shots and images without any clear dramatic purpose
- used ‘stock’ footage or relied on still photographs to create a slide show
- demonstrated an over-reliance on special effects in post-production, leading to poor image quality or over-used effects in editing that did not contribute to the meaning of the film
- used editing merely to link scenes without exercising control of pace and timing to build tension
- had poor control of sound levels in post-production, with live sound and added music being set at very different volume levels.

Written examination

General comments

Candidates are reminded that practical experiences should inform their understanding and should be used in their HSC written responses to show a personal response rather than a purely literary one.

In the best responses, candidates synthesised workshop experiences, analysis of the plays, and real or imagined productions into well-structured and articulated visions of the plays they had studied. They demonstrated an insightful understanding of the texts and their context, which they could articulate in reference to how the plays might be staged. They used appropriate theatrical terminology in their analysis and/or discussion and approached the staging of the plays from the perspectives of varied practitioners, such as actors, directors and designers as well as an audience.

In weaker responses, candidates presented literary responses with few or no references to in-class workshop experiences and/or productions seen or imagined, and did not relate their answer to the question asked. They displayed a superficial appreciation and understanding of dramatic forms, performance styles, conventions and techniques. They often relied on formulaic or prepared responses that sometimes employed key terms of previous HSC questions as the basis for the response.

Section I – Australian Drama and Theatre

Question 1

In better responses, candidates:

- addressed key terms in the question such as personal tensions and social tensions.
- identified and addressed the concept of tensions 'between' characters and defined/described the tension specifically
- recognised that social tensions were exemplified through characters rather than 'social issues'
- differentiated between 'personal' and 'social' tensions
- demonstrated a thoughtful understanding and appreciation of the dramatic forms, performance styles, techniques and conventions particular to each play and how these conveyed social and/or personal tensions between characters
- synthesised workshop experiences, analysis of the plays, and real or imagined productions into a well-structured and articulate exploration of the tensions between characters
- adopted appropriate theatrical terminology and discussed theatrical choices that were effective
- presented their discussion in a structured and coherent manner.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- did not answer the question and/or did not address the key terms in the question such as personal tensions and social tensions
- did not discuss these tensions 'between' characters or define the type of tension or distinguish between personal tension and social tension

- demonstrated a limited understanding of dramatic forms, performance styles, techniques and conventions and had limited capacity to describe how these could be 'expressed' on stage to show personal tension and social tension between characters
- did not link workshop experiences, analysis of the plays, real or imagined productions to the question
- attempted to use workshop experiences that did not arise directly from the play (such as an improvisation exploring a personal response to an issue) but did not link this to their thesis or the question
- demonstrated superficial and/or inaccurate knowledge of the dramatic action of the plays
- listed themes and character descriptions or relied on recount of plot
- did not address both texts
- were too colloquial or inconsistent in their style.

Section II – Studies in Drama and Theatre

Question 2 – Tragedy

In stronger responses, candidates:

- addressed the question explicitly, identifying and interpreting both fate and responsibility in relation to both society and the individual
- provided an insightful, balanced and thorough discussion of both plays
- demonstrated a vivid sense of the plays on stage
- supported their argument with highly relevant examples from their own workshop experiences or imagined directorial choices
- showed a clear understanding of the plays as theatre
- presented a coherent argument with clarity and sophistication.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- wrote of the historical background of tragedy without linking this to the question
- addressed some, but not all, components of the question
- wrote generally about tragedy, listing various terms, such as catharsis and hubris, but ignored the 'tragic vision'
- imposed an inappropriate concept on the play with suggestions that sometimes included changing the text rather than the staging
- retold the storylines or explored the history of Greek theatre.

Question 3 – Irish Drama

In stronger responses, candidates:

- addressed the key terms of the question directly, articulating the desperate situations in Irish Drama and how the audience is made to laugh at them. This view was supported by convincing and relevant examples
- demonstrated an insightful understanding of the texts and their context and could articulate this in reference to how the humour and desperate situations might be staged

- developed a coherent and insightful argument that was supported by equal treatment of both plays
- supported their response with relevant integrated evidence from workshops, stage productions and hypothetical staging.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- gave accounts of the historical and socioeconomic background of Irish drama and used these to make vague or inaccurate value judgements about the Irish
- largely ignored the requirements of the question to look at how the humour could be staged
- relied on discussing plot rather than identifying desperate situations and humour explicitly and how they might be portrayed on the stage
- gave inappropriate or irrelevant staging ideas.

Question 4 – Brecht

In stronger responses, candidates:

- engaged with and interpreted the question, developing and sustaining lines of argument that explicitly addressed the portrayal of characters
- explored the notion of a ‘hero’ and character portrayal through Brecht's theatrical techniques with reference to relevant workshops and staging – such as design, styles of acting and the use of stagecraft – and to experiential learning by discussing real or imagined stage productions, both within and beyond the classroom
- discussed the audience response and referenced both texts in their response.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- presented a general checklist of Brecht's techniques without addressing the idea of a ‘hero’ or character portrayal
- ignored what the question asked and wrote generally or superficially about Brecht's techniques, such as *verfremdungseffekt*, *gestus* and alienation
- recounted the narrative of each play rather than analyse the importance of the action on stage in reference to the question
- gave a prepared answer that didn't deal with the concept of ‘heroes’ or the portrayal of characters and only referred to one text.

Question 5 – Site-specific, Street and Event Theatre

In stronger responses, candidates:

- engaged with the requirements of the question, thoroughly analysing the importance of contexts of the communities to shape site-specific theatre
- thoroughly explored relevant examples from the two set texts
- answered the question explicitly, linking their own processes of creating site-specific work with the processes of the practitioners.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- did not discuss or interpret the context of community, or did not discuss its importance in shaping site-specific theatre

- did not engage in, or did not discuss, their own experience of site-specific work or recounted superficial examples only
- did not discuss specific examples of case studies from the set texts
- were limited by a lack of significant theatre-making experiences.

Question 6 - Approaches to Acting

In stronger responses, candidates:

- addressed the key terms of the question directly
- responded insightfully and comprehensively to how the practitioner's training techniques were used to develop an actor's presence
- defined their concept of presence and referenced this throughout their essay
- explored how the training techniques manifested in their own or others' performances in order to engage an audience
- used relevant and insightful examples of both their classroom workshop experiences and other production examples.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- failed to address all aspects of the question
- provided little personal workshop experience and/or production evidence to support their discussion
- did not explicitly define and/or describe their understanding of an actor's presence
- gave workshop examples but didn't tie them back to the question
- discussed the practitioners' philosophies without mentioning presence
- did not make links between actor training and its manifestation in performance.

Question 7 – Verbatim Theatre

In stronger responses, candidates:

- addressed all areas of the question with insight, consistently engaging in a discussion that analysed the dramatic structure and dramatic elements of verbatim plays and how they can be manipulated in the process of development to make exciting theatre
- analysed the role of the writer of a verbatim play and how the structuring and shaping of testimony and personal story into theatre is achieved by playwright, director and performer
- examined the manipulation of theatrical conventions like the fourth wall and techniques particular to verbatim theatre in order to have a deliberate impact on the audience
- supported their discussion with relevant staged examples.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- did not directly address the requirements of the question
- listed practical workshops with little reflection on their relevance to the question
- did not engage in discussing the specific texts
- discussed irrelevant workshop experiences

- spent their time retelling the plot of the plays.

Question 8 – Black Comedy

In stronger responses, candidates:

- addressed the key terms of the question and the given quote directly
- identified the techniques and conventions of black comedy in the two plays studied and discussed how these establish humour through the suffering presented on stage
- showed an insightful understanding of the making of humour on stage
- explored how the techniques and conventions force audiences to laugh at the suffering
- supported their argument with highly relevant examples from their own workshop experiences or imagined directorial choices
- explored both texts with equal rigour.

In weaker responses, candidates:

- did not engage with the quote presented in the question, making statements without supportive evidence
- addressed some aspects of the question
- did not analyse the way techniques and conventions were used
- relied on a discussion of the plot or humorous incidents without linking these to the question
- described the key scenes from the text and/or retold the plot.