

**2005 HSC Notes from
the Marking Centre
Drama**

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2005 HSC NOTES FROM THE MARKING CENTRE

DRAMA

Introduction

This document has been produced for the teachers and candidates of the Stage 6 course in Drama. It provides comments with regard to responses to the 2005 Higher School Certificate Examination, indicating the quality of candidate responses and highlighting the relative strengths and weaknesses of the candidature in each section and each question.

It is essential for this document to be read in conjunction with the relevant syllabus, the 2005 Higher School Certificate Examination, the Marking Guidelines and other support documents which have been developed by the Board of Studies to assist in the teaching and learning of Stage 6 Drama.

General Comments

In 2005, approximately 5,140 candidates attempted the Stage 6 Drama Examination. The majority of candidates once again chose *Performance* for their Individual Project option, with *Design: Costume* the next largest, attracting over 500 candidates. Most other options increased proportionately, with Video Drama numbers growing significantly to over 300.

In the Written Examination the general quality of responses for both Sections has continued to improve, with more candidates including experiential class work as part of their supporting material. However, as a general rule, the stronger candidates were able to explain how the playwrights explored the issues theatrically and how their choices affected the audience.

Practical Examination

Group Performance

The majority of candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the requirements for HSC performance examinations. Teachers and candidates are reminded, however, of the following requirements for the HSC Drama performance examinations:

- The time limits 6-8 minutes (Individual Performance)
 8-12 minutes (Group Performance)
- Each performer in the group performance is marked individually. As such it is important for the markers to be able to differentiate each candidate. If all candidates are wearing similar costumes a distinguishing ribbon, badge or other indicator will assist the markers to identify each candidate.
- Candidates who read scripts or improvise pieces are unlikely to satisfy the criteria for the examination.
- Under no circumstances should candidates use props in a dangerous or threatening way to the markers or other members of the audience.
- Live performance is a dynamic medium. Candidates should perform their piece for an audience prior to the examination to ensure they are aware of audience responses to their work.

Recommendations relating to Group and Individual Performance

Class work on the Group Performance should commence after the Easter break of the HSC year. Group Performances that begin too early may suffer from over-rehearsal and may lack spontaneity and freshness in their presentation.

Individual Projects may commence in Term 4 at the beginning of the HSC Drama course.

Production effects such as costumes, sets, lighting, video, film, sound, microphones and technical support should be minimal. Markers will not award extra marks to any performance dependent on technical and/or special effects.

Schools need to ensure that technical effects do not impinge or hinder candidates' performance skills. It is recommended that limited lighting effects be used (lights up and lights down are sufficient). Strobe lighting is strongly discouraged and markers should be informed when unusual lighting or effects are to be used. The performance should not rely solely upon set or elaborate costume.

Space should be taken into consideration by candidates to assist in developing the actor/audience relationship.

Theatrical coherence is vital in conveying the journey of the performance.

- The intention of the performance should be clear to the audience.
- Candidates should be careful to make a theatrical statement for the stage, especially if using material inspired by film and video.
- Candidates should be discouraged from overreliance on song, dance or music – unless integral to the meaning and theatricality of the performance.
- Placing the focus of the performance somewhere on stage, eg to a chair or 'invisible character', is problematic for the actor/audience relationship.
- Candidates need to understand that a series of connected or related monologues do not always ensure a clearly-defined and sustained character. Candidates need to be theatrical in the development of a whole performance piece.

Voice skills are marked as part of the performance skills criteria.

- Performers who recite their lines risk losing the role and character and the dramatic concept of their piece.
- Some candidates confuse emotional intensity/projection with screaming, shouting and yelling, which indicates a lack of vocal control.

Stronger performances demonstrated:

- a sophisticated approach to content
- sophisticated use of a range of dramatic elements
- cohesive ensemble work
- a high degree of integrity in performance conventions appropriate to the chosen style
- unobtrusive transitions
- originality and creative flair in the interpretation of the material
- incorporation of focused energy to realise the intention of the piece
- a well-researched and well-rehearsed performance
- engagement of the audience in an innovative and confident way by manipulating the dramatic and performance elements
- use of symbol and metaphor
- a clear theatrical journey

- clear and expressive manipulation of vocal skills
- control of energy in movement dynamics that is appropriate to form and/or style
- control of timing that adds to the meaning through the response to cues
- exploration of the scope of the character
- strong and well-defined interpretation of character
- sustained belief at the highest level
- the ability to stay in the moment.

Weaker performances demonstrated:

- a lack of clear intention or direction in the work
- basic, labored performances that lacked focus, planning and theatricality
- the inability to work as an ensemble – often evidenced by candidates being off stage for periods of time or a series of monologues linked by awkward transitions
- clichéd, derivative material presented in a simplistic manner – eg a non-theatrical re-enactment of a TV show, film or *OnStage* material
- under-rehearsal and over-reliance on improvisation
- an inability to take the audience into consideration
- a superficial interpretation of the chosen material
- a lack of understanding of the actor/audience relationship
- a series of undeveloped, unrelated scenes using awkward transitions or no transitions
- confusion of emotional intensity/projection with screaming, shouting and crying. This can indicate a lack of control of performance skills
- little or no evidence of candidates creating or sustaining characters(s) or role(s)
- a lack of ability to sustain a character or role.

Individual Performances

Strong Individual Performances were innovative and often complex or sophisticated in content, theme and/or style using material appropriate to skills, with clarity of analysis. They should be created theatrically rather than through an over-reliance on music cues and lighting such as blackouts.

Candidates should clearly define the beginning and the end of their performance. For example, candidates should be encouraged to hold the last position to indicate the piece has finished. Other appropriate theatrical devices should be explored to ensure the audience is aware that the performance has begun, and, similarly, has finished. This allows the audience to become immersed in a theatrical journey from beginning to end.

Several teachers and candidates were still unclear about what is defined as an inappropriate item. All guns – real, replica, toy, plastic, water pistols – are considered inappropriate and must not be used. These items are not permitted and their use is considered a breach of examination rules. Examiners will stop performances if these items appear. A few candidates also used props as weapons, or in a threatening manner dangerous to themselves, the audience and examiners. It is clearly stated in information sent out to all schools that no weapons or props that can be used as weapons can be used. This includes such items as knives, swords, matches, naked flames, lit cigarettes etc. If a teacher is in any doubt as to whether the prop is dangerous or could be used in a dangerous way, they must show the prop(s) to the markers before the examination.

Recommendations: Individual Performance

For Individual Performance candidates are able to consider using costume if it enhances the performance. The costuming chosen is not marked in the IP or GP criteria.

Candidates should attempt to create mood and atmosphere using their own voices and bodies. Frequent and/or overly-long blackouts can interrupt the momentum of the piece, as can performers leaving the space during the performance.

If candidates intend to perform their own original material for a theatrical performance in the Individual Performance, they must take dramatic structure into account when writing the piece.

Choosing scripts from monologue or audition manuals should be a starting point or springboard into the performance rather than the performance piece itself which can lack coherence, context and background.

Examiners noted that candidates often make limited choices in their Individual Performance, using material that does not demonstrate the full range of their skills, or is beyond their capabilities. Some performances were under-developed, ran under or overtime, and lacked rehearsal.

Teachers must ensure that candidates are working to the prescribed time frame (6-8 minutes) and not beyond this time.

Some candidates did not present Rationales. It is a requirement of the Individual Project: Performance that candidates include their Rationale in their logbooks and that these be available for the markers during the examination. The Rationale should not be a synopsis of the piece but rather a discussion and justification of the candidate's aims and results.

Candidates should be careful in choosing scripts from the internet which have not been written for the stage. Material should meet the criteria in all three categories, demonstrating a well-rehearsed, complete theatrical statement with a coherent through-line and clear intention.

It should be noted that great care should be taken to ensure self-devised pieces are thoroughly edited and worked into a piece of theatre. Often candidates split their energies between scripting and performing, without an understanding of the demands of either and to the detriment of both.

In some cases there is still an over-reliance on technical effects. If candidates intend using lighting, sound and other effects, they must ensure that the effects are minimal, the cues are thoroughly rehearsed and the equipment being used is reliable. It is also important to note that candidates can only be marked effectively if they can be seen. Very low or highly focused lighting can prevent this.

Musicals are often used to source Individual Performances. Candidates need to be encouraged to create from this material a total performance piece which develops the character's journey both internally and externally without relying on songs, lyrics and dance routines.

Stronger Individual Performances:

- were evocative, exhibited light and shade, and reflected the necessary time involved in the preparation and development, creating a clear theatrical journey for the audience
- had a strong audience response through a thorough understanding of character and style
- demonstrated exemplary control of all criteria
- had seamless transitions
- engaged the audience with strong actor/audience relationships
- were sophisticated not only in subject matter but also in style and technique
- developed ideas from scripted work, demonstrating a sophisticated level of understanding form
- presented strong, self-devised pieces using effective script writing skills

- demonstrated a good sense of theatre and superior actor/audience relationship
- demonstrated ownership of the material and inhabited the life of the character
- adhered to time limits
- used a necessary prop in an often simple and effective way
- employed strong energy, focus and timing
- had a sophisticated use of space
- employed imaginative and inventive movement that extended the theatricality of the piece
- established strong, clear, sustained characterisations/roles
- used subtle choices to create a sophisticated characterisation.

Weaker Individual Performances:

- used material beyond the ability and understanding of the candidate
- presented pieces that were under-rehearsed, poorly prepared, repetitive or without any real structure
- relied on blackouts or other lighting effects
- relied on song or dance for significant periods in the performance without integrating them into the piece successfully or meaningfully
- were often fragmented, with poor transitions, lacking cohesion and intention
- used slabs of text from plays without any sense of purpose
- were self-devised psychodrama (eg dealing with suicide or teenage angst), or unrehearsed/improvised performances, lacking evidence of an understanding of the elements of drama
- often relied heavily on props, costumes, lighting and sound to convey mood and/or meaning
- relied too much on voiceovers and/or music and other sound effects
- were limited in their ability to create dimension/dynamic through vocal work
- demonstrated limited ability to control movement, gesture and body language
- demonstrated limited ability in sustaining the energy to create an engaging performance
- played 'themselves' with no evidence of character/role or belief
- presented an 'audition piece' or an extract from a film or a musical without consideration of a coherent theatrical statement or character journey
- demonstrated limited ability to create and sustain roles/characters
- were overly concerned with the external journey of the character rather than the internal
- appeared as 'talking heads' rather than fully developed characters.

Supervising teachers are reminded that:

- All paperwork should be completed and signed (including group photo sheets, certification forms and running order for the day) prior to the examination day.
- The performance schedule should include the candidates' numbers and titles of performances (no names) as well as times and scheduled breaks. Breaks may be scheduled around the school bell times and other interruptions. A synopsis of performances is not required.
- The teacher's role in the exam room is to support the process and ensure that the exam runs smoothly and without interruption. Markers will inform the teacher when they are ready to continue with the next candidate/s.
- During the examination, examiners' desks should be positioned in an easily accessible, safe position with a clear and uninterrupted view of the performances.
- Mobile phones are not permitted in the examination room. Please inform candidates and audience members of this ruling prior to the exam.
- Supervising teachers should be aware of an age-appropriate audience for the material being performed.

Submitted Projects

Critical Analysis

Portfolio of Theatre Criticism

Projects were articulate, insightful and entertaining, demonstrating a wide knowledge and understanding of theatre and an increased sophistication in content and style. Of particular note this year is that candidates are maintaining the integrity of the project by submitting superior and substantial logbooks and reviews that reveal an increase in interest and passion for live theatre.

Candidates are advised to include the Rationale in their portfolios rather than their logbooks. For ease of reading it is suggested that final copies of the reviews be printed in 12 point and in Times New Roman font. A word count should be provided at the end of each one and to aid the marking process, examiners advise candidates to indicate the type of publication for which the review is written. Ensure that all research material and preliminary drafts are included in the logbook.

Stronger projects:

- created a clear sense of the style of production and the impact of key dramatic and theatrical techniques on an audience
- demonstrated a strong knowledge and understanding of a variety of theatre styles through a judicious choice of productions
- were consistently strong and effective in selecting appropriate elements and substantiating judgements
- demonstrated extensive background knowledge of the play, playwright and production
- used their research and informed knowledge effectively
- maintained depth and range in their analysis regardless of review style
- showed an understanding of purpose and audience in a variety of review styles by changing the voice effectively
- communicated with sophistication and flair
- provided an entertaining and engaging read, often demonstrating a sophisticated and intelligent sense of humour.

Weaker projects

- were under the required length and thus lacked range in the selection of key elements
- were limited in scope by reviewing amateur productions or productions of the same style eg musical theatre
- were largely descriptive and superficial in their treatment of key theatrical and production choices, subsequently, they failed to evoke the theatrical experience for the reader
- were unable to demonstrate sufficient research and analysis either because they had not done enough reading or because they failed to incorporate research into the review
- used inappropriate review style and language
- presented reviews that were pedestrian in structure, language and style
- showed a limited understanding of voice when using different review styles.

Applied Research Project

The best projects were scholarly, original and diverse in subject matter. There were fewer lower range projects and markers noted that even these made genuine attempts to use sophisticated research skills and explore topics of interest. Teachers are advised to check that topics do not infringe on either the Drama topic areas or the prescribed text lists of any other HSC subject. To

ensure they are meeting guidelines, candidates should avoid subject matters that are associated with any of the Drama topics or texts.

Stronger projects:

- selected topics that demonstrated a discerning, judicious choice and a genuine interest and passion for the subject matter
- presented a narrower hypothesis that was practical and achievable
- drew together their research arguments in a clear and logical conclusion
- chose appropriate and extensive research material that demonstrated a range of methodologies
- provided clear and accurate footnoting and bibliographies that demonstrated extensive and sophisticated research skills
- used sophisticated analysis and synthesis of research material to prove the hypothesis
- used the language of drama and theatre effectively
- had a sophisticated grasp of language and style appropriate to the form
- achieved coherence, unity and fluency by integrating research into an essay format or by using divisions that allowed for a flow of ideas

Weaker projects:

- selected hypotheses that were too broad and difficult to prove
- failed to keep sight of their hypothesis and wandered off the point
- presented unoriginal and predictable research topics or topics that were not focused enough on drama and theatre
- were limited in range and scope of research material or used inappropriate methodology
- regurgitated rather than synthesised material
- lacked sophistication and flair in their language and style, often failing to maintain formality
- were disjointed and lacked clear structure
- failed to provide accurate and sufficient referencing

Director's Folio

Some candidates tried too hard to find originality by imposing inappropriate concepts on the plays. There is no need to use a metaphor or to change the text by cutting or adding scenes and dialogue. A theatrical concept should come from the play itself and should respect the integrity of the work. Candidates need to analyse the role of the director more thoroughly to help them find the appropriate approach to staging a play. Candidates should note that this is not a theoretical study of a play but a visual project that must begin with a visualisation of the production on stage. Therefore, discussion and research of the play must always be strongly linked to the directorial concept and how ideas will be staged.

Several of the weaker projects did not meet project guidelines. Teachers are advised to update their information from the Board of Studies website which contains the most recent and correct specifications for projects.

Stronger projects:

- presented a clear concept that was a strong representation of the play's core metaphor
- demonstrated an effective vision of the play in performance
- demonstrated originality without compromising the integrity of the play
- used extensive research and analysis of text in discussion of the dramatic and theatrical elements
- analysed the tension in dialogue and how key scenes would be realised on stage
- provided effective interpretation of characters and relationships that were strongly linked to the play's ideas

- demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of design principles and how the various aspects of design provide a visual realisation of the concept
- presented clear analysis of intended audience response
- discussed sophisticated and well-developed rehearsal techniques appropriate to the style of production.

Weaker projects:

- presented inappropriate or unclear concepts
- were unable to sustain a concept through all elements of the production
- showed a limited understanding of a directorial concept and what that encompasses
- presented limited research and analysis of text
- included research that was not clearly linked to the director's vision
- made sweeping generalisations in their analysis of the text
- presented design ideas that were inappropriate and impractical or that relied too much on projected images rather than design to create the world of the play
- lacked understanding of rehearsal techniques and how a director would use them to develop a particular performance style
- gave inadequate analysis of intended audience response.

Individual Project: Design (Lighting)

Stronger Projects:

- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the dramatic elements of the chosen play, reflected in an effective directorial and lighting design concept
- presented a complete, unified and workable design which effectively supported and enhanced the two scenes chosen
- demonstrated a substantial knowledge and understanding of lanterns, gel colour, placement and the effective utilisation of other lighting elements and their collective impact in a performance context
- demonstrated an effective choice of each lighting state to support the ongoing dramatic action, mood and setting
- addressed the theatre space, production style and design features within the lighting plan
- presented a clear, logical and accurate to scale (1:25) lighting plan, cue sheet and running script with cue points, for the two scenes. The conventions used reflected industry standards and theatre practice.
- The lighting plan included:
 - location of all lantern positions
 - significant set features plotted onto the floorplan
 - an indication of the stage area which each lantern covers
 - a list of each lantern used, gel colour and patching channel
- provided an evocative description of the intended impact of each lighting cue on the dramatic action for both scenes

Weaker Projects:

- lacked a sense of director's vision and demonstrated a limited understanding of the text
- presented a simplistic, inappropriate or incomplete design which disregarded the dramatic needs of the play and chosen scenes, and lacked basic lighting considerations such as illumination, focus and mood
- demonstrated limited understanding of the lighting needs for the theatre space, production style and design features
- showed a limited or flawed understanding of lighting elements such as lanterns and positioning to achieve appropriate impact and illumination
- made simplistic and obvious choices for each lighting state which undermined the dramatic action and mood
- presented incomplete, confusing and illogical lighting plans, cue sheets and running scripts. These often reflected little knowledge of industry standards and theatre practice
- used a standard lighting plan provided by a theatre company with little modification or relevance to the chosen play or concept
- provided little or no support material to explain the intended impact of lighting states on the dramatic action

Individual Project: Design (Costume)

Some candidates imposed unsuitable concepts on the plays. Candidates are advised to create design concepts that bring out the underlying themes and ideas in the play and that strongly link to a clear and effective overall vision. There were also some candidates who failed to adhere to project guidelines and specifications. Designs are not to be submitted in timber frames or on heavy board, and the use of glass and lights for display is prohibited. The most suitable material for mounting and displaying is cardboard, and it is crucial that each component of the project is clearly labeled for easy identification. Candidates are reminded that the Rationale is a statement of the Directorial Concept not a retelling of the plot, and that Rationales should be included in portfolios rather than in logbooks.

Stronger projects:

- included renderings for a range of characters from a variety of scenes to accurately represent the journey of the play
- presented renderings for the most significant characters in the play
- communicated the design concept through the costume as well as the stance, facial expressions etc
- communicated the concept/vision through a range of support material such as fabric swatches, character details and annotations on, or accompanying, the renderings
- presented characters in a moment of action
- reflected a theatrical interpretation in their designs rather than merely copying fashion, thus presenting figures imbued with a sense of character and scene
- submitted at least four other preliminary sketches in their portfolios to extend and enhance the concept
- adhered to the project specifications about height, size and mounting.

Weaker projects:

- showed poor understanding of the text by imposing an inappropriate concept
- sacrificed the integrity of the play for the sake of adopting a perceived original concept
- misinterpreted the idea of 'timelessness' and simply submitted individual designs styled from different periods without a unified concept tying together all characters
- chose colours, textures and fabrics that lacked unity
- presented designs that lacked an understanding of practicality in performance
- selected a limited range of characters and/or did not represent the whole play
- submitted duplicates of the main renderings that did not fulfill the function of preliminary sketches
- submitted designs that lacked sufficient detail
- did not adhere to project guidelines and specifications.

Individual Project: Design (Set)

Stronger projects:

- demonstrated a thorough and sophisticated understanding of the dramatic concerns of the play in order to develop an effective theatrical design concept
- demonstrated an outstanding vision and an imaginative and appropriate concept clearly communicated through the designs
- considered the theatrical style of the play eg naturalistic, surreal, symbolic, musical theatre etc
- demonstrated creativity in their use of levels, space, dimensions and detail while often taking a minimalist approach
- demonstrated an understanding of the practical concerns of entrances and exits
- constructed sound models to scale and with appropriate and effective use of materials, colour, texture and space
- plotted the set design on to the floor plan and provided a 1:25 figure to represent the size of the actor using the space in the scale model
- provided support material in a separate folder and showed scene changes accompanied by written descriptions or sketches and/or photographs of how the set would work in the selected theatre space.

Weaker projects:

- lacked a sense of director's vision and demonstrated a limited understanding of the text
- were unable to visualise the abstract, interpreting the text too literally
- were unable to realise the concept in the design
- demonstrated limited understanding of the theatre space and basic staging conventions, often presenting box sets without consideration of actors' needs eg entrances and exits
- failed to address scenic changes or acknowledge the potential problems in staging the entire play
- constructed poor set designs, frequently using difficult or inappropriate materials
- used dolls' furniture not in 1:25 scale and did not provide a 1:25 scale figure to represent an actor using the set in the scale model
- did not address scale and did not fulfill other project requirements eg floor plan, logbook, set pieces, scene breakdown and application of their ideas.

Individual Project: Design (Promotion and Publicity)

There was an increasing level of skill demonstrated in the manipulation of visual elements to communicate a clear directorial concept. More candidates demonstrated creative and evocative concepts that reflect a theatrical understanding of the text. Furthermore, there is an improvement in candidates meeting requirements for this project area with the media feature story, program and flyer included in a portfolio with the poster design.

Candidates should realise that the logbook must demonstrate the process and development of the final submitted project and that this process is to be marked by teachers in the internal assessment program. Candidates are reminded that the director's concept should be communicated through the Director's Notes in the program and through the flyer and media feature story. Please note that these items of the project **MUST** be original pieces of writing by the candidate.

Stronger projects:

- presented a sophisticated and original directorial vision, communicating a deep understanding of the play through the promotional image
- employed effective and/or evocative design elements, capturing a clear sense of the play's concerns
- made design choices that demonstrated a theatrical understanding of the play
- demonstrated a strong working knowledge of the function and purpose of each promotional item in their choice of visual elements and written material
- created a sense of unity by choosing visual elements that crossed all promotional items
- made appropriate choices to communicate a strong profile for their chosen theatre company
- presented the design concept through a sophisticated use of layout, font and colour
- demonstrated sophistication, originality and flair in the Director's Notes and media feature story
- presented a directorial concept clearly through the use of effective and original language and style.

Weaker projects:

- presented a limited or inappropriate directorial vision for the play through the promotional image
- used design elements in a superficial or ineffective way, demonstrating a weak understanding of the text
- communicated a minimal knowledge and understanding of design choices
- showed limited understanding of the function and purpose of each item of promotional material eg posters did not include session dates
- were inconsistent in their use of visual elements across all promotional material
- failed to clearly convey a company profile through all items of promotion
- made inappropriate visual choices in layout, font and colour, demonstrating poor understanding of the principles of design
- wrote a critical review rather than a media release promoting the production
- were unable to clearly convey the director's vision.

Scriptwriting

General Comments

Candidates are strongly encouraged to increase their own experiences of theatre through attending live performances and reading a wide range of plays to absorb the conventions of playwriting. It is in the actual written text that the play is experienced by examiners and, as a blueprint for performance, the dialogue, character voices, setting, stage directions, verbal imagery, production effects are all tools that need to be clearly described. Textual clarity will achieve dramatic impact, believability, engagement and sustained theatrical experience for an audience. To ensure that the words work, plays should be read in front of an audience and further workshopped. Through this process, the text can be refined and the theatrical experience further clarified and enriched.

Candidates are reminded to write for an audience, actors and director so the text should clearly communicate theatrical elements and focus on engaging an audience from the opening set description. While writing from your own experiences is to be encouraged, remember you must appeal to a universal audience. Experience of life should also come from observation and reading and absorbing cultural influences.

Stronger projects:

- showed evidence of research into the world created by the playwright to find both the psychological and environmental truth
- had a theatrical vision for a whole play experience not just a scene, while remaining within the required length
- sustained the theatrical concept to the end, creating a believable world and a sense of journey and audience
- chose effective and appropriate dramatic elements and manipulated them imaginatively to enact the concept
- resolved the action and explored mood, theme and style to a satisfying resolution
- showed evidence of workshopping and editing to sustain audience engagement
- clearly described the opening setting to immediately create a theatrical experience
- facilitated the staging, clarified and enhanced the production by using recognised script and theatrical conventions
- imaginatively and appropriately manipulated production elements, technical aspects and acting practicalities

Weaker projects:

- created concepts more suited to TV or film than live theatre
- were tied down to basic plots or two-dimensional characterisation that failed to explore light and shade, or deep thematic meaning
- were unclear as to whose journey the play was exploring or which thematic or stylistic focus was pivotal to the overall concept
- showed little awareness of dramatic rhythms and failed to vary dramatic elements or dramatic action in order to sustain audience interest
- confused or limited the dramatic action due to lack of purpose or lack of understanding of style or form
- were limited in showing dramatic action and structuring it in dynamic sequence to maximise conflict, status and tension appropriate to the style
- attempted to fix poor characterisation and unmotivated dialogue with over-written director's notes or description of action

- used text more appropriate to TV and film than theatre
- showed a lack of clarity with written or overly-complicated cast lists and setting instructions.

Video Drama

General Comments

The structure of dramatic narratives and the use of visual language were sophisticated and most impressive. There is an increasing number of candidates using their expertise with technology to support an engaging dramatic journey. However, please note that both the straight music video and documentary do NOT meet the requirements of a dramatic narrative and are to be avoided.

Candidates should ensure that the highest technical quality of DVD or video is submitted for marking. Furthermore, candidates must not submit any format other than DVD or video tape. CD-R and CD-ROM are both unacceptable.

Candidates should be aware that restrictions regarding dangerous items in performance also apply in video, particularly the use of weaponry, sharp instruments and naked flames. Also stunts, falls, fights and action involving cars, where health and safety could be in jeopardy, must be avoided. Situations of physical or psychological abuse should also be avoided.

Stronger projects:

- produced a clear concept which could be simple and straightforward or layered and complex
- manipulated elements of visual language (time, space, image, symbol) and strongly integrated this with elements of drama (tension, mood, conflict and character)
- presented journeys rich in engagement for the viewer
- used conventions of the chosen genre to produce a unique vision and voice
- produced images of great clarity, beauty and variety which strongly carried and added to the dramatic meaning
- strongly capitalised on often overlooked elements in lighting, casting and location to enhance and develop the dramatic action
- used clear and consistent location and sound
- made strong and informed choices in editing which enhanced elements of mood, pace and tension
- used layers of sound and appropriate production effects to develop the drama of the narrative
- ensured there was a variety of shots and comprehensive coverage to enable choices in the editing room which would substantiate the drama.

Weaker projects:

- presented confused concepts that were muddled by disjointed plots and poor understanding of visual language
- limited the engagement of the audience by an over-reliance on predictable plots, stereotypical characters or limited use of the elements of drama
- used the elements and tools of visual language merely as recording devices rather than resources to shape image and sound, to take the audience on a dramatic journey
- produced poor quality images and camera work which either hindered understanding of the dramatic intention or limited audience engagement
- made poor choices regarding lighting, casting and location which detracted from the dramatic intention
- used poor quality sound which compromised the viewer's understanding of the dramatic meaning
- used fancy post production techniques for minimum dramatic effect

- failed to use editing to heighten and develop the dramatic intention to maximise audience engagement
- used editing to ‘string shots together’ rather than cut for the refinement of pace, mood and tension.

Written Examination

General comments

Candidates should note the importance of selecting and analysing relevant workshop experiences and examples from the plays to support their discussion, instead of recounting and describing these experiences. All candidates are reminded that the written paper is seeking a clear understanding and appreciation of the texts in performance.

Section I – Australian Drama and Theatre

Question 1

Stronger Responses:

- demonstrated a sophisticated, detailed and insightful engagement with the question
- discussed how dramatic elements are employed to explore the broader implications of ‘changing circumstances’ and ‘how characters respond’
- were anchored in relevant textual evidence and/or appropriate employment of workshop experiences and productions
- employed appropriate theatrical terminology in analysis
- integrated a discussion of historical, social and cultural influences on the plays in directly addressing the question
- demonstrated an understanding and appreciation of the playwrights’ intentions and audience reception.

Weaker responses:

- did not directly address the specific requirements of the question and ignored key terms including ‘changing circumstances’ and ‘how characters respond’
- discussed the plays as literary texts rather than as scripts for performance
- used inappropriate or superficial textual evidence and/or workshopping experience
- relied on formula or prepared responses to previous HSC questions
- gave personal, biased opinions, retold the plot, made sweeping generalisations and/or provided inaccuracies or misinformation that were not relevant to the question
- paid minimal attention to the second text.

Section II – Studies in Drama and Theatre

Question 2 – Theatre of the Absurd

Stronger responses:

- were able to deal comprehensively with all aspects of the question, mentioning background cultural material and integrating this into the discussion of abstract ideas and linking these ideas to their physical and visual expression
- demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of all the plays as theatre, in terms of the effect upon the audience
- were able to discern a variety of physical ways in which abstract ideas were presented and discuss the reasons for this
- explained visual imagery and its purpose, for example Pozzo and Lucky's appearances were analysed in terms of the comic and horrific effect on the audience
- analysed the visual effect of the settings and recognised the oppressive and intimidating nature of each of the enclosed worlds which left their inhabitants helpless and without will
- recognised the seemingly random acts of violence present in all the plays and analysed their significance
- provided experiential evidence which related directly to the stylistic point they were presenting.

Weaker responses:

- did not deal with all aspects of the question
- did not discuss one or more of the plays in sufficient detail
- referred only to verbal aspects of performance skimming or ignoring the physical and verbal aspects
- neglected the significance of setting and the effect of the visual on the audience
- provided little or inappropriate evidence of experiential learning.

Question 3 – Irish Drama

Stronger responses:

- deconstructed and comprehensively addressed all parts of the question
- showed a thorough and deep understanding of both plays and the topic area
- explained how the playwrights explored the issues theatrically and how their choices affected the audience
- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics between characters, particularly parental relationships and the effects of violence, and related this to Ireland, past and present
- discussed the significance of staging and symbolic props
- discussed the significance of language to highlight the difference between past and present
- provided relevant experiential evidence and quotations from plays to support their argument.

Weaker responses:

- were unable to deal with all aspects of the question
- showed a superficial knowledge of the texts and topic area
- made little attempt to engage with how the plays explore the issues theatrically
- failed to link characterisation with the present and past in Ireland
- made no mention of staging, symbolic props and language use
- provided minimal or irrelevant textual and experiential evidence

Question 4 - Brecht

Stronger responses:

- were able to deconstruct and comprehensively address all aspects of the question
- demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of Brecht's goals and techniques and were able to identify specific examples of their use in each play
- recognised that objectivity was necessary to educate an audience but entertainment was also necessary to attract and hold them
- discussed epic staging – lighting, signage, visible costuming and presence of band onstage as methods of keeping audience objective
- were aware of the purpose of song as entertainment and to shock the audience into an objective state
- recognised that some empathy with the characters was likely if the actors played the roles with truth and skill and that Brecht's techniques were designed to prevent prolonged empathy
- demonstrated appropriate experiential knowledge which was directly related to the texts.

Weaker responses:

- were unable to engage with all parts of the question, particularly the quotation
- demonstrated only superficial knowledge of the plays
- listed some goals and techniques but were unable to link them specifically to the plays in performance
- narrated plot details which had little relevance to the question
- made little reference to the actor/audience relationship
- took the position that the audience never empathised with the characters and were totally disengaged from their plight

Question 5 – Environmental, Street and Event Theatre

Stronger responses:

- showed a thorough understanding of the political intentions of the performance makers
- demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the techniques employed by the performance makers
- discussed how the performance makers used the various techniques to affect the thinking of the audience
- recognised the particular relationship between actor and audience and the participatory nature of the form
- provided strong and relevant evidence from the performance makers and their own practical experience to support their argument

Weaker responses:

- did not deal with all aspects of the question
- showed a superficial understanding of the performance makers studied
- did not link the performance intentions with the techniques employed
- showed little understanding of the special relationship between performers and audience
- provided minimal or inappropriate evidence and failed to include experiential evidence to support their argument

Question 6 – Meyerhold

Stronger responses:

- deconstructed and addressed comprehensively all aspects of the question
- presented an integrated discussion which demonstrated an understanding of why and how Meyerhold revolutionised the wider landscape of theatre
- discussed older theatrical and artistic forms which influenced Meyerhold's theatre practice such as Commedia, Kabuki and Renaissance art
- demonstrated an understanding of contemporary creative influences such as Constructivism and the work of filmmakers such as Eisenstein
- demonstrated a familiarity with Meyerhold's theatre practice – the use of Biomechanics and specific staging techniques
- provided evidence from a deep knowledge of the topic area and from their own practical experience which supported their argument

Weaker responses:

- did not deal with all aspects of the question
- provided mainly biographical material
- listed theatrical styles and techniques without showing how these were revolutionary
- showed limited understanding of the eclectic range of sources which influenced Meyerhold
- showed little evidence of practical experience
- did not link practical evidence to the points of their argument.

Question 7 – American Drama

Stronger responses:

- deconstructed and addressed comprehensively all aspects of the question including the given quotation
- showed a thorough and deep understanding of both texts which allowed a coherent argument to be presented
- demonstrated an understanding of the plays as performance not simply text, and had a strong sense of how non-realist techniques might add depth to realism in their effect on the audience
- linked clearly experiential evidence and the use of Expressionist and Symbolist techniques in contemporary performance
- discussed feasible concepts for contemporary productions which were strongly linked to the meaning of the plays and allowed the reader to visualise the performance that might take place.

Weaker responses:

- were unable to deal with all aspects of the question
- demonstrated only superficial knowledge of the texts
- listed Expressionist techniques used by the playwrights but did not consider how they might be used on the contemporary stage
- did not link experiential evidence directly to the plays.

Question 8 – Seventeenth Century Comedy

Stronger responses:

- addressed all aspects of the question and sustained a point of view in a convincing manner
- demonstrated an understanding of the context of seventeenth century comedy in terms of audience and its relationship to characters and plot
- referred consistently to the texts as well as critical readings to support their argument
- discussed practical experience – class performance, workshops or visits to the theatre to demonstrate an understanding of the topic and support their argument
- identified the distinct techniques that had meaning for the seventeenth century audience but might not work in the same way for a contemporary Australian audience
- made appropriate, creative suggestions for how seventeenth century comedies could be adapted so that they would be both relevant and entertaining for a contemporary audience.

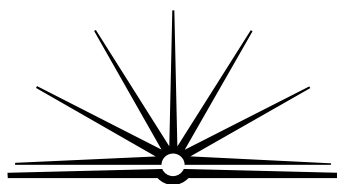
Weaker responses:

- were unable to sustain a clear and logical point of view using the given images as a source
- addressed the question but focused on only one or two aspects of performance, perhaps costume and make-up
- demonstrated a limited understanding of social context, techniques and conventions, the actor/audience relationship and the playwrights' intentions
- provided little evidence to show a thorough understanding of the texts
- failed to support their argument with practical evidence from performance or workshops.

Drama

2005 HSC Examination Mapping Grid

Question	Marks	Content	Syllabus outcomes
Section I — Australian Drama and Theatre (Core Study)			
1	20	Australian Drama And Theatre (Core Study) – Bush and City in Australian Drama or Contemporary Australian Theatre	H3.1, H3.2, H3.3
Section II — Studies in Drama and Theatre			
2	20	Studies in Drama And Theatre – Theatre of the Absurd	H3.1, H3.2, H3.3
3	20	Studies in Drama And Theatre – Irish Drama	H3.1, H3.2, H3.3
4	20	Studies in Drama And Theatre – Brecht	H3.1, H3.2, H3.3
5	20	Studies in Drama And Theatre – Environmental, Street and Event Theatre	H3.1, H3.2, H3.3
6	20	Studies in Drama And Theatre – Meyerhold	H3.1, H3.2, H3.3
7	20	Studies in Drama And Theatre – American Drama	H3.1, H3.2, H3.3
8	20	Studies in Drama And Theatre – Seventeenth Century Comedy	H3.1, H3.2, H3.3



B O A R D O F S T U D I E S
NEW SOUTH WALES

2005 HSC Drama Marking Guidelines

Section I — Australian Drama and Theatre (Core Study)

Question 1

Outcomes assessed: H3.1, H3.2, H3.3

MARKING GUIDELINES

Criteria	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the ways in which characters respond to changing circumstances • Provides a comprehensive discussion of the dramatic forms, styles and conventions relevant to the question of the dramatisation of changing circumstances in AT LEAST TWO of the texts • Provides a comprehensive discussion in a convincing, coherent manner, which may demonstrate flair • Provides a comprehensive response with well-substantiated supporting evidence 	17–20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a substantial understanding and appreciation of the ways in which characters respond to changing circumstances • Provides a substantial discussion of the dramatic forms, styles and conventions relevant to the question of the dramatisation of changing circumstances in AT LEAST TWO of the texts • Provides a substantial discussion in a coherent manner • Provides a substantial response with appropriate supporting evidence 	13–16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an adequate understanding and appreciation of the ways in which characters respond to changing circumstances • Provides an adequate discussion of the dramatic forms, styles and conventions relevant to the question of the dramatisation of changing circumstances in AT LEAST TWO of the texts • Provides an adequate discussion of some of the issues in the question • Provides an adequate response with some supporting evidence 	9–12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a basic understanding of the ways in which characters respond to changing circumstances • Provides a basic discussion of the dramatic forms, styles and conventions of the texts • Provides a series of points related to some of the issues in the question • Provides a basic response with little relevant supporting evidence 	5–8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on some ideas that may relate to some aspects of the content of the question • Comments minimally on some aspects that may relate to the dramatic forms, styles and conventions of the texts • Provides unrelated personal opinions and undeveloped points which may not be related to the question • Provides a limited response with little or no relevant supporting evidence 	1–4

Section II — Studies in Drama and Theatre

Questions 2–8

Outcomes assessed: H3.1, H3.2, H3.3

MARKING GUIDELINES

Criteria	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interprets and explains comprehensively the issues addressed in the question • Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the specific theatrical and dramatic styles and issues relevant to the topic • Provides a comprehensive discussion in a convincing, coherent manner, which may demonstrate flair • Provides a comprehensive response with well-substantiated supporting evidence 	17–20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interprets and explains the issues addressed in the question • Demonstrates a substantial understanding and appreciation of the specific theatrical and dramatic styles and issues relevant to the topic • Provides a substantial discussion in a coherent manner • Provides a substantial response with appropriate supporting evidence 	13–16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains broadly the issues addressed in the question • Demonstrates an adequate understanding and appreciation of the specific theatrical and dramatic styles and issues relevant to the topic • Provides an adequate discussion of some of the issues in the question • Provides an adequate response with some supporting evidence 	9–12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines some of the issues addressed in the question • Demonstrates a basic understanding of the specific theatrical and dramatic styles and issues relevant to the topic • Provides a series of points related to some of the issues in the question • Provides a basic response with little relevant supporting evidence 	5–8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on some ideas that may relate to some aspect of the content of the question • Demonstrates a minimal understanding of some theatrical and dramatic issues and styles • Provides unrelated personal opinions and disconnected points which may not be related to the question • Provides little or no relevant supporting evidence 	1–4