

NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Creative Studies: Performance Skills (600/6990/9)

Assessment window: 5 September – 25 November 2016

This report contains information in relation to the external assessment from the Chief Examiner, with an emphasis on the standard of learner work within this assessment window.

The aim is to highlight where learners generally perform well, as well as any areas where further development may be required.

Key points:

- administering the external assessment
- standard of learner work
- referencing of external assessment tasks
- evidence creation
- interpretation of the tasks and associated assessment criteria (AC)
- planning in the external assessment.

Administering the external assessment

It's important to note that learners shouldn't sit the external assessment until they've taken part in the relevant teaching of the unit to ensure they are well prepared for the external assessment. The preparatory and timed period of the assessment must be independent of the teaching of the unit. Work completed during the teaching of the unit cannot be used in the external assessment. Any stimulus materials used by the centre during the teaching of the unit cannot be used in the external assessment. Learners must complete all of the tasks independently.

The completion of the preparation tasks must be supervised by the Teacher and can be sat in the normal classroom environment. The tasks within the preparation period do not need to be invigilated.

The completion of the timed tasks must be invigilated and sat in accordance with the [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment - V Certs](#). It's important that the external assessment is sat in accordance with the specified conditions.

Standard of learner work

Learners demonstrated various disciplines including dance, drama and music within the external assessment with the standard ranging from NYA to Distinction.

There were many examples of learners doing particularly well in one or more assessment criterion but this standard was not matched across all assessment criteria. The standard of performance for assessment criteria 2.1 was variable, with some learners struggling to reach an appropriate standard for a Level 2 qualification and this was particularly noticeable where music was the chosen discipline.

At Level 2 learners must be able to demonstrate skills such as identify, research, investigate, plan, rehearse and evaluate as per the assessment criteria. In order to achieve higher grades learners must be able to demonstrate critical judgement.

Areas for improvement would be for learners to justify decisions or demonstrate critical judgement within the evidence for each assessment criteria; as well as ensuring the standard of learner evidence is consistently being achieved for each assessment criteria due to the equal weighting of each assessment criteria.

Referencing of external assessment tasks

Referencing external assessment tasks has been an area of improvement within each assessment window. It is vitally important that learners clearly reference the evidence to the relevant tasks. If an Examiner is unable to identify the evidence relating to tasks then the work may not be graded.

Teachers may give advice on referencing during the preparation time but it is the responsibility of the learner to label their own work. The external assessment paper makes it clear that the work should be referenced under tasks and not by hours of work.

Electronic evidence submitted must also clearly display the learner's name and the assessment criteria. The evidence should be organised in a structured way so that the work can be accessed easily by the Examiner, either on separate storage mediums per learner or on one storage medium clearly labelled for each learner. Learners should ensure that their electronic evidence can be opened and is saved as an acceptable file format.

Examiners should be able to identify learners within rehearsals and performances as learners should be identifying themselves.

Where audio/visual evidence of multiple learners is used, each learner being assessed must be clearly visible and identifiable to the Examiner

It is important for the learner to take into consideration the position of the camera to ensure the learner is visible and audible as well as the full performance and that the audience can be seen.

Evidence creation

The external assessment unit must be taught to the learners prior to the external assessment taking place. Its important learners understand each assessment criteria and grading descriptors to ensure they cover the pass criteria first before focusing on merit then distinction assessment criteria.

Learners should use the external assessment paper and the grading descriptors to prepare their work for the tasks and continually reference this. Learners followed through the tasks as described on the assessment paper, keeping appropriate evidence at each stage.

It is important that learners are aware of apportioning time to the various tasks to ensure all assessment criteria are being met.

Interpretation of the tasks and associated assessment criteria

Task 1

AC 1.1

Learners are expected to identify their performance piece and their role within it for a Pass. Learners generally performed well on this task and many gave good reasons for their choice of material and justified their choices for the higher grades.

To gain a Distinction in this AC learners must describe a range of roles within the performance piece, ie the dancer may also be a choreographer. The learner could also make reference to other roles within the performance piece and the soloist might talk about how they direct the performance and take decisions about the performance without considering others (the soloists generally did not achieve well on the higher grades for this AC). In a music performance where a soloist plays with an accompaniment from another instrument, they can explain their role in this context. In dance or drama there is also scope for the learner to explain their changing role as the piece develops. Some learners in the Merit band who commented on their own role fairly well only briefly alluded to other cast members/performers.

In terms of selecting the performance piece, learners must remember that the performance piece must be at an appropriate level of difficulty for a Level 2 qualification. It is also important to remember that the learner is expected to be seen actively performing for 3 minutes and a penalty will be applied if the performance goes under 2 minutes and 50 seconds. Learners can perform 2shorter pieces if they are unable to find 1 piece of suitable length.

AC 1.2 and 1.3

Many learners provided excellent research evidence in this task and many linked this to their choice of piece in AC 1.1. Some of the learners achieved higher grades by linking the research they had completed to their own performance and stating how it had influenced their performance. In the case of many learners they mentioned the research they had completed but failed to link this to their own performance piece or role. For a Pass on AC 1.2 learners provided a YouTube link. YouTube recordings were referred to by some learners who then went on to make critical judgments when making decisions about their own performance.

Teachers may suggest possible research areas during the teaching of the unit but learners must carry out individual research and decide how to approach the brief and task. If learners are performing as a group it is not appropriate for all learners to include the same research as it's not possible for the Examiner to know who actually did the work. Learners should always state their research sources. An excellent performance may suggest considerable research but credit under AC 1.2 can only be given if the learner actually states what research they have done and how it influenced the performance. Examiners cannot make assumptions about the research on the basis of the performance.

As far as the requirements of the performance piece are concerned learners offered considerable information on staging/technical requirements but few went on to consider the skill requirements of the piece or to think about alternative ways of performing their piece.

Task 2

AC 1.4 and 1.6

A rehearsal schedule is required for AC 1.4 and the learner should also consider safe working practices for AC 1.6. Some learners included safe working in the schedule and this was perfectly acceptable. Many also talked to the camera about warm ups and safe working practice during the rehearsal footage in AC 1.5 which worked well. There were some learners who only included potential major disasters when considering safe working practice and failed to think about basic every day activities such as warm ups for their performance.

It is good that most learners understood that some sort of defined schedule needed to be in place but there were some who recorded a log of what had happened rather than a plan for future rehearsals. Some learners very cleverly combined the evidence for AC 1.4 with video clips on AC 1.5 so the Examiner was able to see the rehearsal schedule being put into practice.

There were a few learners who included nothing on safe working and therefore could not be given a grade for this AC and this meant that they were NYA for the whole unit. It is essential that learners check that they have included evidence for every AC.

Some learners produced a basic rehearsal plan and this can satisfy the Pass criteria but in order to receive a higher grade the learners need to include details on how they tackle challenges and difficult aspects of the performance piece. The plan might also take into account that only certain actors are required for some rehearsals. As in other areas of the qualification the work must be individual and although a group performance may be offered, each member of the group should prepare their own rehearsal schedule showing how they have developed their own skills. There will of course be times when the whole group will need to rehearse together so there will be areas of similarity in the schedules. In a band there will be times when the whole band will rehearse together but there will be times when the guitarist and drummer will need to work on their own part to develop appropriate skills.

Learners are reminded again that to achieve the Distinction criteria on 1.4 they must “*demonstrate critical judgment in planning a rehearsal schedule, showing insight and perception in setting the performance in context for different audiences*”. Learners are not expected to perform the piece for different audiences but they need to think about how they might make changes to their performance piece for different audiences and how this may impact on their rehearsals. Some learners wrote about different performances for parents or other friends in the school and how they might modify their rehearsal programme accordingly.

Task 3

AC 1.5

Learners are encouraged to spend most of their time on this task which involves showing the rehearsal process and the development of technical skills. Some learners used a written diary log as evidence for this AC and this provided some useful evidence if completed with details of what techniques had been worked on and how successful the rehearsal had been.

This AC is probably best evidenced by short clips of video showing the skills being developed. Some learners also included a written or spoken commentary with their video clips to explain the techniques and skills they were using and this worked well. What Examiners are looking for here is some development of technical skills through the clips of video. Some learners presented just one rehearsal and this is not likely to go beyond a Pass. Showing a difficult section of the piece before rehearsal and then describing how this will be worked on with a second clip where there are clear improvements would be ideal evidence.

There needs to be clear evidence of preparation for the final performance and some learners did well on this task when they talked to the camera about techniques they were using and how they were improving them. Teachers should avoid interviews with the learners where they lead the learner in the questioning; however peer comments/evaluations are appropriate.

Some learners performed a short extract and then took it apart and explained the techniques they would use to improve each section. It is important to show that there are improvements being secured as a result of rehearsals. Sometimes it was not clear to the examiners in what order the video clips were created. In some cases the rehearsals seemed to be better than the final performance in AC 2.2; this could have been due to nerves in the final performance.

As mentioned in previous reports whole class activities are of little value especially if the learners are not clearly identified. Examiners are interested in short video clips giving the highlights of the rehearsal process. Some learners included details about techniques such as freeze frame or hot seating but failed to relate this to improvements in their performance piece.

Task 4

AC 2.1

In this most recent session the standard of videos presented for the final performance was generally reported to be good with centres showing the audience clearly. The fact that there was an audience present meant that some learners were nervous and did not always perform as well as they had in rehearsal. Examiners saw a wide range of performances across music, dance and drama which included many different styles. Some learners presented unusual performances using electronic equipment such as lighting or DJ equipment. Learners who offer these kinds of performance need to consider exactly what the performer is doing and what engagement there is with the audience; one would expect a DJ to be interacting with the audience. If the performance just shows the learner pressing buttons, examiners will find it difficult to justify a Pass for audience engagement. On the subject of engaging the audience this is something that many learners find difficult to achieve. An introduction at the start of the performance, eye contact with the audience and a bow at the end would all help learners to engage with the audience; this is an important part of performing.

Many learners were encouraged to introduce themselves before they performed but it is worth reminding learners how important this is, especially if there are several learners involved in a group piece of drama or dance. There were still some learners who presented dance and drama items where it was not possible to identify individual learners and in some instances to hear their contribution. The placing of the camera and recording microphone is very important and a test to assess the quality of the video is advised, especially as the brief in this case was to send a video away as an audition piece so the quality of the video was very important.

As mentioned under AC 1.1 the choice of material is also important and needs careful consideration. Some learners ended up with a performance piece which fell just short of the 3 minute deadline and therefore a penalty was applied. Most pieces can easily be extended to meet the 3 minute requirement. Examiners also saw a small number of performances where the material was not of an appropriate standard for a Level 2 qualification. It is made clear in the assessment criteria and on the paper that material that is too simple or material which is badly performed is unlikely to lead to a Pass, regardless of whether improvement has been made from the starting point.

Task 5

AC 2.2

Most learners understood that they had to watch the video and evaluate how they performed. It is important to remember that the learners need to reflect on their own skills and performance as well as reflecting on the whole piece. Examiners are not able to give great credit to learners who just make general comments on the whole performance piece with little reference to their individual contribution. Some learners mentioned strengths and weaknesses and how they could improve but for the higher grades on this AC the learners really need to make specific comments on how they can improve rather than general comments such as “I need to practice more”. Some learners evaluated their rehearsals but if this is done the evaluation should be included under AC 1.5 in task 3.

Planning in the external assessment

Centres are reminded again that they should allow time to teach this unit before the assessment takes place and it is not advisable to enter the external assessment too early in the course. It is important for the relevant teaching and learning to take place before attempting the external assessment. It may make best sense to complete unit 1 before attempting the external assessment. Teachers are also reminded that they should not be giving any feedback on the work during the timed assessment.

Most centres find it helps to have a visit from their External Quality Assurer before entering for the external assessment.

Some centres conducted the timed assessment over 2 or 3 days and others spread it over several weeks and a series of lessons. Rehearsals over a couple of days did not always give the learners sufficient time to develop their skills and techniques. Some learners stated in their evaluation that they had not had sufficient time for their rehearsals. This is worth centres bearing in mind when planning in the external assessment.

Chief Examiner: Derek Griffin

Date: 2 January 2017
