

November 2015 subject reports

THEATRE

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

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

Standard level

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

Independent Project Portfolio

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

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

Standard level

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The portfolios submitted were varied in terms of topic areas and imaginative in their presentation. Almost without exception, candidates pursued a practical realization of their projects. Generally speaking, candidates understood and followed the stages of the creative process in the development of the projects at SL and HL. However, at times the stages were used as sections, which tended to allow for overlap in presentation and content. Overall, the work submitted demonstrated a wide variety of projects at both HL and SL. This reflected a clear intent to approach the task with an independent interest and an underpinning in research. There were almost no instances where students misunderstood the demands of options A or B at HL, though what did vary to some extent was the level of reflection and commitment demonstrated within the portfolios. Once again it was obvious that this project was seen and approached by students as a culmination and in fact a highlight of a demanding course in theatre.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The majority of the portfolios submitted showed independent work that indicated a good amount of initiative and perseverance. The students who fully engaged in the preparation stages of the project tended to do quite well in realization. The relevance of the material presented was excellent overall, though some students still seem to include non-relevant choices and research into the portfolio, this however was minimal. This session in particular showed evidence of a very good understanding of this criterion.

Criterion B

There was a very good amount of skill evidenced in the portfolios and in most instances with practical application. The understanding of skills being applied to a role practically is integral to the course at both HL and SL. Students cannot demonstrate evidence of skill development if they are unaware of the specific skills needed in an area of theatre studied during the course or chosen for the project. Again, this concern was only related to a very small number of candidates, because generally speaking this session showed a evidence of a good understanding of the criterion.

Criterion C

Students consistently demonstrated areas of learning and development from the projects and were able to articulate their own progress in relation to others. There was far more evidence of reflection throughout the portfolio than in past sessions, this practice is to be commended as this demonstrates a very good understanding of both the portfolio and criterion.

Criterion D

The formal requirements at both HL and SL were met with more success than in past sessions. There were numerous samples from candidates where the presentation of visual evidence, as well as proper source acknowledgement was within the formal requirements of the task. In addition, the range of sources improved considerably from past sessions, which again raised the standard from past sessions.

Criterion E (HL only)

The majority of students presented evidence of a theoretical underpinning (theatrically based) against a very small number of candidates who neglected to do this. The ability to integrate and apply the research to the projects was more evident than in past sessions and greatly improved the standard of HL work. In the instances where candidates and schools understood the concept and skill of integrating and applying research, the results were outstanding and thoroughly enjoyable to read. Again, an excellent standard of work at HL.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Not applicable as the new course is in effect.

Practical Performance Proposal

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

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

Standard level

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

In this the last iteration of this IB Theatre programme, it is clear that many schools have worked on encouraging candidates to focus clearly on the requirements of the assessment task of this component. This progress is reflected in the high quality work at both HL and SL with much fewer lower band proposals at both levels. Most of the presented material at HL moved towards the upper bands with coherent proposals that described exciting and innovative staging of ideas developed from the prescribed stimuli and supported by clear theoretical underpinnings in the rationale. At SL, the proposals were of upper band quality but often did not clarify the onstage action through storyboards or spatial descriptions. Some schools did not use the prescribed stimuli for this year as advised in the Subject guide. The Diane Arbus photograph, 'Child with toy grenade ...' proved to be the most chosen stimulus at both HL and SL level with the Zodiac signs being a close second.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Section 1

There was still a tendency for pitches to be a little vague or to express plot outlines or describe the creative process rather than dynamically outlining an envisioned piece of theatre. However, there were many pitches at both HL and SL that were excellently written and presented a clear concept idea, the intent of the performance, the impact the student wanted it to have on an audience and how this would be brought about using both performance and production elements.

Section 2

At both HL and SL there was much more top band work during this session than in May '15 with very complete and detailed section 2 ideas in the majority of proposals. Most students used this section to guide the reader through a creative process from stimuli to product using a mixture of visuals, brainstorming and research to communicate their directorial concept. There were some incredible ideas for plausible staging. Many students found different ways of communicating how action could be staged and supported these ideas by comprehensive production element details. The upper band work at both HL and SL often had clear storyboards and explanatory annotations describing use of space and blocking notes as well as outlines of what happened on stage (plot or scenario detail). Middle band work at both levels tended to present good ideas with coherent development, some action through matchstick sketches and general ideas on production elements but lacked depth and detail to facilitate communication of a complete product. The lower band students typically did not communicate how action would be staged or had a limited knowledge about production elements and how they could be used in performance. A few students are still not sourcing downloaded images.

Section 3 (HL only)

The content of the HL rationale has also improved. Many students were able to justify their choices by supporting them with theoretical, historical and/or cultural research in a very sophisticated way. Those students who didn't score as highly, mainly wrote about ideas they wanted to stage without describing what effect they wanted them to have on the audience or how they stemmed from the theory/research. Some proposals explored the impacts and resonances of their performance and how the practical effects in performance were used to bring these (impacts/resonances) about. The upper band work clearly linked what was intended and how they would bring these effects about using performance and/or production elements.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- There are two main skill block areas from the Practical performance proposal that will be carried forward into the assessment tasks of the reviewed programme for the first iteration in M16. These are firstly, the creation of original theatre from stimuli/starting points and, secondly, demonstration of an understanding of the mise-en-scene process. These areas will be assessed by the Collaborative project (CP) and Director's notebook (DN) respectively.
- To prepare students for the former task, teachers will need to offer experiences to students in collaborative creation, exploration of a variety of starting points, selection and development of performance material, structuring of this material and actual performance. These skill areas should be subtended by research methodologies, self-reflection work and integration of feedback techniques.
- The Director's notebook assessment task will require students to know how to understand the importance of personal (playwright, director), cultural and theoretical contexts and how these can influence artistic choices. The students should also have experience in text analysis and the potential within the text for staging together with the

relationship between intent (what the director wishes to bring about) and impact (how this intent will be brought about using performance and production elements). In preparation for the DN, teachers should offer their students the opportunity to learn how to communicate ideas in format and language appropriate for their role.

- Fuller details of these two assessment tasks can be found in the new IB Theatre Subject guide and in IB Category 1 and 2 Teacher workshops.

Further Comments

Over the last few years, the Practical performance proposal has developed as schools have become more acquainted with the processes and requirements of this assessment task. This growth in the theatre skill block areas identified is due solely to the efforts of the teachers and students who have embraced the PPP and used its format to better understand the processes and power of theatre as a medium of learning in international education.

Research Investigation

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

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

Standard level

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There was a consistent understanding of the task which demonstrated a growing confidence with the task and the teaching of the task. Most students understood the requirements and the purpose of the task.

What has significantly improved for HL students is Criterion D, Critique of Sources. As this deals solely with sources, it is not effected by the standard of the rest of the essay and stands alone. Over the past few years there seems to be a higher level of skill and competence in fulfilling the requirements of this particular criterion.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A Research Skills

Though there has been some improvement in the attribution of sources, consistency continues to be problematic. Students still need to be aware that there needs to be attribution of sources even in the introduction. There is also at times a lack of a range of research sources with students relying on one or two trusted sources and not going beyond this. In some instances students are relying solely on electronic sources and as a result missing out on seminal books which cannot yet be electronically sourced.

B Task Relevance

There are still instances where the research is not applied fully to a play/piece of theatre. This is particularly the case in instances where the students focuses on preparation or training. The

research essay is an exercise in applied research. This research needs to be applied to a particular play or piece of theatre. This focuses and guides the research. Where students did not pay enough attention to the play, the research was too broad and general. Close attention should be paid to either text or particular moments of action in the performance text. Simply watching a video of the practice in action in a particular performance and describing this in detail is not sufficient as adequate research and does not fulfil the requirements of the task. The student needs to consult both other sources and other records of the practice to avoid considering one particular interpretation as the correct one.

In some instances students approach the play with an emphasis on literary analysis rather than applied research. This encourages the student to focus on words rather than the staging of action which is the focus of the task.

Formulating an appropriate focused question which includes theatre practice, piece of theatre/play and aspect in its wording helps the student to have a clear direction and focus for the task. The most successful research investigations were ones that had clear, focussed and simple wording.

C Presentation

Presentation and register is generally appropriate though some essays, particularly those focusing on design, would benefit from more visuals. When visuals are used they should be clear and large enough to show any detail the student is referring to in the essay. Titles and subheadings sometimes impeded the flow of the essay and gave the impression of the essay being a collection of notes or guidelines rather than an academic essay. A careful structure is important as it helps the coherence of the essay and guides the reader through the research and its applications. Students should be encouraged not to provide hefty quotes as these sometimes appear clumsy. Where all the information in a quote is key it would be a good idea for the student to paraphrase it while clearly citing the source and the author.

D Critique of sources (HL only)

This has significantly improved with some students often producing excellent critiques even when the rest of the essay is limited. The critiques were generally detailed and thorough though some tended more towards the descriptive. There are two aspects to the critique, an evaluation of the source and an explanation of how the student has used the source. Both these elements need to be demonstrated. In some instances the criteria for critiquing the reliability of the source was tenuous. Publication does not always guarantee the reliability of the source.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- It is advisable to keep a log of all sources as they are consulted. This includes basic sources that are accessed at the start of the task to give the student a broad view of the theatre practice.
- The wording of the question is key. Teachers should help students develop their skills regarding the formation of questions.

- Questions should contain the theatre practice, the play/piece of theatre and the aspect the student is focusing on.
- Avoid literary analysis of text especially in practices which can lend themselves to text analysis such as Theatre of the Absurd.
- Students should engage with exercises in applied research; researching aspects of a practice and then practically applying this to a play/piece of theatre. This will help their conceptual understanding of the task.
- Students would benefit from study skills regarding essay writing and the presentation of visuals.
- It would be a good idea to draw up a checklist with the students regarding the criteria against which a source will be evaluated.

Theatre Performance & Production Presentation

Component grade boundaries

Higher level

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

Standard level

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of work from schools in the November session was more than adequate with some exciting introductions of new material. The edgy and the provocative presentation is much appreciated by the examining team who like to have their preconceptions rattled by new ways of seeing theatre. What was particularly impressive in some of the work was how technology has been so seamlessly incorporated into the way many candidates encounter theatre. A greater awareness and integration of the post-modern approach to theatre was also evident and while this examiner makes no claims for this it is refreshing to see how theatre is no longer entirely in the thralls of early 20th theory at this level. Range is one thing, we can all enumerate giddy numbers of practitioners, plays, productions and traditions but it is the candidate who can see these things in a different, unique and personal way that is the candidate we pay deepest attention to because that is how they have met the work: with thought and attention. It is never easy to make sense when speaking under pressure according to time constraints but it would encourage us all if fewer candidates simply read their pre prepared text. 30 minutes is a long time and a lot can be said in that period but a manic reading of a thousand discrete items is not what we are looking for. A more thoughtful and speculative approach which is the product of some prior editing and selection is far more welcome.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The tension between analysis and narrative continues to characterize this exercise. In this respect some of the sharper candidates realized that in the images they had a wonderful resource they could not afford to neglect. Here was a structure and an analytical stream in visual terms just waiting to be exploited. That so few do testifies to the continuing difficulty candidates have with understanding the organic relationship that should exist between what is said and what is shown. Once this is grasped the presentation takes a turn for the better. Analysis is not about conveying your understanding of a theory it is about how you interrogate that theory in relation to your own practice and development. We expect you to not feel the need to tell us what "emotional memories" are but if you do use this approach then we want to know how it worked for you.

Criterion B

Candidates who did well under Criterion B appreciated that theatre is not a finished art form but a composite one under constant dispute and entirely provisional in its outcomes since audiences for it change all the time. Those who struggled had a "deadly" approach to the task, the word "deadly" being used in the sense that Brook intended in "The Open Space". The business of putting ideas together is one of the most exhilarating exercises this assessment task requires. Too often candidates seem to tremble on the edge of perception before retreating back to what they think they know. The explorative element is at its most acute (potentially) when you start to compare ways of doing things. More of this would have been welcome, given the fact, as mentioned above, that there were some shifts into new modes of receiving and understanding the subject. Once again the more daring the response to the challenge of understanding through synthesis the more likely the success; new knowledge requires the synthesis of older knowledge into new and startling combinations, that is part of what makes theatre so engaging for the student and teacher.

Criterion C

Reflection. This was often very well done and what was especially gratifying was the nature of the encounter had had with theatre. In many cases this was mature and sophisticated and conveyed, too, in a critical language that only enhanced what was being said. At its best reflection establishes the links which allow students to synthesize their experience and there was evidence of this happening in the better presentations. The careful focus on images usually facilitated this process. Weaker candidates still fell back into narcissistic declarations about their own success as actors primarily but thankfully this is becoming less prevalent.

Criterion D

Candidates are getting far more assured in how they incorporate research, it seems to be a lot clearer for them that this research needs to be applied to their own work and there were many examples of this being very cleverly done. It does not matter if the apprentice Bunraku puppeteer achieves no mastery but it does matter that they do it so that they learn by doing.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Analysis not narrative
- Images from the work of the candidate usually make more visual sense than pictures of idyllic scenes from nature
- Reflect on your work by establishing relationships between different aspects of it
- Interrogate your work and your inspirations and continually test the validity of what you are being told, or what you read by applying it to practice.
- A visit to the theatre means work not simply entertainment, take notes on what you see, think about it, and connect it to what you are doing.
- Theory is always limited, Stanislavski is not God. One theory is never going to be enough, explore as much diverse theory and practice as you can.

Further Comments

Teachers are well advised not to over "prepare" candidates, no moderator wants to listen to exercises in ventriloquism repeated 5 or 6 times. Variety IS the spice of the life of this component, standardized and safe responses will not get any student very far.