UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE
MAY 2015

EXAMINERS' REPORT

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS BOARD
The Table below outlines the distribution of grades of the candidates who sat for the examination:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Abs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Candidates</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2015 has been the third year that candidates have sat for Theatre and Performance at Intermediate Level, and the number of candidates has increased every year. This year candidates were presented by three different schools which is encouraging.

Although the number of candidates is still quite small, there was a range of outputs that is possibly indicative of the range of effort put into preparing for the examination. The practical part of the examination, which was examined first, showed that in most cases candidates were prepared to face the scrutiny of a critical audience. However, what stood out was the difference in preparation for this part of the examination. Particular groups presented technically competent material for this level, however, some of their members presented very similar material in their solo performance. On the other side of the spectrum, there were performances which although imaginative and possibly even energetic, often lacked the technical knowledge that should have developed as a result of a two-year-long course of studies. More coaching or guidance might help in such situations. Examiners noted that with regard to collective performances, candidates who presented better material tended to struggle to explain their work during the interview sessions, while weaker performances were generally accompanied by more articulate interviews. Within time and other constraints, a better balance between these two extremes is desired.

This year, as in previous years, unfortunately many solo as well as collective performances were inspired by cinema or television. Too many candidates looked like they were not very familiar with live theatrical performances. Although it is not prohibited to use film as inspiration, candidates need to be aware that acting for the camera requires different skills and attitudes to acting during a live performance. The syllabus is rooted in the tradition of live performance and does not make references to techniques that are specific to cinematography. It would therefore be wiser to look at the western theatrical tradition that is being studied rather than to try and adapt material from a different art-form. Attitudes to text, montage, use of space, costume, make-up and acting differ widely between live theatre and performance for film. While adaptations from cinema to stage have been done successfully by professional theatre-makers, such adaptations require skills that candidates at this level are not expected to have.

An important component of the practical examination is the documentation presented by the candidates. This should show a systematic record of work performed in relation to and leading up to the two performances, as well as a critical reflection on one’s own practice. In most cases, logbooks are filled in mechanically, apparently perceived only as proof that an established number of hours were dedicated to preparing for the performances, when they should be seen as an opportunity to showcase thought and decision-making processes which might not be obvious to the examiners watching the performances. More time should be spent on preparing the entries in the logbooks. Examiners are not interested in reading quickly jotted down notes but in documents which are prepared consciously and conscientiously. Candidates need to learn to question their work more perceptively.

The logbooks for collective performances imply that all work was done during timetabled lessons. Students should note that studying performance, like studying anything else, needs to be supported by work outside the classroom.
With regard to the written examination, this year a broader range of quality in submitted answers was seen. While a number of candidates submitted answers of a high level, showing a mature style commendable for this level, many others offered stock answers, apparently derivative of notes which were not internalised. Markers generally felt that candidates were not making enough effort to answer the specific questions as set out in the examination paper but were writing generic answers that might have been prepared for more generic or different questions. In certain cases, even introductory paragraphs seemed to be unrelated to the questions asked.

This year’s examination session has been encouraging, both because of the increased take-up of the subject, but also because a broader range of candidates participated. It is still felt, however, that in broad terms, theatre history is still treated by most candidates as information to be acquired and returned when prompted, and not as a body of knowledge that can inform one’s practice.

Chairperson
2015 Examination Panel