



Preparing for HSC Drama

The Individual Project: Performance

Choosing to perform for the Individual Project (IP) in HSC Drama is still the most popular choice for our drama students. Perhaps it is a direct result of the students' positive experiences of performance in their Stage 5 Drama program. Perhaps they feel they have developed their skills in performance and are comfortable in choosing something they 'know'. Perhaps they just love performing, taking a risk! Whatever the impetus, few students fully realise the challenges performance in the IP will demand.

In 2002, approximately 4695 students attempted the Stage 6 Drama examination, with two thirds of those students presenting for performance in the IP. In 2004, the number of students has increased to approximately 5233 but the proportion choosing individual performance remains much the same. With such a popular project, teachers are keen to facilitate the best possible process for their students from Term 4 (Year 11) to Term 3 (Year 12) and the optimum experience for them on the day the visiting HSC examiners mark the 'finished product'.



The following information provides some useful points to assist you and your students:

- Plan the concept and the scope of the individual project in performance over the next three terms. The process of developing an Individual Performance should be clear for the student. Students are most responsive to planning positively and visually. **Logbooks** can assist from the beginning.
 - Have students draw the task ahead metaphorically e.g. as a mountain with the main stages of the **performance process** defined – defining the concept/choosing or devising the material/establishing the role or character(s)/developing body language and voice etc. They can trace their own 'journey' up the mountain from one term to another by placing themselves in the picture
- e.g. at the foot of the mountain/ in front of an obstacle/out on a ledge/on top of an obstacle/down an overgrown track. Written reflections and responses should link easily with this graphic portrayal of their own progress.
- 'Play' with a range of ideas and possibilities, using scripts, other texts or self-devised improvisations, in order to identify the direction each student wants to take to establish his/her **concept**. Defining the concept and choosing the **style** of performance are imperative in establishing a dramatic context. The intention of the performer must be realised in the performance if it is to be understood or interpreted by the audience.
 - Follow closely the recommendations relating to Individual Performance in the 2003/4 HSC notes from the Marking Centre for Drama which can be found at the *Board of Studies* web site.
http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsc_exams/hsc2003exams/pdf_doc/drama_er_03.pdf
This 71 page document contains excellent advice (pp. 7–11) for individual performers as well as the Marking Guidelines and three Assessment Criteria (pp. 63–65). Note particularly that the comments relating to *technical effects* and the use of **space** under **Group Performance** also relate directly to Individual Performance. Each student should aim to be seen and heard clearly in an appropriately intimate space by the audience. Advise students to use elements of drama for transitions rather than relying on lighting, music or sound effects.
 - Acknowledge and develop the student's best performance skills so that they are incorporated and demonstrated in a piece that suits their capabilities.
 - Warn your students to be careful and selective in choosing material from the Internet where the **theatrical context** may be lacking or uncertain. These 'scripts' often have minimal clarity in role or character, so that the student will need to create the character in body language and voice without the benefit of subtextual clues in the words on the page. For the intelligent, creative student this challenge can allow the imagination and skills to 'build the character', but, too often, the ready-made script invites the student to believe the 'character' is there and will emerge as long as the words are learnt!
 - Encourage students to consider the process of the presentation of the character or role to the **audience** as part of the 'journey' of the piece, which should have a sense of theatre that engages the audience. The character can be revealed gradually within the developing context

or the role can provide different perspectives of character for the audience. Costume or a suggestion of costume is permissible, although not marked, and can assist the performer in establishing and sustaining the chosen role.



A possible approach to the development of the Individual Project/Performance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review syllabus requirements including marking criteria and negotiate contract and timeline between teacher and student
Selecting researching and experimenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose, read and research for performance, context and style. Teachers should guide in this process in both scripted and self-devised works Experiment with a variety of material Record process in logbook Receive feedback from teacher and others on choice in relation to student's strengths and audience accessibility
Concept development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse, write, redraft, adapt, edit and refine material to develop a coherent theatrical statement Draft rationale stating directorial intentions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is engaging about the performance? What are the key moments? Are the meanings and intentions clear? Have all theatrical elements been considered? Does the blocking keep the audience interested? How does the character/role develop?
Performing and evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform material for evaluation Refine and shape performance considering theatricality, performance skills, sustaining and developing role/character, structure and dramatic coherence Rehearse, checking time limits
Scripting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete final script, including any minimal production effects essential to the work's meaning Rehearse, record and reflect with any modifications Develop individual performance and logbook, including rationale for evaluation

Staging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HSC Drama showcase for parents, friends, peers, teachers and evaluation Refine and write the rationale
Final stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher/student preparation for practical examination including organisation, certification and logbook collection.

Final product:

- Solo performance
- 6–8 minutes
- 300 word rationale.

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The Centre for Volunteering is developing a short film competition for 2005, aligned with a wide range of key learning areas in the NSW high school syllabus.

Background: The Centre for Volunteering has a longstanding commitment to working with schools through SCIP (Student Community Involvement Program). Future Visions 4X5 offers a great opportunity for students to create a vision of volunteering through their own interpretations and their individual ideas using basic digital video (DV) equipment.

The challenge: Teams of up to five students aged between 11 and 17 years are invited to make four minute productions. These can be short documentaries, dramas, animations or clips using original music. They must tell the story of inspiring examples of volunteers in their communities or depict volunteering in general.

Details: The competition will run during the first two terms of the 2005 school year, with judging and an award ceremony in June. A handbook on using modern digital filmmaking tools will be distributed free to all entrants and there will be an emphasis on workshops, visits to production companies and film lots amongst the prizes.

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