

## Advanced GCE Performing Arts Unit G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

### Choosing subjects for case studies

Selecting suitable subjects for the case studies can make a significant difference to a students' grade. It is therefore recommended that some guidance be given. Please read through the marking criteria and ensure that there are good opportunities to show :

- Show a 'comprehensive insight into the purpose and operations of each organisation' (AO1.1.2)
- Comment with insight on the 'significance and purpose of most or all roles' (AO1.2.2)
- Present a 'reflective commentary on the effectiveness' (structure and purpose) (AO4.1.2)
- An understanding of the job role's 'significance and purpose' (AO1.3.2/AO4.2.2)

The unit requires students to present case studies on two contrasting organisations. It would be difficult to find two performing arts organisations which do not vary in some significant ways and teasing out the subtle differences can be as rewarding for a student as trying to find common ground on which to comment in two highly different organisations. Candidates have not been penalised for selecting similar organisations.

It is expected that students will say why they have chosen the organisations and give sources of information.

The chosen organisation needs to give the student scope to show knowledge of the way performing arts businesses produce products (programmes) bring them to a market (audiences) and generate revenue. Live performance venues provide the best organisations to study. Organisations that receive public funding (subsidised) have to publish their financial status and make good studies. Candidates who have compared two subsidised organisations have not been penalised and have often produced high scoring case studies.

Candidates also need to show how organisations are structured (staffing) and how this relates to their missions (aims/objectives) and the markets (audiences) they are trying to reach. It is very difficult to explain the organisational structure without a staffing chart. Small organisations with just a few staff (such as dance teachers) provide limited scope and it is difficult for a student to provide evidence of understanding that takes them beyond the first mark band.

It is helpful if the candidate can visit the organisation and gather information first hand. Information put into the public domain by organisations and available through the internet is selected by the organisation is often promotional in nature. This does not often allow the student to see the relationships between the structure and the organisations intended purpose. While it is possible to get a pass mark from internet research is very

hard to present evidence that takes a candidate into the upper bands when limited entirely to desk research.

Students often select LIPA for a case study as this has overlap with the 'Finding Work unit'. Too often they have to rely upon material taken from web sites and publicity documents. There is a wealth of promotional material in the public domain which describes its creation and aspirations but it is harder to get current information on its running costs, the way the organisation is structured etc. Without visiting and talking to business managers candidates cannot get the information to 'make insightful comments on the significance of most or all roles' (AO1.2.2). Invariably this is a very weak study.

The best organisation to study is the local live performing arts venue. It will be accessible and will present opportunity to describe relationships with the community, missions, audiences and funding in depth. It will be large enough to have a wide range of roles that will be organised in a way that reflects the artistic policy, funding body demands and audience expectations. Individuals working within the organisation can be interviewed for the job role presentation.

The town (or the region) may have more than one venue, in which case it is often productive to explore how they attract different audiences and how this is reflected in the importance given to different roles. The 'commentary' and comparison which requires some assessment of effectiveness is usually the weakest section. Comparing organisations that have some common ground but differ slightly in purpose, audiences, catchment or facilities is not necessarily easier but can make more sense. Candidates will need to comment quoting ticket sales, financial security, reviews, ability to attract high quality acts etc.

Large corporations such as the BBC are difficult to study - mainly down to size but it is also harder to see how they actually operate as businesses. Case studies of the BBC have been tried many times but none has succeeded in reaching the upper mark bands. Some students have made brave attempts at studying departments or regional outposts but it is often difficult to get information on revenue/expenditure and explore all the roles.

### **Examples given**

BBC Essex (for all students): Is this subsidised or for profit? That is for the students to find out – It could be a good choice if you can visit the studios and talk to some managers about the way this regional branch is organised. Get a picture of its organisational structure (staffing chart) and get facts on revenue and expenditure.

All students second organisations:

Chelmsford Civic Theatre **Excellent** – there should be access to good primary data – it will be very different from BBC Essex. Information on artistic policy, funding, marketing and the range of roles and their organization should be

available from visiting or making contact.

Globe Theatre – **Good** if they can visit/make contact – information in the public domain is insufficient – again generally promotional.

Dominion Theatre – Tottenham Court Road? – **Good** if they can visit or make contact – information in the public domain is insufficient

Theatre Train (Local theatre school for children) - **Excellent** – should be access to good primary data

Cliffs Pavillion Southend - **Excellent** – should be access to good primary data

The London Comedy Theatre - **good** if they can visit – information in the public domain is insufficient

O2 Arena – **Okish** if they can visit – information in the public domain is insufficient again generally promotional. It is a venue that will sell space to anyone – I doubt that there is any policy other than fill the house

Cirque De Soleil – **poor choice** – reliant upon web based publicity material – almost all promotional material - an exciting web site that promotes the company but gives little information about how it is organized – no organisational chart. ('over 4,000 employees today – Montreal Headquarters employs 1,800'). Cutting and pasting from a web site is not acceptable at this level but you can do little else unless a visit to Montreal HQ is possible. A candidate could not possibly select a role in this organization to present on.

MTV (music department) – **very poor choice**. Again not possible to visit - reliant upon web sources – it will be a weak case study.

Empire Cinema Basildon – **poor choice** - part of a chain - all policy will be set nationally and information on funding/profit/loss will not be available. There will be front of house staff but marketing will be organized somewhere at central office. Impossible to talk to and ask about marketing strategies. Avoid cinemas unless local community cinemas which have a local artistic policy and the structure is determined locally.

Odeon Cinema Chelmsford – **poor choice** - part of a chain all policy will be set nationally and information on funding/profit/loss will not be available.