

**PRODUCTION SUPPORT**

**HELP PACK**

**TECHNICAL OPTION – What you should be up to**

Use this as a tick box list – to tick off when you have completed a task, so your tutors know where you are up to.

The role of performance support is a difficult role to perform. You will work much more independently than the other students who are working as performers. You will need to attend all rehearsals, but you will also be expected to work on your own, researching, preparing all the written support work, and building up your knowledge of your chosen skill.

The positive element is that not only will you be marked on your contribution to the final performance but unlike the performers themselves, you will have time in a presentation to talk to the examiner explaining your choices and your process.

The designer works with the director to realise their visual interpretation of the play. You will need to ask specific questions and then find a way to communicate your answers either visually or aurally depending on your chosen skill.

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| Context |  | When is the play set, and how will you communicate this context to the audience? |
| Social Context |  | What will your design communicate to the audience about the character’s class and social standing? |
| The space |  | What is the layout of your performance space (revise on pages 20 – 23) and how will this affect your design decisions? |
| The genre |  | What is the genre (the type of play) of the text you are working on and what elements does this mean you must include? (Revise page 13) |
| Theme and Ideas |  | What are the central themes and ideas in this play? Have you agreed these with your director and cast? How will you reflect these ideas and themes in your design work? |
| Mood and Atmosphere |  | Design creates mood and atmosphere. What mood and atmosphere does the play text need and what mood and atmosphere does your director require? |
| Practitioner |  | What practitioner’s techniques will the play use and how will this affect your design decisions? |

You then need to decide what style your design will take:

NATURALISTIC: Attempting to create a realism in your design. Making the design look true to life, accurate and believable.

SYMBOLIC: Attempting to reflect the meaning and the ideas rather than trying to create accuracy

MINIMALIST: An empty space that only has the essential design items necessary – but think, does this really show your skills as a designer?

Whichever option you choose you will have to complete the following tasks.

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| What is required of you | Tick if you think you have completed this |
| **You are required to work collaboratively with all other group members** | |
| Have you discussed your ideas with your director? |  |
| Have you discussed your ideas with the cast? |  |
| **You are required to take advice, guidance and direction from the director** | |
| Your design must work for the whole production, and your director as director will have an over-view of this. Your design must enhance, must work with, the performance not work against it. Have you taken advice from your tutor / director? |  |
| **You are required to communicate your chosen skill to an audience and to the examiner** | |
| Have you agreed with your director and your actors on the key themes and ideas that the production is attempting to communicate? |  |
| Have you found ways to reflect these key themes and ideas in your design? |  |
| Have you included research ideas about these key themes in your written evidence? |  |
| Have you completed a mood board to further explore these key themes and ideas? |  |

**DIFFERENT UNITS AND DIFFERENT PRODUCTION SUPPORT OPTIONS WILL ATTRACT SLIGHTLY DIFFERING DEMANDS BUT ESSENTIALLY:**You will be marked under four separate grade criteria headings:

**Justification of design decisions**

Your design must fit the context of the performance

Your examiner will see this in your presentation and in performance

Does your design support the form and the genre of the production?

**Documentation**

The examiner will look at all your written support material. Make sure you draw their attention to all your work in your presentation. Make sure you reference your documentation.

There has to be some high quality design work here. Remember, different skills ask for different documentary material. Make sure you know what you have to produce, produce that and then produce more.

**Realisation of Design**

Essentially you need to design to an outstanding standard and then fulfil that design to an outstanding standard.

**Communication of Design in Performance**

Your design must support the key themes and ideas of the production. It must be clear that direction, design, performance are all working together to support the director’s concept for this production.

Your design must increase the quality of the performance. Without your design the performance would be weaker.

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| **INITIAL GROUND WORK** |
| **Look through old portfolios of evidence.** The criterion for technical support is vague, so your first port of call should be example work. | |  |
| **Make a list** of everything that is in there. Let that be your foundation – trying to better that work. | |  |
| **Discussions with the cast.** Log all the discussions you have with your company of actors to demonstrate how well you have worked with them, how well you have adapted to their ideas, what ideas you have contributed – and how your design has contributed to the overall success of the piece. | |  |

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| **PREPARATION** |
| **Read through your play.** Make initial notes / ideas / pictures / drawings. This becomes a document, presented however you see fit – **my initial responses to the text.** | |  |
| **Themes.** Pick out all the main themes from the text. Do these match what your company of actors have pulled out? You then need to prepare visual responses to these themes (however you see fit) – as visual brain-storms, mood boards etc (dependent on your technical option) | |  |
| **Research.**   1. Into past productions. A good way to do this is to down-load a review. Then use REFERENCES – INSERT COMMENT – and give your comments as you read it …. What ideas does that review spark in you, what ideas from the reviewed production will you steal / try and do in your own way / interpret.   As many of these as you can will be useful | |  |
| **Research.**   1. Into the playwright – but all the time bringing it back to your production / your technical option ….. what design ideas does your research spark? | |  |
| **Research.**   1. Into the context.    1. When was the play written? What was happening in the world at that time. Can this spark design ideas?    2. When are you setting the production? What was happening in the world at that time. Can this spark design ideas?    3. Get out and about – look for stimulation – buildings / views / people – take photos of them - Can this spark design ideas? | |  |
| **Research.**   1. A job description of your technical option. 2. Who has inspired you – what designer working within your option has inspired you in this choice – do a ‘research document’ on this designer – all the time discussing how they have sparked ideas for your own design work 3. You need a ‘research document’ on the history of your design option | |  |
| **HEALTH AND SAFTEY.**  You will need to produce a Health and Safety research document exploring the H&S issues / concerns in your particular area | |  |
| **REHEARSAL REPORTS.**  Much like the feedback sheets the performers have for each other – you will need to design for yourself a Rehearsal Report – a sheet you will fill in and complete each time you go into a rehearsal (for a period of time).  Think about what information you need to record for your particular technical option.  Design your grid around your needs.  You may need to record:  Date | Scenes | General notes about the feel of the scenes / the themes being explored – and then notes specific to your production support area.  Design this as a grid template that you keep using  Maybe you start notating the moves etc in your script/text? | |  |
| **PRODCUTION SCHEDULE**  You need to draw up a schedule for yourself – when you need to get jobs done by.  A GANTT graph would be useful at this stage.  If there is more than one production support practitioner working on the same production, then you may want to draw these up together. | |  |
| **SPECIFICS OF YOUR ROLE**  You now need to move into research into your particular ‘production support role’.  *EXAMPLES:*  A list of lanterns and what they do / what effect they have  A discussion about lighting from different angles  Discussions about gels / colours and their effect on the audience  Do different textures have differing effects?  What effects can you create using different frequencies / recording methods? | |  |

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| **SOME PRODUCTION SUPPORT OPTION SPECIFICS!** | |
| **LIGHTING** |

The primary function of good lighting is to ensure the audience can see the stage action. It must then support the creation of mood and atmosphere. It may suggest the location of the scene through use of colour, intensity or by use of gobos.

There are many useful websites which will help you with your lighting design ideas. Type Stage Lighting Design into a search engine to begin your search. Sites you may wish to check out include:

A guide about stage lighting for students:

[www.stagelightingprimer.com](http://www.stagelightingprimer.com/)

An excellent resource about all aspects of theatre, which includes interviews with designers about their role:

[www.getintotheatre.org](http://www.getintotheatre.org/)

Association of Lighting Designers

[www.ald.org.uk](http://www.ald.org.uk/)

The Drama Info Web

[www.dramainfoweb.co.uk](http://www.dramainfoweb.co.uk/)

Society of British Theatre Designers

[www.theatredesign.org.uk](http://www.theatredesign.org.uk/)

In the first instance complete an AUDIT, this is to make a list of all the resources that are available to you.

LANTERNS?

Lanterns are sometimes also called lamps. These are the actual lights. There are many types of lanterns, but you will need at least four different types of lantern to complete Unit 3 to a higher standard.

CABLES?

These are the wires that connect the lanterns to the socket and then to the control board.

DIMMER BOARD OR CONTROL BOARD?

This is the control board that will operate the lights. A dimmer board allows you to pre-set a lighting cue while another lighting effect is running. Modern dimmer boards allow you to programme your lighting effects into a computerised memory. You can manage without a computerised board, but if you do not have access to a good dimmer board you will find it difficult.

GELS?

These are the thin plastic sheets that you put in front of a lantern to colour the light.

GOBOS?

These are small metal plates that have shapes cut into them. When you place a GOBO into a lantern the image is projected onto the stage.

SAFETY CHAINS?

Lanterns must always be chained onto a lighting bar with a safety chain. You need at least one safety chain per lantern.

It is very common mistake to use colour to reflect the mood of a character. This does not always work well. If you flood a stage with red lighting you will just create very shadowy actors on stage. If you use red lighting on a red object the colours will just cancel themselves out.

Don’t forget you could use torches as lighting, or over head projectors to produce effects. These are all part of the equipment you could use to show off your lighting ideas. Projections can also be a part of lighting. You might project images onto the back wall of the stage, or use moving images to create effects on stage.

OTHER KEY LIGHTING TERMS

GENERAL WASH (or general cover)

This is the basic lighting of the whole stage. A good general wash covers the whole of the set evenly. Make sure you are able to design a good general wash.

BLACKOUT

This is when all the lights are switched off. You may have a snap blackout or you may dim the lighting slowly until you reach blackout.

A word of warning, do not use too many blackouts, they break up the stage action and make the performance become disjointed. You do not have to have a blackout at the end of every scene, and you do not have to have a blackout to change the scenery.

**FOR YOU EXAM**

The exam board says a lighting designer must show the examiner:

A PORTFOLIO OF RESEARCH

A JUSTIFICATION FOR THE FINAL DESIGN

A FINAL DESIGN

This must include a grid plan. Here you will usually work to the accepted scale of 1:25 : 1cm = 25cm (so 4cm = 1m) That will show the position of your lanterns. There is a special symbol associated with each lantern. Ensure you find out the symbols associated with your lanterns.

Make a list of all the lanterns you are using and say why you are using that particular lantern and what effect you are hoping to achieve with each one. Include discussion here about choice of gel and use of gobos.

**We have a master copy of this document**

A LIGHTING PLOT OR CUE SHEET

The essential information a cue sheet must have on is:

The page number the cue happens on

The line or piece of stage action the cue happens on

A description of the effect you are trying to create

What lights are being used and at what level

The fade time or cross fade time – how long the lighting effect takes to come up over

or go down over

**We have a master copy of this document**

Also include in your written work for the examiner

Your mood boards

Your research ideas

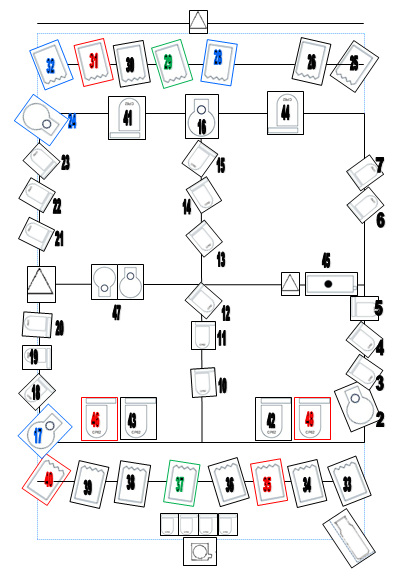
A marked up script with all your initial ideas for lighting (lighting is marked in a script as LFX)

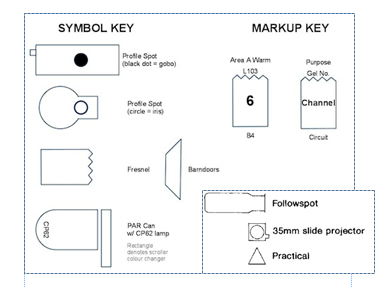
Colour charts exploring the types of colour you will use

You might produce a list of equipment you have used during your design process. You could take photographs of all the equipment and then copy and paste the image into a document where you can add notes around the image explaining how the equipment works, labelling pieces of the equipment and explaining exactly you used the equipment

**LIGHTING CUE SHEET**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Page No** | **Cue No** | **Cue Line** | **Instruction** | **Fade In/Out Time** |
|  | **1** | **Audience entrance** | **Centre stage focus with Profile Spot over-head**  **With Profile behind audience with GOBO –the block is the main focus and the only object on stage** | **00.03.00** |
|  | **2** | **Clearance “Thank you”** | **Blackout – clear signifier for the audience that it’s started** | **00.03.00** |
|  | **3** | **After 3 secs of blackout** | **Actress USL on back wall – light from front and back Fresnel Lantern – not much emotion demonstrated at this point** | **00.03.00** |
|  | **4** | **… on the pool** | **Lighten with Fresnels from above and from the back – more heightened emotion, with a splash of blue at 50% intensity to connote water** | **00.02.00** |
|  | **5** | **… And up and up** | **Focuses Centre Stage, use of two Fresnels from Up above/behind her to connotate the ‘angel’ that is mentioned** | **00.3.00** |
|  | **6** | **… and then** | **Introduce red geled fresnels – from behind actress into the audience so the light bounces off of her picking out her body movements** | **00.00.1** |
|  | **7** | **… the crack** | **Add in more red at 100% intensity – red symbolises death and horrible stuff** | **00.00.1** |
|  | **8** | **… of her body** | **Use of front fresnels with red gels at 100% to begin to pick out her facial expressions** | **00.00.1** |
|  | **9** | **… on the concrete** | **Introduce last 2 Fresnels with red gels over head to light the whole space – as her Circle of Attention (Stanislavski) grows so the lights grew** | **00.00.1** |
|  | **10** | **We edge forward** | **Focus back on actress – she stops talking about the body and now talks about her reactions so red out, back to white fresnels and a splash of blue back to the pool** | **00.03.00** |
|  | **11** | **… god or angel** | **Add in lighting DSL as actress extends her movements – use of open white with the splash of blue – this brightens the stage for the narrative to come through** | **00.03.00** |
|  | **12** | **Did she die** | **Blackout signifies to the audience that the performance is over** | **00.03.00** |
|  | **13** | **Three seconds later** | **Back to a repeat of cue one to bookend the performance** | **00.03.00** |





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| **SOME PRODUCTION SUPPORT OPTION SPECIFICS!** | |
| **COSTUME** |

There are some excellent examples of COSTUME support documentation available – please have a look through these examples.

Costume design focuses on the clothes and the accessories the actors wear to communicate their character to the audience. A costume designer will of course design costumes that fit with the production’s context – the time it is set, the clothing conventions of that time period and it will also need to reflect the character’s social standing and their age. It is vital your actors rehearse in your costumes as they will affect the way they move and feel and you must ensure they can complete all the stage action the director has asked them to do in your costume. **You are required to MAKE ONE COSTUME from scratch.**

There are many useful websites which will help you with your costume design ideas. Type Stage Costume Design into a search engine to begin your search. You might also search for museums that have images of clothing, like the Victoria and Albert Museum, or Costumiers such as ‘Angels’ a big costume design company in London. Sites you may wish to check out include:

Victoria and Albert Museum

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk/)

The Fashion Museum

[www.fashionmuseum.co.uk](http://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk/)

In the first instance you will need to identify the production’s time period or setting and then begin some research into that time period. Ensure you have discussed this with the director as they may choose to change the context, time period that they are setting the production in. You will need to collect together a collage of images and photographs showing what people wore in that time period. Some playwrights will suggest types of costumes for characters. You do not have to go along with these ideas as your interpretation and your director’s concept may have changed the time period the play is set in.

Beginning Your Research

* Read and analyse the play-text itself. Note down clues about character, about setting and time period. There may be obvious costume demands made by the text, maybe a character has to appear in disguise, or maybe a character appears and it needs to be obvious from their costume where they have come from.
* Begin building up your visual research by gathering together images to build your own visual reference library of pictures. Once you have identified the time period then begin your research into the clothing from that time period. You could visit galleries or museums to get visual ideas, or you may be able to virtually visit museums on-line by typing their names into a search engine.
* If it is a contemporary play set today, then use magazines a contemporary films to build up your visual reference library.
* Begin making up Mood Boards as part of your research.

Once you have started your research, you need to present the director with some initial ideas so you can begin the design discussions with the director and ensure that your initial ideas fit the director’s concept.

Don’t forget to explore textures on your mood board. Different time periods used different materials and different textures in their clothing. You need to research texture as part of your mood board.

The main purpose of good costume design is to get the audience to believe in the play, for example dressing the characters in costumes from the time period.

As a costume designer you may decide that a total period costume might distance the audience from the production. They may watch a period piece and decide that the action and the message of the production have nothing to do with their lives today because it is a period piece. You may then decide to introduce an anachronism into your design. An anachronism is something that doesn’t fit within the period it is placed. For example you might be working on a production of Wedekind’s Spring Awakening which is originally set in the 1890’s. You may have period costumes from that time but decide that all the young people in the cast will wear modern trainers. In this way you are trying to make a link between the world of the play and our world today over a hundred years later. Have a look at the Baz Luhrmann’s film of Romeo and Juliet and spot the many anachronisms used in that.

You need to think about the style of the production, you will get the answer to this from your director and from the director’s concept. The production may have a large complicated naturalistic set which requires period accuracy for the costumes, authentic clothes that match the period of the play accurately. It maybe that the director has decided on a minimalist approach; a bare stage with little design elements and representational items of setting. If this is the case your costume design needs to work with and enhance the chosen form.

REMEMBER if you are working within minimalism do not fall into the trap of dressing all your actors identically. It maybe that your cast are working as an ensemble and all playing the same character as you might do for a production of Sarah Kane’s 4:48 Psychosis, but as costume designer you must ask yourself the question, ‘how will the examiner be able to identify the individual actors?’ Each must have a slight difference – maybe a different number printed on their T-Shirt, or a different coloured belt or a different hair style. It is vital the examiner can identify each actor.

SYMBOLISM

Maybe your costume design could use symbolism, using symbols to communicate themes and ideas to your audience. For example, the play ‘Tuesday’ by Edward Bond is essentially a naturalistic play in which you would probably choose to dress your actors in contemporary clothing. But think, does this really show off your understanding of the play’s themes and ideas? The main character, a teenager called Irene attempts to shoot her father in the play and can be seen as being innocent at the start of the play and having lost her innocence at the end of the play. As a costume designer you may want to show your examiner that you understand this change in character. You may dress Irene in a simple white T-Shirt when she is seen as innocent at the start of the play and have a costume change into a red T-Shirt for the end of the play.

**FOR YOU EXAM**

The exam board says a costume designer must show the examiner:

A PORTFOLIO OF RESEARCH

A JUSTIFICATION OF THE FINAL DESIGN DECISIONS

THE FINAL DESIGN OF AT LEAST ONE CONSTRUCTED COSTUME

Have your actors come into your presentation and model the costumes. Ensure you are able to talk through the costumes in detail, explaining to the examiner all your choices.

THE FINAL DESIGN OF ALL THE CHARACTERS IN THE PRODUCTION (there must be at least three different designs here)

A COSTUME PLOT

This is a developed document. This is a table or list which lays out the costume and accessories for each character for every scene of the play. You must have a costume plot.

The scene you are discussing

Each character’s name under which is written specifically what the character is wearing and what accessories they have.

You should also be able to show exactly where you sourced each item of costume; this means you should have a list of what costumes (if any) you made, and what costumes you borrowed (if so where from) and what costumes were found or bought.

You could also include in your written work for the examiner

Your mood boards

Your research ideas

A marked up script with all your initial ideas for costume design

Colour charts exploring the types of colour you will use

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| **SOME PRODUCTION SUPPORT OPTION SPECIFICS!** | |
| **SOUND** |

**Do not attempt this production support option unless you have experience in this field and access to recording / mixing equipment and programmes.**

A good sound design can instantly locate a play; for example the sound of trains or aeroplanes can instantly communicate a setting for the audience, the sound of wind and rain can instantly create mood and atmosphere for an audience. Good sound design locates the action of a scene for the audience. Sound can create or reinforce the audience’s emotional response to the stage action, and the use of music as an underscore can support the emotive engagement of the audience. Film sound tracks are excellent examples of this.

Equity is the trade union for the entertainment industry. A union will work to ensure your working conditions, pay, and wellbeing are looked after. Equity have some excellent fact sheets that describe different roles within the performing arts industry. There is a useful fact sheet on all the specific design roles we are exploring:

[www.equity.org.uk/Industry/CareersAdvice/Factsheets](http://www.equity.org.uk/Industry/CareersAdvice/Factsheets)

In the first instance complete a technical AUDIT, this is to make a list of all the resources that are available to you.

Then think about auditing your knowledge of sound design. Do you have enough subject knowledge to do this well?

Diegetic and Non Diegetic Sound

Diegetic sound is sound that the characters on stage are aware of, a telephone ring, a door slamming. What is important to remember is the direction of the sound. For diegetic sound effects you must place your speaker in the correct location. For example, in order for the sound of a telephone ringing to be authentic, it needs to come from the same area as the telephone itself, not from the speakers at the back of the auditorium.

Where possible use acoustic sound for these types of effects. If the stage action requires a door slamming then maybe you can produce the sound effect live? This is known as acoustic sound.

Non diegetic sound is sound heard by the audience that is not part of the world of the characters. Music underscoring a scene that is used to build tension for the audience is non-diegetic sound. Non diegetic sound can also be known as ambient sound, this is sounds that create mood and atmosphere.

Beginning Your Research

* Read and analyse the play-text itself looking for sound requirements and ideas for the play.
* Sound effects are recorded in a script by using the abbreviation SFX.
* There will be obvious moments in the texts where sound is required, and it may actually suggest sound effects in the stage directions. Highlight these moments.
* Highlight moments where you think music would be useful to underscore a scene. This means playing music that will support the mood and atmosphere the scene is attempting to create. Film sound tracks are masters at the use of underscore to manipulate the way the audience feels and responds to a particular scene.

If you are using music to underscore a scene, do not use music with lyrics as the song lyrics mixed with the spoken words of the text get confused and communication to your audience is not clear. Save any evocative music that includes song lyrics for the end of scenes or for the end of the play itself where there will be no spoken words from the performers on stage. Songs can have a great effect on the audience and help build the emotions you hope your audience feels. Think about specific songs that you might utilise, maybe at the end of a scene, or the end of the play or for specific movement sequences or sections of physical theatre in your production.

* Highlight moments where you think sound will support the communication of location for the audience. Find moments where you could use sound effects to tell the audience where the stage action is taking place.
* Consider the time period and context of your play text. Are there particular sound effects or musical instruments that will create a time period for the audience?

Once you have started your research, you need to present the director with some initial ideas so you can begin the design discussions with the director and ensure that your initial ideas fit the director’s concept.

You do not have to operate the sound yourself. Once you have created a cue sheet (a description of this follows towards the end of this page) you might trust another technician to operate your sound effects, leaving you free to possibly produce some live sound effects. If you have access to a live microphone you might think about how you support the stage action through live sound. For example trickling water between two cups into a microphone may create the sound of rain, or you might experiment with ways of creating live heart beats, or you might experiment with cutting up pieces of a cabbage to sound like bits of body being cut up! You could produce some music live, maybe on a keyboard or with percussion instruments. If you are working with Brechtian techniques you might decide that all the live sound is created in front of the audience, breaking the illusion of the play.

**FOR YOU EXAM**

The exam board says a lighting designer must show the examiner:

NOTES ON YOUR RESEARCH ON THE PLAY

A JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHOICE OF EFFECTS AND OR MUSIC

THE FINAL SOUND TAPES

The examiner will hear your sound effects in action during the performance, but you may wish to highlight a couple of effects you are proud of, and play examples of these during your presentation. The exam board says that you must create at least four sound cues, and at least one of these must be created and recorded live by you. This means you can use sound effect CDs and Music CDs but you must record at least one of your sound effects yourself. Your play text may have a scene outside a school in the playground, and therefore you might decide to go to a playground with your microphone and mini disc or hard disk recorder and actually capture the sound in the playground live.

A CUE SHEET

The essential information a cue sheet must have on is:

The cue number

SFX 1 | SFX 2

The page number and line in the text where the cue happens

A description of your sound cue

The sound of a football match crowd roaring as a goal is scored

The source

BBC Sound Effects CD 5 Track 3 or

Recorded live on 28/12/2008 outside Losely Fields Primary School in their playground

The length of the cue

14 seconds

The Output Level (the volume level on the mixing desk)

15

You could also include in your written work for the examiner

Any sound effects you collected and rejected as part of your research period

Your research ideas

A marked up script with all your initial ideas for sound

You might produce a list of equipment you have used during your design process. You could take photographs of all the equipment and then copy and paste the image into a document where you can add notes around the image explaining how the equipment works, labelling pieces of the equipment and explaining exactly you used the equipment