

GCSE Drama and AS and A Level Drama and Theatre: Decisions on Conditions and Guidance



In March 2015 we published a consultation about the rules and guidance we proposed to put in place for reformed GCSEs in drama and reformed AS and A levels in drama and theatre.

This consultation set out draft Subject Level Conditions and guidance which would apply to all reformed GCSEs in drama and reformed AS and A levels in drama and theatre.

We have reviewed the responses to the consultation and are now announcing our decisions. We are also publishing a more detailed analysis of the responses.¹

GCSE drama

Conditions

We proposed to require all reformed GCSEs in drama to:

- comply with the subject content requirements published by the Department for Education,² and with our assessment objectives;
- in line with our previous decisions, allocate 60 per cent of marks to non-exam assessment, with the remaining 40 per cent allocated to exams; and
- comply with our rules and guidance around assessments.

Respondents did not comment on these proposals.

We have reviewed our proposed Conditions following consultation and are satisfied that they are fit for purpose and consistent with our overall approach to reformed GCSEs. We have therefore decided to confirm our proposals.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-dramadrama-and-theatre

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-drama

Assessment requirements

For GCSE, we proposed that exam boards must:

- set and publish a list of performance texts and key extracts on which exam questions will be based;
- ensure that students do not receive credit for questions in the exam on a piece they have performed for the non-exam assessment;
- require students to participate in at least two performances (both of which test students' performance and devising skills) – one devised piece in response to a task set by the exam board and one performance text;
- ensure that students do not fulfil their performance requirements by performing two monologues;
- require evidence of both students' performance and their contribution to the devising of that performance; and
- either mark the non-exam assessment themselves, or moderate teachers' marking.

Respondents raised a number of concerns about our proposals – in particular, the length of performances, the limited range of texts, the use of tasks set by exam boards for devised performances, and the marking of non-exam assessment.

We have made changes to our proposals in response to the concerns raised. We have removed the requirement for exam boards to set the task for the devised performance, and have allowed more flexibility around how exam boards structure the non-exam assessment. We have also removed some unnecessary constraints on the design of assessments to give exam boards more freedom to produce specifications that will work for schools.

Our revised rules mean that exam boards will need to:

- set and publish a list of set texts for the written exams;
- ensure that if students perform one of the set texts, they do not receive credit for questions in the exam that cover the same set text;
- require students to complete at least two performances – a devised performance and a text-based performance, only one of which can be a monologue;
- require, as appropriate, evidence of students' performance and their contribution to the devising of that performance;

- mark at least one of the two performances themselves, with any remaining performances marked by teachers and moderated by the exam board; and
- explain in their assessment strategies how they are managing the risks associated with their chosen approach.

Guidance

We proposed to introduce guidance clarifying:

- how exam boards should interpret the terms “complete and substantial performance text” and “key extract” in the subject content;
- the interpretation of our assessment objectives; and
- our expectations for group sizes in performance and the assessment of non-performance roles.

Respondents broadly supported our proposed guidance, but did raise concerns that our guidance on interpreting the subject content could exclude some important works.

In response to this comment, we have revised our guidance so that it now suggests exam boards should interpret the term “complete and substantial performance text” as a text that lasts at least 45 minutes when performed. We recognise that the length of a text cannot be measured precisely, but believe this is the best way to distinguish between texts. In any event, exam boards may take a different approach, provided they can explain why it is appropriate.

AS and A level drama and theatre

Conditions

We proposed to require all reformed AS and A levels in drama and theatre to:

- comply with the subject content requirements published by the Department for Education,³ and with our assessment objectives;
- in line with our previous decisions, allocate 60 per cent of marks to non-exam assessment, with the remaining 40 per cent allocated to exams; and
- comply with our rules and guidance around assessments.

Respondents did not comment on these proposals.

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-drama-and-theatre

We have reviewed our proposed Conditions following consultation and are satisfied that they are fit for purpose and consistent with our overall approach to reformed AS and A level qualifications. We have therefore decided to confirm our proposed Conditions.

Assessment requirements

We proposed to introduce different assessment requirements for AS and A level, reflecting the different requirements specified in the subject content.

For AS, we proposed that exam boards must:

- set and publish a list of performance texts and key extracts on which exam questions will be based;
- ensure that students do not receive credit for questions in the exam on a piece they have performed for the non-exam assessment;
- require students to participate in at least one performance (which tests students' performance and devising skills) based on a performance text;
- require evidence of both students' performance and their contribution to the devising of that performance; and
- mark the non-exam assessment themselves.

For A level, we proposed that exam boards must:

- set and publish a list of performance texts and key extracts on which exam questions will be based;
- ensure that students do not receive credit for questions in the exam on a piece they have performed for the non-exam assessment;
- require students to participate in at least two performances (both of which test students' performance and devising skills) – one devised piece in response to a task set by the exam board and one performance text;
- require evidence of both students' performance and their contribution to the devising of that performance; and
- mark the non-exam assessment themselves.

As at GCSE, respondents raised a number of concerns about our proposals – in particular, the length of performances, the limited range of texts, the use of tasks set by exam boards for devised performances, and the marking of non-exam assessment.

Again, we have made changes to our proposals in response to the concerns raised – in particular, removing the requirement for devised tasks set by exam boards and changing our approach to marking non-exam assessment. We have also removed some unnecessary constraints on the design of assessments to give exam boards more freedom to produce specifications that will work for schools.

Our revised rules mean that for both AS and A level, exam boards will need to:

- set and publish a list of set texts for the written exams;
- ensure that if students perform one of the set texts, they do not receive credit for questions in the exam that cover the same set text;
- require, as appropriate, evidence of students' performance and their contribution to the devising of that performance; and
- explain in their assessment strategies how they are managing the risks associated with their chosen approach.

At A level, exam boards will also need to:

- require students to complete at least two performances – a devised performance and a text-based performance, only one of which can be a monologue; and
- mark at least one of the two performances themselves, with any remaining performances marked by teachers and moderated by the exam board.

At AS, exam boards will need to require students to complete a text-based performance. We have given exam boards freedom to mark the non-exam assessment themselves, or to moderate teachers' marking.

Guidance

We proposed to introduce guidance clarifying:

- how exam boards should interpret the terms “complete and substantial performance text” and “key extract” in the subject content;
- the interpretation of our assessment objectives; and
- our expectations for group sizes in performance and the assessment of non-performance roles.

As at GCSE, respondents broadly supported our proposed guidance, but some did raise concerns that our guidance on interpreting the subject content could exclude some important works.

We have looked again at our proposals here, and while the length of a performed piece cannot be measured exactly, we think it is the best available way to ensure a measure of consistency between specifications. We remain of the view that our proposals are appropriate for AS and A level, and therefore adopt them unchanged.

Issues outside the scope of the consultation

A number of respondents also commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation, including:

- the Department for Education's subject content requirements; and
- the relative weighting of exams and non-exam assessment.

The subject content requirements are a matter for the Department for Education, which has carried out its own consultation.⁴

We have already considered the concerns raised about the use of written exams and the balance between exams and non-exam assessment in response to our earlier consultation.⁵ None of the responses to this consultation raised new issues. Our view remains that the most appropriate way to assess theoretical content in this subject is through written exams, and that our proposed assessment arrangements reflect the balance between theoretical and practical aspects of the subject content.

Next steps

We have published the following documents which set out our final rules and guidance for reformed GCSEs in drama and reformed AS and A levels in drama and theatre:

- *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Drama*⁶
- *GCSE Subject Level Guidance for Drama*⁷
- *GCE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Drama and Theatre*⁸
- *GCE Subject Level Guidance for Drama and Theatre*.⁹

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform--2

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-as-and-a-levels-new-subjects-to-be-taught-in-2016

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-drama

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-guidance-for-drama

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-drama-and-theatre

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-guidance-for-drama-and-theatre