AQA
Realising potential

GCSE DRAMA

(8261)

Specification
For teaching from September 2016 onwards
For exams in 2018 onwards

Version 1.5 19 August 2019

2 Specification at a glance

This qualification is linear. Linear means that students undertake all non-exam assessment (NEA) in the certification year and sit the written exam at the end of the course.

2.1 Subject content

The subject content details the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to develop throughout the course of study.

The subject content for GCSE Drama is divided into three components:

1. Understanding drama (page 11)
2. Devising drama (page 15)
3. Texts in practice (page 16)

Guidance is also provided on the theatrical skills students will need to work on.

In the practical components students may specialise in performing, lighting, sound, set, costume and/or puppets.

2.2 Assessments

Component 1: Understanding drama
What's assessed • Knowledge and understanding of drama and theatre • Study of one set play from a choice of six • Analysis and evaluation of the work of live theatre makers
How it's assessed • Written exam: 1 hour and 45 minutes • Open book • 80 marks • 40% of GCSE
Questions • Section A: multiple choice (4 marks) • Section B: four questions on a given extract from the set play chosen (44 marks) • Section C: one question (from a choice) on the work of theatre makers in a single live theatre production (32 marks)

Component 2: Devising drama (practical)
What's assessed • Process of creating devised drama • Performance of devised drama (students may contribute as performer or designer) • Analysis and evaluation of own work
How it's assessed • Devising log (60 marks) • Devised performance (20 marks) • 80 marks in total • 40% of GCSE
This component is marked by teachers and moderated by AQA.

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Component 3: Texts in practice (practical)
What's assessed • Performance of two extracts from one play (students may contribute as performer or designer) Free choice of play but it must contrast with the set play chosen for Component 1
How it's assessed • Performance of Extract 1 (20 marks) **and** Extract 2 (20 marks) • 40 marks in total • 20% of GCSE
This component is marked by AQA.

3 Subject content

Our GCSE Drama offers students the opportunity to explore drama as a practical art form in which ideas and meaning are communicated to an audience through choices of form, style and convention.

Students will create, perform and respond to drama informed by their theoretical knowledge of drama and theatre.

The subject content details the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to develop throughout the course of study.

The subject content for GCSE Drama is divided into three components:

1. Understanding drama (page 11)
2. Devising drama (page 15)
3. Texts in practice (page 16)

For the practical units students choose to work as performers or designers (design students may choose lighting, sound, set, costume or puppets).

Guidance is provided in Guidance on theatrical skills (page 17).

3.1 Understanding drama

This subject content is assessed in a written exam.

See Component 1: Understanding drama (page 21) for details.

3.1.1 Knowledge and understanding

Students must develop knowledge and understanding of the following:

Content	Details
Characteristics of performance text(s) and dramatic work(s)	• genre • structure • character • form • style • language • sub-text • character motivation and interaction • the creation of mood and atmosphere • the development of pace and rhythm • dramatic climax • stage directions • the practical demands of the text.

Content	Details
Social, cultural and historical contexts	• the social, cultural and historical context in which the performance texts studied are set • the theatrical conventions of the period in which the performance texts studied were created.
How meaning is interpreted and communicated	• performance conventions • use of performance space and spatial relationships on stage • actor and audience configuration • relationships between performers and audience • design fundamentals such as scale, shape, colour, texture • the design of props and the design of sets such as revolves, trucks, projection, multimedia, pyrotechnics, smoke machines, flying • the design of costume including hair and make-up • the design of lighting such as direction, colour, intensity, special effects • the design of sound such as direction, amplification, music, sound effects both live and recorded • performers' vocal interpretation of character such as accent, volume, pitch, timing, pace, intonation, phrasing, emotional range, delivery of lines • performers' physical interpretation of character such as build, age, height, facial features, movement, posture, gesture, facial expression.

Drama and theatre terminology and how to use it appropriately	• stage positioning:
	  • upstage (left, right, centre)
	  • downstage (left, right, centre)
	  • centre stage.
	• staging configuration:
	  • theatre in the round
	  • proscenium arch
	  • thrust stage
	  • traverse
	  • end on staging
	  • promenade.
	
	Students should have a general understanding of the implications of the above stage configurations on the use of the performance space.

Content	Details
The roles and responsibilities of theatre makers in contemporary professional practice	Roles: • playwright • performer • understudy • lighting designer • sound designer • set designer • costume designer • puppet designer • technician • director • stage manager • theatre manager. Knowledge and understanding should cover: • the activities each may undertake on a day-to-day basis • the aspect(s) of the rehearsal/performance process each is accountable for (their contribution to the whole production being a success).

3.1.2 Area of study 1 – Set play

Students must study and explore practically **one** set play chosen from the list below.

Specific editions are prescribed for these plays.

Please note the year from which the plays will be assessed and the year from which they can be taught.

Questions will not be asked on *The 39 Steps*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* after summer 2021.

Play	Edition	Taught from/until
The Crucible by Arthur Miller	Methuen Student Editions, ISBN 978-1408108390	• Taught from: 2016 • Assessed from: 2018 • Assessed until: N/A
Blood Brothers by Willy Russell	Methuen Modern Classics, ISBN 978-0413767707	• Taught from: 2016 • Assessed from: 2018 • Assessed until: N/A
The 39 Steps by John Buchan/ Patrick Barlow	Samuel French, ISBN 978-0573114403	• Taught from: 2016 • Assessed from: 2018 • Assessed until: 2021

Play	Edition	Taught from/until
Hansel and Gretel by Carl Grose (Kneehigh Theatre)	Oberon Books, ISBN 978-1849430579	• Taught from: 2016 • Assessed from: 2018 • Assessed until: 2021
Noughts and Crosses by Malorie Blackman/Dominic Cooke	Nick Hern Modern Plays, ISBN 978-1854599391	• Taught from: 2016 • Assessed from: 2018 • Assessed until: N/A
A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare	Penguin Shakespeare Edition, ISBN 978-0141012605	• Taught from: 2016 • Assessed from: 2018 • Assessed until: 2021
Around the World in 80 Days by Jules Verne/Laura Eason	Nick Hern Modern Plays, ISBN 978-1848425170	• Taught from: 2020 • Assessed from: 2022 • Assessed until: N/A
Things I know to be True by Andrew Bovell	Nick Hern Modern Plays, ISBN 978-1848425767	• Taught from: 2020 • Assessed from: 2022 • Assessed until: N/A
Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare	Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN 978-0230232082	• Taught from: 2020 • Assessed from: 2022 • Assessed until: N/A
A Taste of Honey by Shelagh Delaney	Methuen Drama, ISBN 978-1408106013	• Taught from: 2020 • Assessed from: 2022 • Assessed until: N/A

Study should be targeted at:

- developing knowledge and understanding (as described in Knowledge and understanding (page 11)) of the characteristics and context of the whole play
- exploring ideas for how the play may be interpreted practically.

The exam will include one compulsory short answer question for all students linking design and context and/or theatrical conventions. Students don't need to have gained practical experience of design to answer this question.

One part of Section B will offer students the choice of answering as a performer or designer (lighting, sound, set, costume, puppets).

Students must not answer Section B and Section C of the exam on the same play ie the live production seen cannot be their set play.

3.1.3 Area of study 2 – Live theatre production

Students must learn how to analyse and evaluate the work of live theatre makers (performers and/or designers).

Students should aim to understand productions in terms of the relevant content listed in Knowledge and understanding (page 11) and in addition consider:

- how the play has been interpreted in the production seen and what messages the company might be trying to communicate
- the skills demonstrated by the performers and how successfully meaning was communicated to the audience by the performers
- the design skills demonstrated in the production and how successfully meaning was communicated to the audience through design.

To aid their analysis students should carry out background research into the production.

They may read the play and reviews of the production and should develop an understanding of:

- the plot and characters
- specific features or hallmarks of the style/genre of the production
- the context of the play/production.

Live theatre could include:

- plays
- physical theatre
- theatre in education
- musical theatre.

Productions may be professional or amateur (not peer).

For the purposes of this specification live theatre can include digital recordings or streamed productions. The original production must have been performed live by the company no earlier than five years before the commencement of the student's course.

Students certificating after 1 January 2019 are required to experience live performance – in which they are a member of the audience in the same performance space as the performers. This may be a professional or amateur, but not a peer, performance. Schools/colleges must submit a 'Live Performance Statement' (which will be available on our website) to confirm that all students have completed this requirement. Failure to provide this statement prior to 1 May in the year of certification will be treated as maladministration. Students may still complete the 'Live theatre production' section of the exam paper referring to digital recordings or streamed productions.

Teachers must ensure that students see at least one performance which will enable them to access the exam questions and mark scheme in full. We recommend that this performance is a minimum of 50 minutes in duration (excluding any intervals or breaks) and that it includes at least two actors, dialogue and a range of production values (lighting, sound, set and costume).

Students must not answer Section B and Section C of the exam on the same play ie the live production seen cannot be their set play.

3.2 Devising drama

This subject content is assessed practically.

Each student must choose to be assessed as a:

- performer or
- lighting designer or
- sound designer or
- set designer or

- costume designer or
- puppet designer.

Costume designers may choose to include make-up and/or hair and/or masks. Set designers may choose to include design of props.

Each student must choose one specialism only for all the Devising drama content.

See Component 2: Devising drama (page 23) for details.

3.2.1 Creating devised drama

Students must learn how to create and develop ideas to communicate meaning in a devised theatrical performance.

Students must draw on and demonstrate a practical understanding of the subject content listed in Knowledge and understanding (page 11).

Students must develop their ability to:

- carry out research
- develop their own ideas
- collaborate with others
- rehearse, refine and amend their work in progress
- analyse and evaluate their own process of creating devised drama.

For assessment, students must produce an individual Devising log documenting their devising process and an analysis and evaluation of their contribution.

See The Devising log (page 26) for details.

3.2.2 Performing devised drama

Students must learn how to contribute to devised drama in a live theatre context for an audience. They must contribute as either a performer or designer.

Students must draw on and demonstrate a practical understanding of the subject content listed in Knowledge and understanding (page 11).

They must develop their ability to:

- create and communicate meaning
- realise artistic intention in devised drama.

For assessment, students must perform or create realised designs for a devised duologue or group piece.

See The devised performance (page 28) for details.

3.3 Texts in practice

This subject content is assessed practically.

Each student must choose to be assessed as a:

- performer or
- lighting designer or
- sound designer or
- set designer or

- costume designer or
- puppet designer.

Costume designers may choose to include make-up and/or hair and/or masks. Set designers may choose to include design of props.

Each student must choose one specialism only for all the Texts in practice content.

Students may choose the same or a different specialism to the one chosen for the Devising drama content.

Students must learn how to contribute to text-based drama in a live theatre context for an audience.

Students must draw on and demonstrate a practical understanding of the subject content listed in Knowledge and understanding (page 11).

They must develop their ability to:

- interpret texts
- create and communicate meaning
- realise artistic intention in text-based drama.

For assessment, students must perform or create realised designs for two extracts from one play which contrasts to the set play studied in Component 1.

See Component 3: Texts in practice (page 30) for details.

3.4 Guidance on theatrical skills

3.4.1 Performer

Students who have chosen performing as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to commit dialogue to memory for devised performances and/or learn text they are performing for text-based performances
- develop the ability to interpret and/or create and perform a character as appropriate to the demands of the performance
- develop a range of vocal skills and techniques eg clarity of diction, inflection, accent, intonation and phrasing; pace, pause and timing; projection, pitch; emotional range; song and/or choral speaking
- develop a range of physical skills and techniques eg movement, body language, posture, gesture, gait, co-ordination, stillness, timing, control; facial expression; eye contact, listening, expression of mood; spatial awareness; interaction with other performers; dance and choral movement
- develop an appropriate performer/audience relationship and ensure sustained engagement throughout the performance
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

3.4.2 Lighting designer

Students who have chosen lighting design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise lighting that contributes positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicates intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise lighting capable of establishing the location, time and/or to enhance mood or atmosphere
- develop the ability to design and realise a range of lighting effects eg through the use of colour, gobos, gels, filters, gauzes, projections and lighting states through intensity, fading and cross-fading, blackout, shadow, directional lighting
- develop the ability to select the appropriate equipment and determine its position in order to realise the intended design eg choice of lanterns and lamps – profile, Fresnel, flood, moving light, birdies, strobes; rigged, floor and side lights; angle and focus of lanterns
- develop an understanding of how to apply rigging, positioning, angling and focusing
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

It is the student's lighting **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to operate the lighting equipment when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

3.4.3 Sound designer

Students who have chosen sound design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise sounds that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise sounds capable of establishing the location, period, time and/or to enhance the mood or atmosphere
- develop the ability to select the appropriate equipment to realise the intended sound design eg use of microphones, amplifiers, software, musical or percussion instruments
- develop the ability to deploy different types of sounds as appropriate to realise the intended sound design eg live and recorded sound, directional sound, music
- develop the ability to deploy a range of sound effects to realise the intended sound design through eg audio effects, edited and/or mixed sound, distortion, reverb, echo, volume/amplification, fades, soundscapes
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

It is the student's sound **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to operate the sound equipment when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

3.4.4 Set designer

Students who have chosen set design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise sets that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise sets capable of establishing the location, period, time and/or to enhance the mood or atmosphere
- develop the ability to select the appropriate materials and equipment to realise the set design eg flats, cyclorama, floor coverings, drapes, furnishings, projections/media
- develop the ability to realise sets showing an understanding of stage configuration, performer/audience relationship, action taking place, positioning of entrances/exits, effective, smooth and fluent scene changes, use of space, scale, levels

- develop the ability to design and realise sets selecting as appropriate dressings, furnishings, material, colour, texture, props
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

It is the student's set **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to construct the set when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

3.4.5 Costume designer

Costume designs may include masks, hair and make-up as well as clothing.

Students who have chosen costume design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise costumes that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise costumes capable of establishing the character, period, location and/or contributing to the mood or atmosphere as appropriate
- develop the ability to select appropriate materials to realise costumes showing an understanding of fabrics, textures, trimmings, accessories etc
- develop the ability to create costumes showing an understanding of colour, shape, appropriate fit, period detail, ethnic authenticity, movement constraints
- develop the ability to create costumes showing an understanding of the intentions of the performance, individual performer requirements, theatrical devices
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

Where students include make-up and hair in their designs they are expected to:

- develop the ability to select appropriate materials to realise their make-up design showing an understanding of different types of make-up eg grease-paint, liquids, powders, facial hair, eyelashes, gum, putty, prosthetics, stage blood
- develop the ability to create character through make-up: aging, fantasy characters
- develop the ability to create hairstyles appropriate to character, period, age, ethnicity.

It is the student's costume **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to assemble the costume(s) when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

3.4.6 Puppet designer

Students who have chosen puppet design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise puppets that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise a puppet with a well-defined character and audience appeal
- develop the ability to select the appropriate materials to realise a puppet showing an understanding of construction materials, colour, texture, shape, costume, potential for characterisation
- develop the ability to realise a puppet showing an understanding of structural design, size, shape, scale; functionality, performer manipulation skills and intentions of the performance
- develop the ability to realise a puppet showing an understanding of a variety of puppet types eg rod, string, human-arm, shadow
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

It is the student's puppet **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to construct and/or operate the puppet(s) when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

Marking the Devised performance

This is the mark scheme to be used for the Devised performance in Component 2.

There are 20 marks available. Award either 1 mark, 2 marks, 3 marks, or 4 marks for each of the following five criteria.

The assessment objective being assessed is AO2: Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance.

Mark	Level of theatrical skill	Range of theatrical skills demonstrated	Contribution to the effectiveness of the piece	Inventiveness of individual's work	Success in realising individual artistic intention*
4	**Highly competent, highly developed and sustained** use of theatrical skill.	**Extensive** range of theatrical skills demonstrated.	**Outstanding** contribution to the effectiveness of the piece.	**Highly inventive** work throughout.	**Highly successful** realisation of individual artistic intention.
3	**Developed, secure and consistent** use of theatrical skill.	**Wide** range of theatrical skills demonstrated.	**Considerable** contribution to the effectiveness of the piece.	Work has **many inventive qualities** or moments.	**Secure success** in realising individual artistic intention.
2	**Some developing competency** in use of theatrical skill, **not always sustained**.	**Fair** range of theatrical skills demonstrated.	**Some meaningful** contributions to the effectiveness of the piece.	**Some useful inventive** ideas.	**Some** success in realising individual artistic intention.
1	**Little competency and little consistency** in use of theatrical skill.	**Narrow** range of theatrical skills demonstrated.	**Little** contribution to the effectiveness of the piece.	**Little inventiveness.**	**Little** success in realising individual artistic intention.
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.

* This must be judged against the Statement of Dramatic Intentions provided by the student (how far has the student met their aims?).