

Pearson response to the Ofqual Consultation on GCSE, AS and A level Drama, Conditions and Guidance

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Organisation details

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Would you like us to treat your response as confidential?*

If you answer yes, we will not include your details in any list of people or organisations that responded to the consultation.

() Yes (X) No

Is this a personal response or an official response on behalf of your organisation?*

() Personal response (Please answer the question 'If you ticked 'Personal views'...')

(X) Official response (Please answer the question 'Type of responding organisation')

If you ticked 'Personal views' which of the following are you?

() Student

() Parent or carer

() Teacher (but responding in a personal capacity)

() Other, including general public (Please state below)

If you ticked "Official response from an organisation/group", please respond accordingly:

Type of responding organisation*

- Awarding organisation
- Local authority
- School or college (please answer the question below)
- Academy chain
- Private training provider
- University or other higher education institution
- Employer
- Other representative or interest group (please answer the question below)

School or college type

- Comprehensive or non-selective academy
- State selective or selective academy
- Independent
- Special school
- Further education college
- Sixth form college
- Other (please state below)

Type of representative group or interest group

- Group of awarding organizations
- Union
- Employer or business representative group
- Subject association or learned society
- Equality organisation or group
- School, college or teacher representative group
- Other (please state below)

Nation*

- England
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Other EU country
- Non-EU country

How did you find out about this consultation?

- Our newsletter or another one of our communications
- Our website
- Internet search
- Other

May we contact you for further information?

- Yes No

Question 1

Do you have any comments on the draft Conditions for new GCSE Drama?

(X) Yes () No

If yes, please provide them here:

In section 1.4 on page 10, it states that a key extract should be at least 15 minutes when performed. On page 11 it states that a key extract should be 10 minutes when performed. These sections contradict each other. Furthermore it is unclear what this time stipulation is in relation to as the subject content states that a key extract is a 'key scene or moment' in the play and a minimum performance time has been stipulated for candidates. This extra time stipulation is unnecessary and contradicts the definition in the subject content. If this time stipulation is in relation to the texts studied in the examination, the suggested 15 minutes is too long to be a key scene.

In addition, in this section it also states that a complete and substantial performance text should be at least 60 minutes in length. This is too long at GCSE because it removes the option for students to explore National Theatre Connections plays which are all under an hour long when performed. These are plays that are especially written for students of this age to explore and perform and as such are engaging and have appropriate content in terms of themes and language. We propose that for GCSE that the minimum length of the text when performed should be 45 minutes.

Question 2

Do you have any comments on the draft requirements in relation to assessments which are not Assessments by Examination for new GCSE Drama?

(X) Yes () No

If yes, please provide them here:

Section 1.22 on page 18 permits awarding organisations to either moderate or examine the NEA components or use a combination of both. This raises significant issues around comparability, as one board may be examining every student in a cohort and another may just see a recording of a small sample of candidates. Some centres may feel compelled to choose an awarding body on the basis of the proportion of marks they feel they have greater control over, given the increased proportion of examined assessment. Assessment methodology is not an appropriate grounds for competition, and a consistent approach should be taken on this key issue.

To ensure a consistent approach between boards we suggest the original wording of:
'An awarding organisation must ensure that the evidence generated by each Learner for either the Devised Performance or the Extract Performance is marked by the awarding organisation or a person connected to the awarding organisation.

In respect of whichever of the Devised Performance or the Extract Performance does not fall within the preceding paragraph, the evidence generated by a Learner may be marked –

- (a) by the awarding organisation or a person connected to the awarding organisation,
- (b) by a Centre, or
- (c) through a combination of (a) and (b).'

We also believe that it should be stipulated in the first sentence above that it is the component where **process** forms the majority of what is being assessed that should be assessed by the centre.

There is a contradiction in Sections 1.17 and 1.22, with differing use of the words **must** and **may**. Both instances should say **may**, in order that students have the option to produce a legitimate variety of evidence.

Section 1.17 (first bullet on p14) also states that AO1 and AO2 have to be assessed through both the Devised performance and the Text-based performance. In Drama it is valid to assess the candidates' performance and process skills separately or in combination – there is not a difference in terms of demand, validity or the experience of the candidate. If it is possible to assess AO4 in either component, we believe that there should be no such restrictions on where to assess the other two AOs. Each board would need to justify their approach to how the AOs have been distributed in the assessment strategy.

The fourth bullet on page 14 (section 1.17) states that exam boards will set the non-exam assessment tasks for the devised performance. It is not necessary for the exam boards to set a task for the devised piece. A brief for devising simply outlines a starting point or stimulus, which the students then use to create and develop a piece of drama from. It can be as open as a word, a theme, an image or a quotation. There is no reason for all students to work from the same brief; in fact it is likely to stifle creativity and engagement unnecessarily. Centres often devise from a stimuli which is pertinent to their local area or is topical and if we set the task we are removing this as an option for them.

The open nature of the 'task' makes it difficult to imagine a scenario in which a centre could set something that would prohibit from accessing the full range of marks. Other reformed A level qualifications, such as History, require candidates/centres to set their own task and we believe that that should also be the case in Drama.

In section 1.22 on page 17 it goes on to detail that the task must not be communicated before 1 September in the academic year of awarding. Due to the amount of content that centres need to cover for this qualification, as well as two final performances and an exam to prepare for, students will need to begin work on this task in the first year of their course. This will not encourage teaching to the task, as the assessment is of the process they have been through and the creation and development of their ideas rather than an assessment of their end product.

Question 3

Do you have any comments on the draft Guidance on assessment objectives for new GCSE Drama?

(X) Yes () No

If yes, please provide them here:

On page 25, the guidance on AO4 references a 'reasonable balance' between own work and the work of others. As this AO weighting is fixed at 20% and we have to assess half of it in the exam and half in the NEA, we believe that it should say an equal balance between own work and the work of others.

Also in the guidance on AO4, the 3rd sub-bullet under the heading interpretations and definitions we believe that the analysis and evaluation should be in relation to knowledge, understanding and skills. Therefore it should say that the analysis and evaluation should be assessed in relation to paragraphs 7 and section 8 of the content document.

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the draft Conditions for new A level and AS Drama and Theatre?

() Yes (X) No

If yes, please provide them here:

In section 2.4 on page 27, it stipulates that a key extract should be at least 15 minutes. It is unclear why this time stipulation has been included as the subject content states that a key extract is a 'key scene or moment' in the play and a minimum performance time has been stipulated for candidates. This extra time stipulation is unnecessary and contradicts with the definition in the subject content. If this time stipulation is in relation to the texts studied in the examination, the suggested 15 minutes is too long to be a key scene.

Question 5

Do you have any comments on the draft requirements in relation to assessments which are not Assessments by Examination for new A level and AS Drama and Theatre?

(X) Yes () No

If yes, please provide them here:

Section 2.15 on page 32 states that all non-exam assessment tasks at AS and A level must be marked by the exam board. It is our belief that a component which is primarily assessing **process** should be assessed by the centre, in-line with the GCSE.

Validity of assessment

At AS and A level, AO1 assesses the creation and development of ideas to communicate meaning as part of the theatre making process, making connections between dramatic theory and practice. This is an iterative and collaborative process, which is most validly assessed through having an assessor in the room. The creation and development of ideas will take place over many weeks, and it would not be viable for an external assessor to be present throughout.

The technical interpretation document clearly states that the emphasis of AO1 should be on the practical creation and development of students' own ideas. In order for an external assessor to be able to award marks for this, all of the practical work would have to be recorded by the teacher and then watched by the examiner. From a

logistical perspective this would be a huge burden on centres as they would have to ensure that each group of students could be clearly seen and heard on the recording. In addition, it would not be possible for exam boards to find enough examiners to watch all of the footage for each student.

As such, in order to make it feasible to assess the process, the exam boards would have to set time restrictions on how much recorded evidence would need to be submitted. This would then create an artificial situation, where teachers would have to film particular sections of the practical exploration to ensure relevant discussions and practical explorations were captured. If we were to remove the recording of the practical exploration for logistical and validity reasons, the only way of adequately assessing the process would be for students to produce written evidence to detail what they had done. This would remove the practical emphasis of this assessment objective which would go against what stakeholders and HE recommended. It is for the benefit of the candidates that we believe that the assessment of AO1 should be internally assessed.

Internal marking of AO1 will ensure the individuality and authenticity of each candidate's portfolio. This is particularly important in Drama where students will work as part of a group to create and develop ideas. The teacher will have a deeper understanding of the student's work, the process they have been through and the research they have done and therefore can testify with greater authority that what they have produced is authentic and individual. Teachers will annotate the students' work to show where marks have been allocated. This will increase the validity of internal marking through ensuring correct use of the mark scheme and highlighting if any additional support has been given to the student. The teacher is also best placed to know whether the work submitted is the student's own.

Alignment with other GCE qualifications

The proposal to externally mark all of the NEA externally is not aligned with the new accredited specifications which also assess process. For example, in AS/A Level Art and Design the process of creating work is part of the assessment and this is assessed internally by the teacher and then externally moderated by the awarding organisations. The assessment of process in Drama should be assessed in the same way as this, rather than being compared to the assessment of Music where the final outcome is what is being assessed rather than the process that the student has been through to get there.

The proposal to externally mark all of the NEA externally is also not aligned with the proposals for the new AS/ A level in Physical Education which permits internal

marking because 'internal marking by teachers can lead to a more balanced judgement about students' ability (particularly in team sports where an individual student's performance can be affected by the performance of their team-mates)'. This issue is equally pertinent in Drama and Theatre, as part of the creation and development of ideas for performance. A consistent approach should be taken to the assessment of subjects where the nature of skills and type of task being undertaken by students is similar.

Operational impact

External assessment of the A level Drama and Theatre non-examined assessment, which involves watching several hours of footage of students creating and developing ideas, would be very challenging to implement in terms of examiner recruitment and expertise, without it impacting negatively on an awarding organisation's ability to deliver the qualification on time and with high quality of marking maintained.

Recruitment of AAs in the current GCE Drama and Theatre specification requires significant investment to convert interested invitees to examiners each series as the conversion rate in this subject is low. Should the process NEA component require external marking, this effort in recruiting and retaining AAs would be significantly increased and would require fair remuneration of AAs for watching several hours of footage of each candidate. That is a marked increase on the length of time it takes to mark our current written papers (approx. 3 candidate papers per hour) and on the length of time that is required of a visiting examiner (approx. 3 hours to assess 9 candidates' performances).

There is currently a shortage of external visiting examiners for the legacy GCE Drama and Theatre qualification and so frequently some of the examiners take on extra sessions in order that we can ensure each centre gets an external examiner. In 2014, we had to invite 309 examiners in order to secure 191 contract acceptances, a rate of 62% acceptance. This figure of 191 AAs is below the 234 figure that we would ideally have to assess this component of the qualification. It would simply not be possible to recruit an adequate number of AAs if we had to add to this a visiting examiner at AS and the external assessment of a large number of hours of process per candidate for both AS and A Level.

We also have to factor in the requirement for AAs to mark the written paper, and the fact that this is now a requirement for GCSE, AS and A level.

Other comments

There is a contradiction in Sections 2.13 and 2.16, with differing use of the words **must** and **may**. Both instances should say **may**, in order that students have the option to produce a legitimate variety of evidence.

Section 2.13 (third bullet under A level sub-heading on p30) also states that AO1 and AO2 have to be assessed through both the Devised performance and the Text-based performance. In Drama it is valid to assess the candidates' performance and process skills separately or in combination – there is not a difference in terms of demand, validity or the experience of the candidate. If it is possible to assess AO4 in either component, we believe that there should be no such restrictions on where to assess the other two AOs. Each board would need to justify their approach to how the AOs have been distributed in the assessment strategy.

Also in section 2.13, the second bullet under the AS sub-head on page 31 states that at AS all of AO1, AO2 and AO4 have to be assessed in the text-based performance. This again removes legitimate variation between the specifications and limits awarding organisations to two components for an AS level. The minimum requirement set out in the subject content is to have one extract performance, but there is no maximum requirement stipulated. There is a lot of content required in the AS qualification - 1 text, 2 extracts and 1 practitioner. Some elements will be able to be validly assessed in the exam, but awarding organisations should have the option to cover the other elements in more than one component.

The first bullet on page 31 (section 2.13) states that exam boards will set the non-exam assessment tasks for the devised performance. It is not necessary for the exam boards to set a task for the devised piece. A brief for devising simply outlines a starting point or stimulus, which the students then use to create and develop a piece of drama from. It can be as open as a word, a theme, an image or a quotation. There is no reason for all students to work from the same brief; in fact it is likely to stifle creativity and engagement unnecessarily. Centres often devise from a stimuli which is pertinent to their local area or is topical and if we set the task we are removing this as an option for them.

The open nature of the 'task' makes it difficult to imagine a scenario in which a centre could set something that would prohibit from accessing the full range of marks. Other reformed A level qualifications, such as History, require candidates/centres to set their own task and we believe that that should also be the case in Drama.

In section 2.16 on page 35 it goes on to detail that the task must not be communicated before 1 September in the academic year of awarding. Due to the amount of content that centres need to cover for this qualification, as well as two final performances and an exam to prepare for, students will need to begin work on this task in the first year of their course. This will not encourage teaching to the task, as the assessment is of the process they have been through and the creation and development of their ideas rather than an assessment of their end product.

Question 6

Do you have any comments on the draft Guidance on assessment objectives for new A level and AS Drama and Theatre?

(X) Yes () No

If yes, please provide them here:

On page 41, Assessment Objective 1 – in the third bullet point under the heading interpretation and definitions, it says that the assessment objective should be targeted in the context of the knowledge and understanding, this should also include the context of skills, as it does in the GCSE. So the sentence would say 'The assessment objective should be targeted in the context of the knowledge, understanding and skills in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the Content Document'.

In addition, on page 44, Assessment Objective 4 - in the 3rd sub-bullet under the heading interpretations and definitions we believe that the analysis and evaluation should be in relation to knowledge, understanding and skills and therefore it should say that the analysis and evaluation should be in relation to paragraphs 10 and 11 of the content document. Currently it just references knowledge and understanding and refers to paragraph 7 which is the correct paragraph for the GCSE content rather than the A Level.

Question 7

We have not identified any ways in which the proposed requirements for reformed GCSEs or GCEs in Drama would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified? If so, what are they?

Yes No

If yes, please provide them here:

N/A

Question 8

Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic? If so, please comment on the additional steps we could take to mitigate negative impacts.

Yes No

If yes, please provide them here:

N/A

Question 9

Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Yes No

If yes, please provide them here:

N/A