

# **GCE Subject Criteria for Performing Arts**

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## **The criteria**

### **Introduction**

GCE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCE specifications in a given subject.

They provide the framework within which the awarding organisation creates the detail of the specification.

### **Aims and objectives**

1. Subject criteria define the relationship between the AS (3-unit), the AS double award (6-unit), the A level (6-unit) and the A level double award (12-unit).
2. Any GCE specification that contains significant elements of the subject performing arts must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria. Awarding organisations must ensure that GCE specifications and external assessment approaches are clearly differentiated from other qualifications they offer in this and similar subject(s) at this level.
3. The titles of the qualifications are:
  - Advanced Subsidiary General Certificate of Education in Performing Arts;
  - Advanced Subsidiary General Certificate of Education in Performing Arts (double award);
  - Advanced General Certificate of Education in Performing Arts;
  - Advanced General Certificate of Education in Performing Arts (double award).
4. All specifications in Performing Arts should encourage learners to develop broad skills, knowledge and understanding of the performing arts sectors. The term 'vocational' is used to characterise learning approaches and activities that are work related. In other words, reflecting current working practices, constraints and preoccupations of professionals in the performing arts industry. All specifications should prepare learners for further study or training in performing arts related occupations. To this end, learners should have opportunities to develop

appropriate materials (for example portfolios, show reels, photos or audition pieces) that support progression.

5. AS and AS (double award) specifications in Performing Arts should encourage learners to develop knowledge, skills and understanding of:
  - the techniques and approaches required in one or more performing arts areas of study;
  - working methods linked to industry practice;
  - how their own skills and aptitudes could be best employed in further study and/or work within related sectors;
  - the breadth of the sector through exploring its products and processes;
  - the outcomes of industry practice in terms of people, products, services and contexts;
  - social, historical and cultural influences.
6. In addition, the A level and A level (double award) specifications should develop ways of working that encourage learners to:
  - develop their skills, techniques and work attitudes to a standard that allows progression to further training or work;
  - apply working methods used by professionals as individuals and in teams as well as with audiences and commissioners;
  - explore independently, through creative and reflective experimentation, how meaning is communicated;
  - emphasise practical independence, self-management and improvement of performance over time.
7. All specifications should support progression to courses that are general or multidisciplinary throughout; start general and become more specialist; or maintain a single focus throughout.

## **Subject content**

8. AS and A level specifications should build on the knowledge, skills and understanding that may be acquired through level 2 qualifications in related subjects or through equivalent experience.

9. There are two main focuses of the performing arts industry:
  - performance/creative development: this covers professionals working in performance disciplines (for example actors, dancers, musicians, music technologists, DJs and entertainers) and others (for example choreographers, composers/song writers and directors) involving performing live or via a recorded or electronic medium;
  - production: this covers technical disciplines, including lighting, sound and theatre design, as well as stage management, arts administration and all other areas supporting production.
10. Throughout these criteria, the terms 'performance' and 'technique' should be read broadly to include all aspects related to creative working. The term 'commission' should be read to reflect appropriate work-based practice and economic constraints.
11. One hundred per cent of all specifications must consist of the areas of study laid out in paragraphs 17 to 26 set in the contexts of the focuses found in paragraph 9.
12. AS and A level specifications might emphasise one or both of the focuses found within paragraph 9. AS (double award) and A level (double award) specifications must offer a broad and balanced experience and the opportunity for learners to develop their skills and understanding fully in at least one focus found in paragraph 9.
13. Double award specifications must include considerable emphasis on the practical skills and techniques described in paragraphs 17- 26. This may allow for specification within a particular performance discipline or production/technical area or offer more general, multi-skilled opportunities.
14. Core content, which is common to all awarding organisation specifications, is grouped into four interlinked areas of study:
  - the performing arts sector (maintaining yourself as a performer) within the performing arts industries and new developments;
  - skills and processes (developing and sustaining personal technique in rehearsal and production);
  - skills and processes (creative development, rehearsal and production), including the development of ideas, the creative process and realisation of performance;

- analysis and evaluation of performing arts practices and products, and presenting this work in a vocationally relevant form.
15. The areas of study are described in paragraphs 17 - 26. All areas of study must be covered in awarding organisation specifications. Area of study titles do not necessarily constitute assessment unit titles.
16. All specifications must include appropriate health and safety information and be informed by the appropriate legislation and/or accepted best practice (for example dance practice, rigging or LX).

### **The performing arts sector**

#### **17. Performing arts industry**

- 17.1 All specifications: specifications must provide opportunities to investigate the scope, operations and language of the performing arts industry and its products, and an appreciation of historical, social and cultural influences.

#### **18. Professional practice**

- 18.1 AS (three-unit) and AS (six-unit) double award: specifications must emphasise the importance of using research findings to improve and enhance technical skills and learners' own practice, and the creation and quality of performance products. This should also include an appreciation of the influences and constraints on professionals.
- 18.2 A level (6-unit) and A level (12-unit) double award: in addition, specifications must extend this to increase understanding of the range of training and employment opportunities, industry practices (including agents and union/professional bodies) and the expectations of professionals (for example gaining work and freelancing).

#### **19. New developments**

- 19.1 AS (three-unit) and AS (six-unit) double award: specifications must offer opportunities to explore both contemporary developments in technology and the range of performance products (for example in related sectors such as music, video or entertainment).
- 19.2 A level (6-unit) and A level (12-unit) double award: specifications must encourage exploration of changes in patterns of

employment, funding and non-traditionally based work (for example community arts).

### **Skills and processes (developing and sustaining personal technique)**

#### **20. Performance and production skills**

- 20.1 All specifications: specifications (whether performance or production focused) must reflect the specialist skills, techniques and understanding of each of the disciplines covered, at a standard and to a depth appropriate to the level and size of the qualification. The particular skills required by each specialist area must be specified for each qualification. Specifications must also recognise the importance of the underpinning skills and attitudes required for successful working in performing arts, including team working, communication skills and managing oneself as an industry worker.
- 20.2 AS (three-unit): specifications must support a realistic assessment of learners' attainment at the start of the course. Through an awareness of professional practice and of the opportunities for progression to further study, training or employment, specifications should encourage learners to set realistic targets to develop their skills using a structured programme of practice.
- 20.3 AS (six-unit) double award: specifications must allow for further development of these skills or for development in a second skills area, underpinned by relevant theory. Increasing confidence in the use of an appropriate technical vocabulary and an appreciation of safe ways of working must be encouraged in these qualifications.
- 20.4 A level (6-unit) and A level (12-unit) double award: specifications must extend the opportunities to develop more advanced skills and techniques in a chosen specialised area, and to broaden the range of practical and technical skills into two or more areas. Increasing independence in devising and managing one's own skills and programme of practice will be reflected in learners' work at this level.

**Skills and processes (creative development, rehearsal and production)**

**21. Developing ideas**

- 21.1 AS (three unit) and AS (six-unit) double award: specifications must develop an understanding of how performance work progresses from an initial idea or treatment through experimentation and rehearsal to final realisation, and is supported by appropriate research.
- 21.2 A level (6-unit) and A level (12-unit) double award: specifications must develop this understanding further. Specifications must require learners to appreciate the constraints/opportunities of working in a work-related context and the influence this might have on the creative process and the realisation of outcomes.

**22. Creative processes**

- 22.1 AS (three-unit) and AS (six-unit) double award: specifications must develop an understanding of how meaning is communicated in performance.
- 22.2 A level (6-unit) and A level (12-unit) double award: specifications must encourage the application of this understanding to development as well as finished products. The emphasis should be on developing ideas to meet the requirements of a commission through creative experimentation and research, typically in response to direction. Learners should be encouraged to undertake work that supports the development of transferable skills.

**23. Presenting work**

- 23.1 AS (three-unit) and AS (six-unit) double award: specifications must provide the opportunity for greater appreciation of the artistic and practical constraints involved in realising performance.
- 23.2 A level (6-unit) and A level (12-unit) double award: specifications must provide opportunities to explore the range of factors that might influence the presentation of their work in terms of its feasibility against the original commission.



## **Analysis and evaluation**

### **24. Analysis**

- 24.1 AS (three-unit) and AS (six-unit) double award: specifications must encourage the development of analytical and reflective skills in all aspects of the areas of study. This should include the ability to analyse performance products and influences on performance outcomes.
- 24.2 A level (6-unit) and A level (12-unit) double award: specifications must encourage analysis of social, historical and cultural influences on performance and link that understanding to practice. Analysis of performance products should include areas such as marketing, financing and programming to inform personal practice.

### **25. Evaluation**

- 25.1 AS (three-unit) and AS (six-unit) double award: specifications must emphasise the importance of ongoing evaluation during the creation and realisation of performance. This should involve an appreciation of the learner's own and others' contribution to this process and to the final performance/finished products in term of its:
- aesthetic quality;
  - technical quality;
  - production costs and timescales;
  - commissioner, consumer or audience approval.
- 25.2 A level (6-unit) and A level (12-unit) double award: specifications must broaden these skills to include evaluation of own/others' progress, the quality of the final outcomes as well as the development of, for example, team working and problem-solving skills. Both subjective and objective perspectives should be used in order to inform critical analysis of work. Through this, learners' work at this level will typically demonstrate a clear understanding of the creative process and the ability to apply this to realising commissioned and non-commissioned work. Whereas the AS might emphasise the ability to evaluate progress in developing performance or production skills or the implications of research, A level specifications should extend

appreciation of the range of factors influencing evaluation, including whether it is valid, current and relevant.

## 26. Presentation

- 26.1 In all specifications the presentation of evidence of these skills of analysis and evaluation in learners' work will reflect understanding of an increasing range of methods and forms. These should meet the expectations of the industry and the demands of programmes of further training and higher education.
- 26.2 Specifications must present content in a coherent and appropriate manner, fit for teaching, learning and assessment purposes.

## Assessment objectives

27. All specifications must require learners to demonstrate the following objectives in work-related contexts.
28. The weightings for the assessment objectives must be within the ranges set out below:

Assessment objective		Weighting (%)		
		AS	A2	A level / A level (double award)
<b>AO1</b>	<b>Knowledge and understanding of the performing arts industry</b> Learners demonstrate understanding of the processes and products of the performing arts industry.	10–20	10–20	10–20
<b>AO2</b>	<b>Acquisition of skills and techniques</b> Learners acquire skill(s) and technique(s) in specialist area(s).	40–50	20–30	30–40
<b>AO3</b>	<b>Application of skills and techniques</b> Learners realise work by applying	20–30	40–50	30–40

	skills and techniques in work-related contexts.			
<b>AO4</b>	<b>Analysis and evaluation</b> Learners analyse and evaluate their own and others' practice and ideas.	10–20	10–20	10–20

### Scheme of assessment

29. Assessment units must be assessed either internally or externally.
30. AS content and A level content must be assessed separately.
31. In each AS, at least one assessment unit must be assessed externally.
32. In each AS (double award), at least two assessment units must be assessed externally.
33. In each A level qualification, at least two assessment units must be assessed externally, one of which must be in A level.
34. In each A level (double award) qualification, at least three assessment units must be assessed externally, one of which must be in A level.
35. All specifications must include external assessment that is set externally, timed and includes some part completed under 'controlled' conditions. The assessed outcome(s) should be marked by the awarding organisation or marked by the centre and moderated by the awarding organisation.
36. Practical work must constitute a significant element of the external assessment.
37. All A level and A level (double award) specifications must include some form of appropriate written communication.<sup>1</sup>
38. All A level and A level (double award) specifications must include synoptic assessment at A level. Synoptic assessment will involve the learner bringing together and making connections between the areas of

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<sup>1</sup> Any reference to 'writing' or 'written communication' should be interpreted as the production of text by any means, for example pen, word processor and so on.

knowledge, skills and understanding learned throughout the programme, and applying this when responding to the set requirements.

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	
Spring Place	2nd Floor
Coventry Business Park	Glendinning House
Herald Avenue	6 Murray Street
Coventry CV5 6UB	Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346