



Department  
for Education

# **Drama and theatre**

**Draft AS and A level subject content**

**September 2014**

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# The content for drama and theatre AS and A level

## Introduction

1. AS and A level subject content set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject.
2. They provide the framework within which the awarding organisation creates the detail of the specification.

## Aims and learning outcomes

3. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must offer a broad, coherent and rigorous course of study. They should inspire creativity in students. They should provide opportunities for students to make and understand drama, recognising it as a practical art form in which ideas and meaning are communicated to an audience through choices of form, style and convention. They should prepare students to make informed decisions about further learning and progression opportunities, including to higher education courses.
4. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must enable students to:
  - develop and apply an informed, analytical framework for making, performing, interpreting and understanding drama and theatre
  - understand the place of relevant theoretical research in informing the processes and practices involved in creating theatre and the place of practical exploration in informing theoretical knowledge of drama and theatre
  - develop an understanding and appreciation of how the social, cultural and historical contexts of performance texts have influenced the development of drama and theatre
  - investigate the practices used in twenty-first century theatre making
  - experience a range of opportunities to create theatre, both published text-based and devised work
  - participate as a theatre maker and as an audience member in live theatre
  - understand and experience the collaborative relationship between various roles within theatre
  - develop and demonstrate a range of theatre making skills
  - develop the creativity and independence to become effective theatre makers
  - adopt safe working practices as a theatre maker<sup>1</sup>
  - analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as a person undertaking one or more of the following roles: Designer, Performer, Director.

## Subject content

5. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre should build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established at key stage 4 and in GCSE qualifications.

6. The content of AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must reflect the aims and allow students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate an analytical framework informed by the knowledge, skills and understanding specified in paragraphs 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

7. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and explore practically:

- at AS a minimum of one complete and substantial performance text<sup>3</sup> and a minimum of two key extracts<sup>4</sup> from two different texts, placed in the context of the whole text. The text and extracts must represent a range of social, historical and cultural contexts, and must have been performed professionally.
- at A level a minimum of two complete and substantial performance texts and a minimum of three key extracts from three different texts placed in the context of the whole text. The texts and extracts must represent a range of social, historical and cultural contexts, and must have been performed professionally.
- the work and methodologies of at AS one and at A level two influential theatre practitioners (individuals or companies), including the:
  - historical, social and cultural context
  - theatrical purpose and practice
  - artistic intentions
  - innovative nature of their approach
  - working methods
  - theatrical style and use of conventions
  - collaboration with/influence on other practitioners

8. Specifications in drama and theatre must require students to participate in:

- at AS a minimum of one performance from a text, which has been studied as part of the course
- at A level a minimum of two performances, one devised and one from a performance text which has been studied as part of the course

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<sup>2</sup> Including their own, their peers, amateur and professional works.

<sup>3</sup> A performance text is one that has been written specifically for theatrical performance.

<sup>4</sup> A key extract is a scene or moment that is significant to the text as a whole.

## Knowledge and understanding

9. AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must require students to know and understand, using relevant subject specific terminology:

- the production processes and practices involved in making and performing theatre collaboratively, and how meaning is created, through:
  - artistic intention
  - research and development of ideas
  - interpretation of texts
  - devising
  - rehearsing
  - design
  - realisation
- how conventions, forms and techniques are used in drama and live theatre to create meaning, including the:
  - use of performance space and spatial relationships on stage
  - relationships between performers and audience
  - design of set, costume, makeup, lighting, sound and props
  - performer's vocal and physical interpretation of character
- through watching live theatre<sup>5</sup>, how contemporary theatre practice informs their own theatre making
- how creative and artistic choices influence how meaning is communicated to an audience
- how performance texts are constructed to be performed, conveying meaning through structure, dialogue, stage effects, character construction and the style of text
- how performance texts are informed by their social, cultural and historical contexts, and are interpreted and performed for an audience
- signs and symbols used to convey meaning in drama and live theatre

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<sup>5</sup> Live theatre can include, but cannot be solely focused on, peer performance

10. At A level, specifications must allow students to demonstrate greater depth of study than the AS through applying their:

- understanding of the connections between theory and practice in a range of periods, theatrical styles, social, historical and cultural contexts
- understanding of how relevant research and independent thought informs decision making in their own practical work

## Skills

11. Drawing on the knowledge and understanding in paragraph 9, AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre must require students to acquire, develop and apply skills in:

- using the working methodologies of at AS one or at A level two influential practitioners (individuals or companies) in their own work
- using theatrical techniques in a live theatre context as theatre makers<sup>6</sup>
- realising artistic intention as a theatre maker, through:
  - at AS, interpretation of published performance texts
  - at A level, interpretation of devised and published performance texts
  - creativity and coherence when communicating meaning to an audience
  - refinement and amendment of work in progress
- applying research to inform practical work to achieve clear dramatic and theatrical intentions
- analysing and evaluating the process of creating their own live theatre and the effectiveness of the outcome
- at AS, interpreting and evaluating live theatre performance by others<sup>7</sup>
- at A level, interpreting, analysing and evaluating live theatre performance by others<sup>8</sup>

12. At A level, specifications must allow students to demonstrate greater depth of study than the AS through:

- analysis of the ways in which theatre makers collaborate to create theatre
- evaluation and analysis of the work of peers

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<sup>6</sup> Defined as a person undertaking one or more of the following roles: Designer, Performer, Director

<sup>7</sup> Amateur or professional performances

<sup>8</sup> Peer and, amateur or professional performances



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