

Decisions on changes to our rules for GCSE drama, and AS and A level drama and theatre



Summary of our decision

Following consultation, we have decided to implement all of our proposed changes to our rules for GCSE drama, and AS and A level drama and theatre. These changes to our rules support the changes the Department for Education (DfE) has already made to its subject content.

Our new rules will require awarding bodies to collect annual statements from schools/colleges offering GCSE drama, and AS and A level drama and theatre.

Consultation responses on our proposal

Some respondents to our consultation were concerned that sometimes there are legitimate reasons why individual students (or, in exceptional cases, whole classes) would be unable to attend live performances. Our requirements recognise this.

Schools/colleges will be expected to confirm in their live performance statements they have taken reasonable steps to secure that students taking GCSE drama, and AS and A level drama and theatre have met the requirement to experience live theatre set out in the DfE's subject content. This is intentionally not the same as requiring schools to confirm all students have experienced live theatre. This means that where schools have taken reasonable steps but some students (or, exceptionally all) have not attended a live performance, the school will still be able to submit the required statement.

Individual students will not be penalised in any way if they do not attend a live performance. Attending a live performance is not a requirement for receiving a GCSE, AS or A level qualification, and students do not need to apply for exemptions and/or special consideration if they are unable to attend a live performance.

Some respondents were also concerned that the changes to our rules and to the DfE's subject content would mean that students would be unable to refer to the wide range of performances they may have seen in their exams. This is not the case. None of the changes we or the DfE have made affect exam assessments. So while students can, where relevant, refer to their experience of live performance in their answers to exam questions or non-exam assessment tasks, they are not required to.

They could choose to answer such questions or tasks based on their experience of streamed and/or recorded live performances.

We acknowledge this new requirement for exam boards to collect live performance statements will impose a limited additional burden on schools, but in our view this burden is justified as it reflects the change in the subject content requirements and will provide assurance that students have met those requirements.

Implementing our proposals

Some respondents also noted that students have already started taking these qualifications, and that it would be unfair to change the expectations for students that are already partway through their course.

We agree with these concerns, and we will not enforce the new subject content requirements around experiencing live theatre for students that are already on a course.

Specifications for courses that begin teaching on or after 1 September 2017 will require students to experience live theatre, in line with the new subject content requirements.

We have also decided that exam boards will only be required to collect 'live performance statements' in respect of students taking their exams from summer 2019 onwards.

This means schools/colleges will not need to provide a live performance statement for students who start an AS course in September 2017 and take their exams in summer 2018, even though the specification will require students to experience live theatre. We think this is preferable to the alternative approach of requiring schools/colleges to apply different rules to students completing 1-year and 2-year AS courses in summer 2018, which we believe would be overly confusing and burdensome for schools/colleges.

Issues outside the scope of the consultation

A number of respondents also commented on the impact of the changes made to the subject content requirements. This is a decision already taken by the DfE, and was outside the scope of our consultation. We have passed the comments we received in response to our consultation on to them.

Next steps

We have published revised versions of the following documents:

- *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Drama*¹
- *GCE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Drama and Theatre*²

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

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-drama-and-theatre