

# A level Drama and Theatre

FAQs

Updated February 2024



# A Level Drama and Theatre 2023 FAQs

This specification is now on Issue 5, we recommend that you check regularly to make sure you are using the most up to date information.

**Q: I am looking for a definition of 'performance text' as used in the A level specification. I can see in the A level specification, there are bullet descriptors, but can you define more clearly what a performance text must be?**

**A:** A performance text is something that has been written and/or created for theatrical presentation. It will provide the structure for the performance and might include, for example, dialogue, stage directions and design considerations. The other considerations as set out in the specifications must also be taken into account when selecting an appropriate performance text.  
There must be spoken dialogue.

**Q: Do I need to submit my text choices to Pearson for approval?**

**A:** Yes. The choices need to be submitted at least 6 weeks before the examination performance date. There is a form you can use to submit your text choices available on our website. This form lists all performance texts that have been pre-approved.

**Q: What do I do if my choice of performance text is not listed as a pre-approved text?**

**A:** Please email [drama.assessment@pearson.com](mailto:drama.assessment@pearson.com) with details of your choice including play text title, playwright, genre and publication date. The Drama Assessment team will review all requests in line with requirements outlined in the specification and Administrative Support Guide.

**Q: As the qualification is linear, do we have to assess all components in Year 13?**

**A:** Only Components 2 and 3 need be assessed in year 13. It is possible to assess Component 1 in year 12; your marks will be submitted and moderated in year 13 however, as was the case with the legacy qualification.

**Q: Can I please confirm that if a text is on a set text list e.g. Equus, then it cannot be used in any of the other components even if it is not my chosen set text (I am using Colder Than Here as my set text for List A) but was hoping to use Equus as my text for component 2?**

**A:** You cannot use any of the performance texts from the set text list for any of the other components in the qualification. You also cannot use them for your Live Theatre Evaluation

## **Component 1: Devised Drama**

**Q: Can there be a different choice of key extract and practitioner for each group?**

**A:** Yes. There can be a different choice of key extract and practitioner for each group.

**Q: Can the teacher direct the devised piece?**

**A:** No, but the teacher can help facilitate. For example, teacher-led workshops are referred to on page 12 of the A level specification.

**Q: Can I use a less well-known practitioner for Component 1?**

**A:** As stated on page 11 of the A level specification, centres have a free choice when selecting a practitioner. However, in order to meet the demands of the specification centres are advised to pick practitioners or theatre companies who offer enough theory and methodology to support candidates in their approach to both performance and the portfolio. There are a list of suggested practitioners on the text submission form.

**Q: Can my student use the influence of more than one practitioner?**

**A:** Students are encouraged to use influence from a range of theatre practice, where appropriate. However, there should be a dominate influence from the chosen practitioner. It should be obvious in the final performance who the chosen practitioner is. The term 'practitioner' is singular in the assessment criteria.

**Performance:**

**Q: When students need to perform to an audience, but the performance is also being recorded, where should the student focus?**

**A:** The focus of the student should be appropriate to the performance style selected. If they just focus on the camera this could create an audition tape quality to the performance, which is not the aim of the component.

**Q: As a set designer or lighting designer can I use projection?**

**A:** Yes, the use of projection could be a feature of your overall design. It is not possible to be assessed solely on the use of projection as this is not a specified design role as outlined on page 10 on the A level specification.

**Q: What are the requirements for design candidates?**

**A:** Requirement for design skills are clearly outlined on page 17 of the A level specification.

**Portfolio:**

**Q: Does the portfolio need to be written like an essay or can you use the statements that are in the specification as headings which the students answer?**

**A:** There is no requirement to write the portfolio like an essay; students can use the statements as headings. The statements are on page 18 of the A level specification. Centres are reminded that when students who choose to write in continuous prose, or present work in different formats, it is the responsibility of the teacher-examiner to ensure it is clear where assessment objectives have been met.

**Q: The specification states a recommended word count of 2500 to 3000 words or a time limit of 12 to 14 minutes, does that mean if the students go over it will still be marked?**

**A:** Students will need to stay within the recommended word/time limit. The teacher assessor must not mark beyond the maximum word/time count. As stated on page 19 of the A level specification, it is strongly advised that the upper word/time limits are adhered to by students to enable them to satisfy the requirement to produce a concise and coherently structured portfolio.

**Q: What format can the portfolio take, especially if it is a combination of written and video, will a blog suffice, written logs, etc.?**

**A:** It is necessary that students meet the minimum requirements as stated on page 19 in the A level specification i.e. the minimum and maximum word limits, the minimum and maximum recorded limit, or the combination. Further details on formatting can be found on page 6 of the Administrative Support Guide. You must ensure that your students respond to the statements included in the specification, in order to meet the demands of the assessment criteria.

**Q: If a student submits recorded evidence for the portfolio, does it have to be recorded in one take or can it be edited?**

**A:** Yes. It can be edited, and it can be recorded in many short takes. However, to ensure parity with the written evidence, feedback from the teacher can only be given once to the student.

**Q: Is it possible for my students to submit their portfolio electronically or does it have to be a hard copy? Some of my students want to combine both written work and audio.**

**A:** There are multiple options described in detail on page 6 of the Administrative Support Guide. You must also refer to the JCQ Guidance for Non-examined assessment.

**Q: Are students assessed on their presentation skills if they are submitting audio-visual evidence?**

**A:** No. Students are not assessed on their presentation skills, they are assessed on the content of what they are saying. It is possible for students to use flashcards or notes when they are speaking.

**Q: Can teachers annotate the work?**

**A:** In line with the JCQ Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments, teachers are responsible for marking work in accordance with the marking criteria detailed in the relevant specification and associated subject specific documents. Teacher annotation should be used to provide evidence to indicate how and why marks have been awarded to facilitate the standardisation of marking within the centre, and to enable the moderator to check that marking is in line with the assessment criteria.

How to annotate the work:

- Follow guidance in the relevant specification and associated subject specific documents.
- Provide evidence to support your marks. Identify the assessment criteria that have been met.
- Be clear and unambiguous.
- Use key phrases from the criteria. For example, awareness of values, uses a variety of techniques, selects appropriate data.
- Insert annotations at the appropriate point in the work - in the margin or in the text – or write comments on the cover sheet to show clearly how credit has been awarded.
- For audio evidence, the teacher can send the transcript and annotate the transcript accordingly.
- For video evidence, the teacher can add text boxes as annotations.

## **Component 2: Text in Performance**

**Q: Can I use the same performance text as used in Component 1 and Component 3?**

**A:** The performance texts used in this component must be different from the texts used in components 1 and the set texts studied in Component 3 Section B and Section C.

Candidates are not allowed to perform any version of any of the prescribed set texts for Component 3, even if the text is not studied by the candidates.

Any candidate who uses a forbidden text, or set text from Component 3, for their monologue/duologue or group performance will receive 0 marks from 2020. This is to give parity between courses like English and Component 3, Section A.

For Component 3 Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation, Candidates may evaluate a live production of a performance text used in Component 1 or Component 2

**Q: It says I can use the same playwright I have already used in Component 1 or 3, is that right?**

**A:** Yes. It is possible as suggested on Page 35 of the A Level Specification. However, it is good practice to offer a breadth of study appropriate to this level.

**Q: Must the narrative arc be maintained in the group piece?**

**A:** It is possible to edit the text from a longer section, or to edit it for the number of candidates in the group. It is important that the meaning of the text is maintained, but there is no need to retain the arc of the full piece.

**Q: What is the statement of intention?**

**A:** Students will need to write an intention for each performance/design which gives them the opportunity to tell the examiner how they have interpreted and will perform the character/realise the design (please see details on page 40 of the specification).

**Q: Does a design candidate have to do a presentation?**

**A:** No. On Page 38 of the A-Level Specification, it is the design skill that is the focus of the assessment. Examiners will not be allowed to watch design presentations for assessment but students can submit a portfolio of research, photographs or materials to document their process. Please refer to the specification for guidance on the minimum requirements for design students.

**Q: For the group text-based performance and monologue/duologue, does every group/student have to perform from the same text?**

**A:** No. Each group/student can design/perform from a different text.

**Q: Do students need to write an intention for both performances in this component, the monologue/duologue and the group piece?**

**A:** Yes, it must be completed for both performances.

**Q: Do the monologues/duologues and the group performance have the same weighting?**

**A:** No. The group performance has a heavier weighting. It is worth 60% of the component 2 marks and the monologue/duologue is worth 40%.

**Q: I have read that my candidates will receive 0 marks for performance if they do not meet the minimum performance time in components 1 and 2. Could you clarify this?**

**A:** No, there was a change after the first year of assessment.

- In component 2 there is a regulatory minimum performance time both for the group piece and for the monologues/duologues. These can be found on pages 35 and 36 of the specification. Students must meet the regulatory minimum performance times as indicated in the grid in order to achieve the full range of marks in this section.
- If students fail to reach the regulatory minimum performance time, whether in the group text-performance, group devised performance or in a monologue or duologue they will be referred by their examiner to Drama Assessment where a proportional adjustment must be made.

**Q: Will there be an option to make a digital submission?**

**A:** Yes. Centres have the option of a digital submission or a live visiting examiner. Please refer to the Administrative Support Guide for further details.

**Q: Can I use an additional performer in a piece who is not assessed?**

**A:** Non -assessed performers can be approved under exceptional circumstances and only with permission from Drama Assessment. Please refer to the Administrative Support Guide for further details.

**Q: A student is absent on the day of the exam with a visiting examiner. Can the live exam take place for the remaining students and a separate recording be submitted so the absent student can be assessed as a digital submission?**

**A:** No. Centres have the option of a live visit or a digital submission. It is not possible to offer a hybrid approach to assessment and therefore special consideration should be sought for the absent student if it is not possible to rearrange the assessment date for the whole cohort.

## **Component 3: Theatre in Practice**

**Q: Do I have to teach from the editions listed in the specification?**

**A:** It is strongly recommended that candidates use the editions listed in the specifications as all extracts and named sections will be taken directly from these specific editions. Please refer to the A level specification.

**Q: Which set texts will Pearson be supplying as digital editions?**

**A:** Pearson have supplied three set texts as digital editions for Woyzeck, Lysistrata and Doctor Faustus which are available to download for free from our website. The remaining set texts for Component 3 will need to be purchased. We have provided the ISBN's of the versions we recommend in the specification.

**Q: What do students have access to in the written exam?**

**A:** Students have access to the following materials in the exam:

- Section A: 500 words of notes for the live theatre evaluation on one performance they have seen.
- Section B: they will be provided with an extract in the exam.
- Section C: they must take in a **clean** copy of the set text they have studied.

**Q: For Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation, can the student view more than one live production?**

**A:** Yes. There is no limit on how many productions a student sees, however, their notes and answers can only be about one production. Please see page 55 of the A level specification.

**Q: For the live theatre evaluation, can students review one of the prescribed texts from Component 3?**

**A:** No. The live theatre performance cannot be any of performance texts on the prescribed list of this specification.

**Q: Is it necessary to keep the 'Live theatre evaluation notes form' after the exam?**

**A:** Yes, centres must retain the 'Live theatre evaluation notes form' until after the Post- Results Services deadline. See page 55 of the specification. To ensure adherence to the requirements the notes are randomly selected by Pearson for review during this period.

**Q: For the live theatre evaluation, can my students write about a production they saw several years ago?**

**A:** Yes. Technically, there is nothing to stop your students writing about a production seen at any earlier date. The specification states 'live performance', not when it occurred. It is probably more in the spirit of the examination that students see a production while they are following the course but there is no way of monitoring this and we recognise that some productions run for many years.

**Q: In the Sample Assessment Materials, Section B of the exam seems to focus on what a performer and a designer might do, while Section C focuses on what a director might do, is this the format future exams will take?**

**A:** Yes. In Section A, the student is an informed member of the audience, in Section B the student is a performer and designer, and in Section C the student is a director, working in the light of a chosen practitioner. Further information can be found on pages 55 to 63 in the specification.

**Q: In Section B Question 3, students are asked to refer to their role as a performer in relation to a specific extract. Are students required to write about every character as they appear in the extract, or must they focus on one singular character in their response?**

**A:** Students are advised to respond to the specific demands and focus of the specific question in the examination they are completing. Although students will always take the role as a performer for Question 3, the demands of the question and what is required from their answer will vary from one year to the next, which may include the number of characters they are expected to refer to in their response to the question.

**Q: Do my students have to make reference to the play as a whole or the extract provided in Section B, Page to Stage?**

**A:** Both. The extract should focus the answer and help provide examples but they should also make reference to the play as a whole in terms of how the content of the extract impacts on other moments of the play. This is clearly signposted in the mark scheme.

**Q: For Section C students have to interpret a text in light of a practitioner from a director's perspective, what does this actually mean?**

**A:** Students will need to consider the methodology of a practitioner from the prescribed list (see page 61 of the specification). They should consider the conventions and elements that would be expected from that practitioner in a production.

**Q: In Section C can a student look at more than one practitioner?**

**A:** No. Students will not be awarded extra marks for referring to more than one practitioner. (See page 63 of the specification).

**Q: Will there always be a new extract every exam series, or will they be repeated?**

**A:** The extracts will never be repeated in their entirety, but there may be overlaps between series.

**Q: Are my students permitted to swap all the roles by gender for their Director's concept?**

**A:** Yes, they could, however this may create additional work for them when there are already a number of demands they must meet to respond to the question.

**Q: Are there additional marks for a more complex concept?**

**A:** No. The concept should support the text and respect its intentions. A clear, workable concept that the student owns and understands is more likely to support them in their response.

**Q: Can we create a Director's concept for all the students in our centre?**

**A:** Yes, you can if you wish, however, at this level students should be encouraged to put themselves in the role of the director and develop their own concept and ideas wherever possible.



**Q: Do my students have to write a certain amount in order to access the higher level marks?**

**A:** It is impossible to define quantity over quality and the various factors involved such as size of hand-writing etc. However, higher scoring responses do correlate with longer answers that are more developed and cover all bases to meet the assessment criteria.

**Q: If I send our concept to you, could you say if it is appropriate or not?**

**A:** No. We cannot speculate about individual concepts, it is a personal choice. Students should use their teachers/lecturers to test the viability of their concept.

