



Pearson
Edexcel

GCSE (9–1) Drama

FAQs

March 2025



Summary of changes:
Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in Drama FAQs

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If you need further information on these changes or what they mean, contact us via our website.



General questions

Do I need to submit my text choices for Components 2 to Pearson for approval?

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 [here](#). This form lists all performance texts that have been pre-approved.

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

Please email 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.

As the qualification is linear, do we have to assess all components in Year 11?

Only Components 2 and 3 need be assessed in year 11. It is possible to assess Component 1 in year 10; your marks will be submitted and moderated in year 11 however, as was the case with the legacy qualification.

If a student opted for design for Component 1, can they opt for design again for Component 2?

Yes. It is possible to design for both components, or to design for one and perform in the other one.

What is the difference between the skills ‘evaluate’ and ‘analyse’ in AO4 for the GCSE Drama qualification?

There is no requirement for students to refer explicitly to either command word in their responses.

To **analyse** is to break down or deconstruct an aspect of students' own work or the work of others. This will ideally result in students offering detailed and specific examples, but without needing to come to a conclusion or make critical judgements. The use of specific subject terminology will particularly support analysis.

To **evaluate** is to make independent critical judgements, communicating own views as an informed, theatre- literate student, forming a conclusion. Judgements may be



positive or negative but **must be supported by analysis** to access the full range of marks. The use of key words such as (but not limited to) effective, convincing, credible, believable, powerful, compelling, emotive etc. will support evaluation.

Please see the AO1 assessment criteria for Component 1 and the Component 3 Section B mark schemes for more information.

Component 1

Students need to devise a performance from their own choice of stimulus; does this mean all groups must have the same stimulus?

No. Each group can have a different stimulus. You could offer a range of stimuli and each group chooses a different stimulus, or they can all choose the same.

For design students, do all of their ideas need to be realised in the performance?

Yes. All ideas must be realised in the performance, in order to gain marks. However, they do not need to be personally realised by the student; for example, the design candidate would not have to operate the lights. Students are assessed on their design skills not their 'making' skills.

There is no requirement for design students to realise the designs themselves; students are assessed on the realisation of their designs, therefore students should be involved in the process of realising the designs in a supervisory role (at the very least).

Can students respond directly to the questions for their portfolio?

Yes.

Are annotations counted within the word count?

Yes. Annotations will count within the word limit. Words in diagrams/photos will not count. Any diagrams/photos included should support the answer the student is giving.

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

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.



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

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.

I'm confused with the portfolio: how should it be completed? Is it under exam conditions? Do you have more guidance on this?

The portfolio doesn't necessarily need to be completed under controlled conditions but you need to ensure that it is the student's own work.

The JCQ Guidance for completion of non-examined assessment can be found here: [JCQ Guidance.pdf](#)

Do my design students need to do a presentation in Component 1?

No, there is no requirement for design students to complete a presentation. The evidence they submit will be the same as performers, for example a recording of the performance and the portfolio.

However, the portfolio could be a video recording of a presentation if preferred. See *FAQs on the portfolio, above, and p. 15–16 of the issue 4 specification for more information on the portfolio.*

Do design students need to be present for the performance assessment?

Yes – all students, both performers and designers, must be present for the assessment and must identify themselves in the candidate identification.

What are the differences between genre, style and form as referenced in the portfolio questions?

Centres will have different understandings of these terms however it would be useful to use the following clarifications with students:

- **genre** is a French word meaning 'category' or 'type', therefore the choice of genre by students for the component reflects the kind of performance they are going to produce, for example. comedy, tragedy, docudrama etc.
- **style** relates to the chosen theatrical approach, for example naturalist, minimalist, Brechtian etc.
- **form** refers to the shape of each individual section or scene, for example. movement/mime-based ensemble scene, duologue, advert, moments of thought-tracking.

Students may wish to discuss some or all of these aspects together.



If students have evaluated their performance, but not necessarily under the right question (5) can we still give them marks for this?

If students have evaluated their performance under other portfolio headings then this should be credited. However, it is important that the last two portfolio questions focus on analysis and evaluation.

What is meant by the word ‘contribution’ in portfolio question 5 (‘How effective was your contribution to the final performance’)?

The above question refers to any contribution to the final performance. The guide to writing the portfolio online states that 'a large proportion of this question requires the students to evaluate how effective their role was during that very last performance', however, some students may want to, or need to link this to something they contributed during the process. Students can mention the process in their responses to this question, as long as this is linked to the impact on the final performance.

In question 6 of the portfolio (‘Were you successful in what you set out to achieve?’) should students refer to their own success individually or to the student AND their group?

Question 6 is about the end product, the final performance – not the process. The focus will be on students’ individual successes and achievements, as well as on the collective aims and goals of the work. If the work is largely ensemble-based in terms of the structure, then the students are likely to find themselves discussing the aims of the whole group more – this is acceptable. The key to this question is that students should explore and explain the levels of success and/or areas that could be improved on reflection

According to the ASG, the sample for moderation consists of ‘a maximum of four groups and must include the highest overall scoring student, the lowest overall scoring student and the work of at least eight further students with a range of marks between the highest and the lowest scoring students. Does this mean I do not have to send the work of the rest of the cohort to the moderator?’

Centres must send the initial sample for moderation, as detailed above, by May 15th. However, further samples from the cohort may be requested by the moderator once the initial sample has been received. Centres must ensure that the remaining work of all students is ready to send should this be requested by the moderator.



Component 2

Do centres have a free choice of text for Component 2?

Yes. Due to the requirement for the texts studied in this qualification to contrast, the choice of text for component is affected by the choice of set text in Component 3. The text you choose for this component must be from a different time from the set text; it must also be written by a different playwright and be from a different genre.

In addition, **no edition or adaptation of any Component 3 set text may be used for Component 2 performances.** *More detail about text choices can be found in the current version of the specification available to download from our [website](#). Please note the addition of four new set texts. We have also provided [a list of plays](#) that could be used in GCSE Drama Component 2 in combination with each set text.*

We have chosen a List A pre-1954 text for Component 3. Can we use a modern adaptation of a pre-1954 text for our Component 2 performances, for example the 2013 Anya Reiss adaptation of *The Seagull*?

No. Modern adaptations of pre-1954 texts will not provide sufficient contrast to meet the requirements of the qualification.

What will happen if my students perform extracts from one of the Component 3 set texts for their Component 2 performances?

Centres are strongly advised that visiting examiners will only award marks for performances of extracts from permitted texts. Students who do not meet the regulatory text requirements will be awarded zero marks for AO2.

The specification refers to a 'key extract'. What does this mean and how does it relate to performance times?

Where performance times are less than 10 minutes, students will need to perform a section from within this 10 minute extract. They must refer to the whole 10 minutes they have studied when responding to the artistic intentions questions and supply the visiting examiner with a copy of the key extract with the specific part they are performing highlighted.

Where the performance times are longer than the 10 minutes key extract, the 10 minutes studied **must** be included in the performance.

Please see the specification for more details on performance times.



Students need to perform/ design for two extracts. Does this mean we can use two different plays?

No. For each student, both extracts must be from the same play. There is no requirement for the whole cohort to use the same play; different groups of students may use different plays.

Do the students have to perform/ design for two different characters?

No. The two extracts are assessed discretely so students can change character/design option for each extract or they can perform the same role/select the same design option.

Can a student choose to perform/ design two monologues?

Yes. In this instance, the student must perform/design two monologue extracts from the same play.

Can the two extracts be scenes in sequence?

Yes. You can choose extracts which follow on from each other or the two extracts can be from different parts of the play.

Can we edit the text, for example to remove surplus characters?

Yes. You can edit and remove characters/content as long as you ensure that the meaning and shape of the text is maintained. **You cannot add dialogue to the text.**

Can a student edit together monologues from a text to create the correct length monologue?

No, the performance must maintain the integrity of the text as written, including the character, **length and shape** of the text.

Can I embed the monologues into the group performance (first extract) or do students each perform their monologue as a standalone piece for their second?

The monologue option is performed as a separate extract and marked accordingly to the specification as stated above.

If we can edit the text, can we add to it?

No. The text must be performed as written other than minor edits, as discussed above.



Am I allowed to adapt references in the text, for example updating *Bouncers* or *Shakers*?

No. References in *Bouncers* and *Shakers* such as 'Mrs Thatcher', 'chicken-in-the-basket' and 'White City dog-racing' must be performed as written. The adaptation of references would be considered addition of text which does not meet requirements for the component.

Can students perform an extract from a piece of musical theatre or a play with music?

Yes. However the emphasis must be on the delivery of the text and not the musicality of the song. Please note that songs cannot be spoken for a monologue or duologue extract.

Can my students change the gender of a character or split a character/characters in the extract, as long as they keep the meaning and shape of the extract intact?

There is some freedom to adapt extracts as detailed in the issue 4 specification, but centres must be cautious when allowing their students to edit. Changing the gender of a character can be done while retaining the shape and meaning of the text (for example Malvolia in the 2017 NT *Twelfth Night*) provided no other changes are made.

Adding a character by splitting a role or roles would however go against the playwright's intentions, for example having five rather than four *Bouncers* would alter the dynamics between Eric, Judd, Les and Ralph as written by John Godber. This would create limits for the candidate playing all affected roles in terms of fully meeting the criteria for both AO2 Characterisation and communication and AO2 Artistic intention and style/genre/theatrical conventions.

Can my students play more than one role within the chosen text?

Where a performance text is written in a multi-role style, for example, John Godber's, *Teechers*, this is permissible. Equally where a text is written with a single voice, for example, *Adult Child*, *Dead Child*, this is permissible.

In both these types of text, the use of multi-role maintains the integrity of the text as written and supports the achievement of students within the component.

Otherwise, centres are strongly cautioned that multi-rolling is likely to create limits for the student playing all affected roles in terms of fully meeting the criteria for both AO2 Characterisation and communication and AO2 Artistic intention and style/genre/theatrical conventions.

Editing of the text to remove surplus role is permitted – see above.



Do my design students need to do a presentation in Component 2?

No, students do not write or deliver a presentation as part of their assessment. The evidence they submit will be the same as performers, for example, the artistic intentions and the performance to an examiner, along with the additional documentation which is listed in the specification.

Do my design students have to realise the designs themselves, for example, do they have to construct the set, or operate the lighting?

There is no requirement for design students to realise the designs themselves; students are assessed on the realisation of their designs, therefore students should be involved in the process of realising the designs in a supervisory role, at the very least.

Will my students be penalised if the performances are under time?

Centres are strongly advised that visiting examiners will only award marks within the regulatory time limits.

A proportional time penalty will be applied, by Pearson, to any work that is under the regulatory minimum time requirements after the work has been marked by the examiner.

Please see the appendix 6 in the specification for the more information on the proportional penalties that will be applied in these circumstances.

Can student(s) restart a performance?

No. The timing and assessment of each extract commences when the performance begins on the first and only attempt.

Do I need to have a break in between the two extracts? How will the examiner know where one ends and the other begins?

The length of the exam schedule is dependent on the number of students examined. An exam session is 3 hours per 20 students examined. The centre is free to co-ordinate their exam schedule to best suit the needs of the students. There must be a short break in-between the two extracts and each group for the examiner to mark.

The length of each marking break may vary depending on the chosen extract which comes before it, a guide is outlined below:

- monologue/duologue = 3–5 minute break
- group of 3/4 = 10 minute break
- group of 5/6 = 15 minute break.



Examiners will remain in the exam space for the duration of both extracts for each group. Examiners may go to a private marking space in between groups. The centre must ensure that before each extract students identify themselves to the camera.

Further information regarding the examination can be found in the Administrative Support Guide.

Do I provide photocopies of the script from the play or a re-typed version of the script?

Each extract must be provided. This can be a highlighted copy from the text or a scanned copy of the text. We are unable to accept re-typed versions.

Students now need to write an artistic intention; what are the students supposed to write about?

The 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 refer to the issue 4 specification page 35 for the questions students need to answer for each extract.

Do we (teacher-assessors) mark artistic intentions?

No, the intentions for performance are not assessed by the teacher or the examiner. They provide an insight into the students' intentions for the visiting examiner.

Do we send the artistic intentions to the examiner?

Yes. They need to be sent to the examiner before the performance.

How long should the intentions piece be?

100–200 words per extract.

Can some students be assessed by a visiting examiner and some students be assessed via digital submission?

No – all students must be assessed via the same assessment method within the exam session required for the number of students in the cohort.



Component 3

One of the requirements for text choice across the specification is contrast, which affects the choice of text for component 2. What type of contrast does Pearson require?

Pearson has decided to contrast GCSE Drama texts by time, author and genre. *Please see the detailed explanation and examples in the specification.*

Does this mean I can't use the same playwright for both components 2 and 3?

Yes. The playwrights must be different.

As I can only select one set text, can I use another text from the list or from the other list in the other components?

No. The set texts cannot be used in either of the other components or in Section B of Component 3.

Please see the questions on text choice in the section on Component 2 above.

Will Pearson be supplying digital versions of prescribed texts?

These will need to be purchased; we have provided the ISBNs of the named editions and versions which should be used in the specification.

Please note:

- The ISBN for *DNA*, Dennis Kelly has changed as a new edition has been published
- The appendix for *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller was omitted from editions of the published text between November 2023 and March 2025 and we have provided a PDF copy of the extract to support with Teaching and Learning for this set text.

Can students take copies of their set text into the written exam?

No. Students will be provided with the relevant extract in the exam.

What do students have access to in the written exam?

Section A: they will be provided with an extract in the exam.

Section B: 500 words of their own notes for one performance they have seen.



How long is the extract in the written exam?

The extract will be 80–110 lines of the performance text. Extracts will be reproduced exactly as in the original text for the live papers and will take up 2–3 sides.

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

The extracts will never be repeated in their entirety, but there may be overlaps where part of an extract used in a previous series is used again in a future series.

How will the questions change for the live Component 3 paper next year compared to the papers already published?

The regulator requires all examination papers at all levels for all subjects to have a sufficient degree of unpredictability to make them rigorous and fair for each and every cohort of students.

The changes in question content/style for which students will need to be prepared, as per the SAMs and specimen paper available on the [GCSE Drama webpage](#), are as follows:

1. the Section A extract will change each series
2. the bullet point options in Qb(i) and Qc will vary each series but all six theatrical/design elements will appear on every paper
3. the focus of the section B questions will vary each year; both performance and design will be addressed each series.

How many points should my students write in each question on the Component 3 exam paper?

For Section A Q(a) the number of points required to access maximum marks is detailed in the question:

- a. (i) TWO suggestions plus TWO linked reasons
- b. (ii) THREE suggestions plus THREE linked reasons.

The structure of the answer booklet has been designed to support this approach.

There are no required number of points for any of the remaining questions which are all marked by the level-based mark schemes. Students must use the time available to respond to each question as fully as possible while allowing time to complete all questions on the paper. Suggested timings per section are offered on the front page of the question paper.

In Component 3, what is meant by stage space/staging? Is mentioning

set acceptable in an answer on stage space/ staging?

Questions that ask students to consider the use of stage space were principally designed as blocking/proxemics/movement questions, whilst questions focusing on staging were intended to be design questions, considering entrances and exits, awareness of audience and creating an appropriate space for performers and audience.

However the phrase ‘look for other reasonable marking points’ on the mark scheme is vital as students may well interpret a stage space question in Section B in terms of set. Staging as a design or production element could also include other physical elements of realising the extract in the space, for example set, as long as these relate to the use of the stage.

In summary: where STAGING is the chosen element for either a Q(b)(i) or a Q(c), responses must have a design/production element focus to meet the criteria fully; examples that relate to the movement and positioning of actors are not relevant in supporting these responses.

In Q(b)(ii) where students are asked to respond to all three bullet points in the direction of an actor, the third bullet point – STAGE SPACE and STAGE DIRECTIONS – covers the use of proxemics, blocking and movement across the stage.

Where the key phrase in the question is the use of STAGE SPACE in a Q9(a) or (b), answers may include proxemics/blocking/movement of actors in addition to the choice of stage, positioning of set items/stage furniture, entrances, exits, levels etc. See the indicative content for Qb(i)/Qc and 9(a)/ 9(b) in the mark schemes for both the SAMs and specimen paper. See also the Component 3 exemplars and commentary on the GCSE Drama home page.

Where the student is asked to refer to the context in which the play was created and performed in Section A, does this mean the student must also refer to the context in which the play is set?

No. The student should refer to the context in which the play was created and performed for example. if referring to *The Crucible*, the student should refer to the time when the play was first performed rather than the era in which it was set. The same applies to *An Inspector Calls* which was set in 1912 but first performed in 1945. There is no requirement to write about the context to the play’s setting although this may be helpful to support students’ ideas, for example in terms of production elements and design.

There are examples within the ‘indicative content’ section of the mark schemes for the sample papers which indicate the kind of comment students may choose to make. Students may, in addition, benefit from doing some independent research of this time period and/ or the writer.

A number of the List A texts are adaptations, which were ‘first performed’ at a different time than the original performance of the text;

does this mean the student must also refer to this context?

No. The student must refer to the context to the first performance of the text, for example:

- *A Doll's House* – the Henrik Ibsen original written in 1879
- *Antigone* – the Sophocles original written in 440BCE
- *Government Inspector* – the Nikolai Gogol original written in 1836.

Should a student choose in addition to use contextual information from another time to support their concept and design ideas, these will be credited according to merit but are not required.

If a response to Question b(i) does not mention the context when the play was written and performed or a response to b(ii) does not include reference to the whole play text, can that response be awarded a mark in the highest level of assessment?

For a response to be placed in a specific level, students will need to be meeting the requirements of *every bullet point* in that level. Where a response meets all the criteria except one for a specific level, best fit marking must be applied. For example, for Qb(i) where there is no context at all, but the response was otherwise in Level 3, this would result in a best fit mark of somewhere between Level 1 and Level 3.

Please note that there are ceilings for a number of questions, which would apply if isolated knowledge is presented without linked understanding, noted by the following statement on the mark scheme:

Responses that demonstrate isolated knowledge without linked understanding can only achieve a maximum of (x) marks.

How much understanding of the role of the director do my students need to have when responding to questions B(i) and B(ii)?

Both of these questions require students to understand that the director is making creative choices, in B(i) for the designer and in B(ii) for the actor. Responses must show this understanding in the phrasing selected by students.

What if a response to b(ii) shows a clear grasp of the character but the student does not write as a director?

The question requires students to write as a director making decisions about characterisation. If decisions about characterisation are made as an actor, the rubric of the question will not have been followed which will limit the mark awarded.

Component 3 questions b(i) and c require students to select and write about one production or design element such as costume, lighting or set. What penalties will be applied if students write about more than one element?



Penalties will not be applied. Examiners will be trained to mark the entire response and assess which design element has been written about at the highest level, awarding marks accordingly.

What about in Section A, where students choose the option of sound as a design as a production element; can they write about silence and the use of voice?

Responses referring to sound in these questions will need to offer examples of how sound might be used as a production/design element. Silence could certainly be offered as a relevant idea or example to support the use of sound as a production or design element, as long as students are clear that this is not just a brief pause in dialogue but a more extended and intentional moment of silence.

The use of voice to vocalise dialogue is a performance skill rather than a production or design skill and does not therefore meet the criteria for either Q(b)(i) or Q(c), however any other reasonable and appropriate use of actors' voices (or indeed bodies) to create live sound effects could certainly be offered as an example for sound design questions.

What is the difference between Q(B) (i) where students are writing as a director of a production element and Q(C) where students are writing as a designer of a design element?

The same elements appear across these two question styles, rotating over the life of the qualification, which makes it easy for teachers to prepare students for both questions. When answering the 9 mark question as a director, students should be looking to produce supporting examples that offer an overview of realising the extract in terms of the chosen production element, and link this to the performance context to the play. Knowledge and understanding will show a grasp of the director's role in overseeing and developing the chosen element, as well as of the element itself and the extract.

When answering the 14 mark question as a designer, students will need to write in more depth and detail, offering at the highest level, the designer's insight into exactly how this realisation will be achieved. Knowledge and understanding will show a grasp of the designer's role in using the chosen element as well as of the element itself and the extract.

Does the appendix to *The Crucible*, where John and Abigail meet in secret, count as part of the play-text, and could this come up as an extract on a live paper?

The appendix in the named edition of *The Crucible* will not feature as an unseen extract for assessment in the examination paper.

Best practice in preparing students for the demands of Component 3 Section A will be to offer students the opportunity to explore all commentaries and appendices provided in a published text to support a full understanding of the context of the play.

A PDF copy of the appendix extract is available to download from our website.



In Section B, Live Theatre Evaluation, if a question about lighting is asked, would that include projection, such as in *The Woman in Black*?

Gobos are used extensively throughout productions such as *The Woman in Black* to create both location (the train, the churchyard, Eel Marsh House) and atmosphere. As such, these could be commented on as part of a lighting or a set question.

The same would be true of projection, for example, the projected numbers & letters used in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.

There might be instances where projection/cyclorama is used purely as set without a strong focus on atmosphere; this is a specific choice creating a very different impact to, for example, a painted flat. Projection could therefore apply to either type of question.

For the Live Theatre Evaluation, can students write about a performance of the play that they performed in Component 2?

Yes.

In Section B, can students write about a performance of the play that they studied for Section A?

No. All editions and adaptations of all twelve Section A set texts may only be used in Section A of the examination.

They cannot be used as the basis of questions on Live Theatre Evaluation.

More detail about text choices can be found in the specification..

Can students refer to a digital recording of a live theatre performance for Section B: Live Theatre Evaluation?

Students are required to attend live theatre as part of the specification and refer to a live theatre performance for which they were a member of the audience.

In extreme exceptional circumstances (including limited access to appropriate live theatre), permission must be sought from drama.assessment@pearson.com before a digital recording to be used.

In Section B, where the question refers to sound /music, will students be rewarded if they write about voice or moments of silence in their responses?

Sound/music questions in Section B are intended to be design rather than acting/performing questions. Responses focusing on the use of voice as a performer would therefore not meet the criteria for these questions, unless relating to singing or



sound effects being created live by performers. Silence could be referenced for example a moment of silence deliberately stretching out prior to a shocking sound effect, (as seen in *The Woman in Black*.)

The best practice for a sound/music question will always be to teach students to write about sound effects and music, whether live or recorded.



