



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

# **GCE AS and A level subject criteria for drama and theatre studies**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 These subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all advanced subsidiary (AS) and advanced (A) level specifications in drama and theatre studies. They provide the framework within which the awarding body creates the detail of the specification.

Subject criteria are intended to:

- help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
- define the relationship between the AS and A level specifications, with the AS as a subset of the A level
- ensure that the rigour of A level is maintained
- help higher education institutions and employers know what has been studied and assessed.

Any GCE specification that contains significant elements of drama and theatre studies must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

## 2. Aims

AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre studies should encourage students to:

1. develop their interest and enjoyment in drama and theatre both as participants and as informed members of an audience, fostering an enthusiasm for and critical appreciation of the subject
2. develop understanding and appreciation of the significance of social, cultural and historical influences on the development of drama and theatre
3. experience a range of opportunities to develop a variety of dramatic and theatrical skills, enabling them to grow creatively and imaginatively in both devised and scripted work
4. integrate theory and practice through their understanding of critical concepts and the discriminating use of specialist terminology.

## 3. Subject content

AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre studies should build on students' prior knowledge of drama in key stages 1–3 and the skills, knowledge and understanding established at key stage 4/GCSE.

### Knowledge and understanding

- 3.1 AS and A level specifications should require candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:
- how performers, designers and directors communicate meaning to an audience
  - theatre practice through their own engagement with the medium as both participant and informed audience member
  - the appropriate vocabulary and specialist terminology for the subject.
- 3.2 AS level specifications should require candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:
- a minimum of two published plays demonstrating understanding of how style, form, dramatic structure and characterisation can be interpreted and realised in performance, and how plays relate to their historical, social and cultural context – they must be varied in terms of period and genre
  - the work of at least one influential director, designer, theatre company or other practitioner who has made a significant contribution to theatre practice.
- 3.3 A2 level specifications should require candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:
- at least two more published plays, of which one must be pre-20th century
  - the connections between theory and practice demonstrated through a range of forms, genres and performance styles
  - the directorial overview required in the interpretation and realisation of a theatrical performance
  - how relevant research supports practical work.

### Skills

- 3.4 AS and A level specifications should develop candidates':
- ability to form judgements about live theatre based on their understanding of drama and theatre
  - use of subject-specific terminology in a range of contexts

- c. performance and/or production skills appropriate to the creation and realisation of drama and theatre
- d. ability to work creatively and collaboratively to achieve shared dramatic intentions
- e. ability to respond to plays imaginatively, conveying ideas clearly and coherently.

3.5 In addition A2 candidates should develop:

- a. a more advanced level of performance and/or production skills
- b. the ability to think independently, make judgements and refine their work in the light of research
- c. the ability to analyse the ways in which different performance and production elements are brought together to create theatre.

## 4. Key skills

4.1 AS and A level specifications in drama and theatre studies should provide opportunities for developing and generating evidence for assessing relevant key skills from the list below. Where appropriate these opportunities should be directly cross-referenced, at specified level(s), to the key skills standards, which may be found on the QCA website ([www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)).

- Application of number
- Communication
- Improving own learning and performance
- Information and communication technology
- Problem solving
- Working with others

## 5. Assessment objectives

5.1 Knowledge, understanding and skills are closely linked. Specifications should require that all candidates demonstrate the following assessment objectives in the context of the content and skills prescribed.

**AO1:** Demonstrate the application of performance and/or production skills through the creation and realisation of drama and theatre.

**AO2:** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of practical and theoretical aspects of drama and theatre using appropriate terminology.

**AO3:** Interpret plays from different periods and genres.

**AO4:** Make critical and evaluative judgements of live theatre.

5.2 The assessment objectives are to be weighted in all specifications as indicated in the following table. The assessment objectives apply to the whole specification.

Assessment objectives		Weighting		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
AO1	Demonstrate the application of performance and/or production skills through the realisation of drama and theatre.	30–40%	30–40%	30–40%
AO2	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of practical and theoretical aspects of drama and theatre using appropriate terminology.	20–40%	20–40%	20–40%
AO3	Interpret plays from different periods and genres.	20–40%	20–40%	20–40%
AO4	Make critical and evaluative judgements of live theatre.	10–25%	10–25%	10–25%

## 6. Scheme of assessment

### Internal assessment

- 6.1 All A level specifications in drama and theatre studies must have internal assessment up to a maximum weighting of 40 per cent. Internal assessment must not exceed 40 per cent at either AS or A2.
- 6.2 Where internal assessment is included, specifications must make clear how reliability and fairness are secured, by setting out requirements that ensure the robustness of each stage of the internal assessment, ie:
- the specific skills to be assessed
  - setting of tasks
  - extent of supervision in carrying out of tasks
  - conditions under which assessment takes place
  - marking of the assessment and internal standardising procedures
  - any moderation process.

## **Synoptic assessment**

- 6.3 Synoptic assessment in drama and theatre studies should be included at A2 and will take account of the requirement that A level qualifications should enable candidates to develop a broader and deeper understanding of the connections between the knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the specifications as a whole. Synoptic assessment in drama and theatre studies involves the selection and application of skills knowledge and understanding to a range of new and varied contexts. In those units indicated as synoptic, candidates should be required to address artistic challenges through the creation of their own work and their interpretation of plays and show understanding of the ways in which other drama and theatre practitioners have made artistic decisions.

There should be both practical and theoretical elements to synoptic assessment, which should draw on all the assessment objectives although not necessarily with equal weighting.

- 6.4 Examples of synoptic assessment are demonstrated in specification content through 3.3b and c (knowledge and understanding), and 3.5c (skills).

## **Quality of written communication**

- 6.5 AS and A level specifications will be required to assess the candidates' quality of written communication in accordance with the guidance document produced by QCA.