

Getting Started September 2007

GCE Drama and
Theatre Studies

**Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Drama and Theatre
Studies (8DR01)**

First examination 2009

**Edexcel Advanced GCE in Drama and Theatre Studies
(9DR01)**

First examination 2010



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- A customisable student guide to help recruit students
- A course planner to make it easy to plan delivery
- Links to sample assessment materials so you can see what is expected
- Information on the products and services provided by Edexcel to support the specification.

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Contents

Getting started for teachers

Introduction	1
Unit overviews	2
What's new	4
Course planner	5
Unit 1: Exploration of Drama and Theatre	7
Unit 2: Theatre Text in Performance	10
Unit 3: Exploration of Dramatic Performance	12
Unit 4: Theatre Text in Context	15

Getting started for students

Student Guide	18
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Introduction

This document is designed to help you get started with the new Edexcel GCE in Drama and Theatre Studies.

Key features of the specification

The key features of the new GCE Drama and Theatre Studies specification are summarised below.

An innovative specification

With maximum flexibility of content, the specification allows teachers to design their own teaching programmes, choosing texts that they want to teach and that they know will suit their students.

A motivating specification

The specification encourages creative approaches throughout the course. It offers a mix of theory and practice, and covers all aspects of drama and theatre work

A supported specification

Edexcel provides extensive support for this specification, including guidelines for the internal assessments and schemes of work.

Assessment overview

The course will be assessed by both examination and internal assessment.

AS units

Unit 1: Exploration of Drama and Theatre	Unit 2: Theatre Text in Performance
Internal assessment: practical drama activities with supporting Exploration Notes; evaluation of live theatre	External assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monologue/duologue performance or design realisation • group performance or design realisation

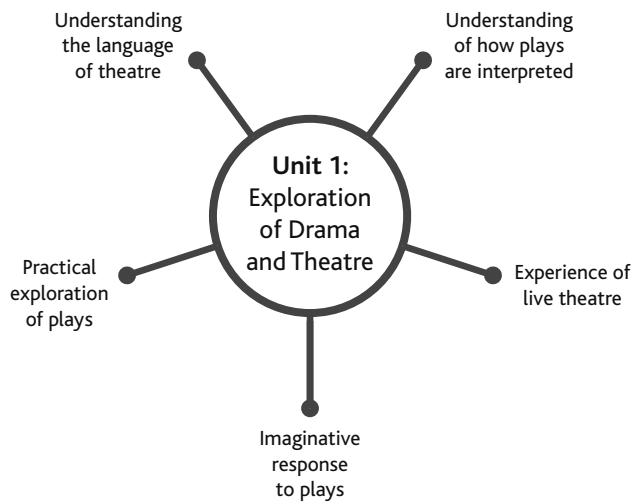
A2 units

Unit 3: Exploration of Dramatic Performance	Unit 4: Theatre Text in Context
Internal assessment: creation and performance or design of original piece of drama	External assessment: 2½ hour written examination on a set text and historical performance conditions

Unit overviews

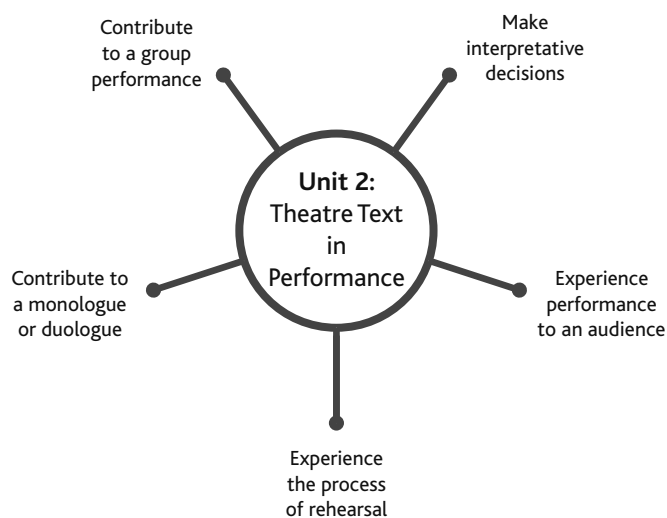
Unit 1

Unit 1 requires the analysis of two play texts through exploration and study to gain an understanding of how plays are structured and interpreted.



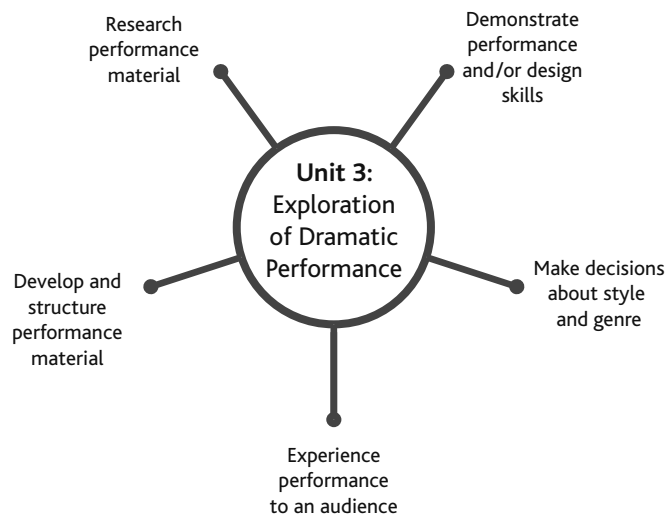
Unit 2

Unit 2 requires the understanding and experience gained in Unit 1 to be applied in a performance context.



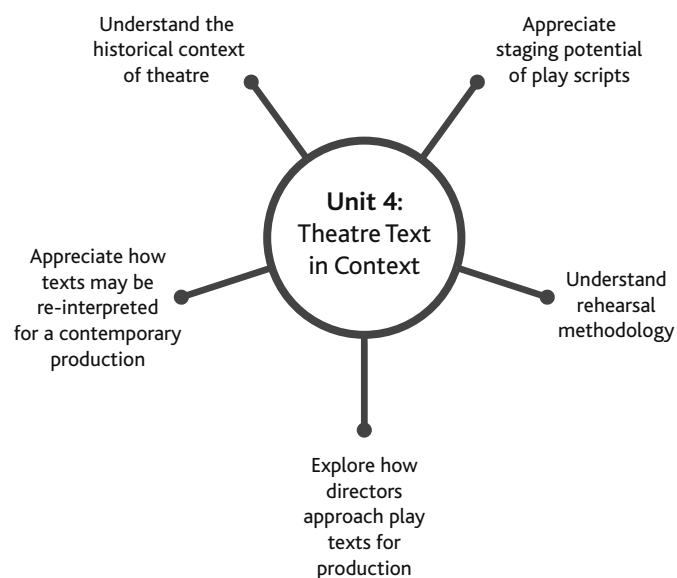
Unit 3

Unit 3 requires the creation of a unique performance created in a group context. Experience and understanding gained in both AS units may be applied to an original production.



Unit 4

Unit 4 requires a historical and directorial approach to theatre texts. Experience gained in the AS units and Unit 3 can be applied to a set text and a play that is likely to be in excess of 100 years old.



What's new?

The main change to the GCE Drama and Theatre Studies specification is that, as with most GCEs, the number of units has been reduced from six to four by QCA.

The new subject criteria from QCA require that the specification:

- develops students' interest in drama and theatre as participants and informed members of an audience
- develops knowledge and understanding of major influences in theatre
- offers a range of opportunities to develop drama and theatre skills creatively and imaginatively
- integrates theory and practice.

The new Edexcel specification builds on the strengths of the current market-leading specification, and has been developed in consultation with a number of professional practitioners, including the National Theatre and representatives from higher education.

Information for current Edexcel centres

Centres who have been delivering the Edexcel GCE in Drama and Theatre Studies (8113/9113) will find that we have kept as much as possible of the previous specification. The following grid shows in summary how the content of the old units maps across to the new units.

New unit	Old unit
Unit 1: Exploration of Drama and Theatre	Unit 1: Exploration of Drama and Theatre Unit 3: Text in Context I - Section B
Unit 2: Theatre Text in Performance	Unit 2: Text in Performance I
Unit 3: Exploration of Dramatic Performance	Unit 4: Devising Unit 5: Text in Performance II
Unit 4: Theatre Text in Context	Unit 6: Text in Context II

Significant new additions or alteration contained in the new specification are:

- **Unit 2: Theatre Text in Performance**
There is an added requirement for students to offer either a monologue or duologue from a different play to that performed in the group performance.
- **Unit 4: Theatre Text in Context**
There is a choice of one from three new set texts.
There is a choice of three historical periods for experience of a live production.

Course planner

The GCE Drama and Theatre Studies units may be delivered in any suitable order, and the length of time spent on each individual unit may, to some extent, be variable. This section offers some guidance on possible routes through the course.

AS Drama and Theatre Studies

Before embarking on work that will be the direct subject of assessment, you may want to introduce the course through an induction period that introduces students to the wider world of theatre, covering, for example:

- Styles
- Actor techniques
- The contribution of design forms
- Stage formats
- Historical context
- Practitioners.

Much of your planning for the AS course will depend on when the assessment for Unit 2 takes place, as this can be any time between 1st February and 31 May. The live performance for Unit 1 can be seen at any time during the AS year, as long as the evaluation is completed by the coursework deadline.

Model 1

In model 1, the assessment for Unit 2 is planned to be later in the assessment window, so Unit 1 is completed before Unit 2.

Induction	Theatre concepts	Live theatre review
Unit 1	First play text	
Unit 1	Second play text	
Unit 2	Rehearsal and preparation	

Model 2

In model 2, the assessment for Unit 2 is planned to be earlier in the assessment window and Unit 1 is split either side of this.

Induction	Theatre concepts	Live theatre review
Unit 1	First play text	
Unit 2	Rehearsal and preparation	
Unit 1	Second play text	

A2 Drama and Theatre Studies

The written examination for Unit 4 is likely to be dated in late May or June of each year of assessment. It is preferable to conduct the preparation period immediately before this date. Unit 3 requires a well-planned process to ensure that all the assessment elements of research and exploration, development and structure, performance and evaluation are given a suitable timescale for completion.

The live production for Unit 4 can be seen at any convenient time during the A2 year. In planning, you should scan suitable media information at an early date to find out what productions will be available so that you can make a choice of a suitable play that is in production at a convenient time.

Unit 3	Research and exploration	Unit 4 live production
	Development and structure	
	Performance	
	Evaluation	
Unit 4	Set text study	
	Set text rehearsal and exploration	
	Live production text study	
	Live production	

Unit 1: Exploration of Drama and Theatre

Planning

There are no prescribed texts for this unit. Instead you have the opportunity to choose plays that you know will engage your students as they begin their AS Drama and Theatre Studies course.

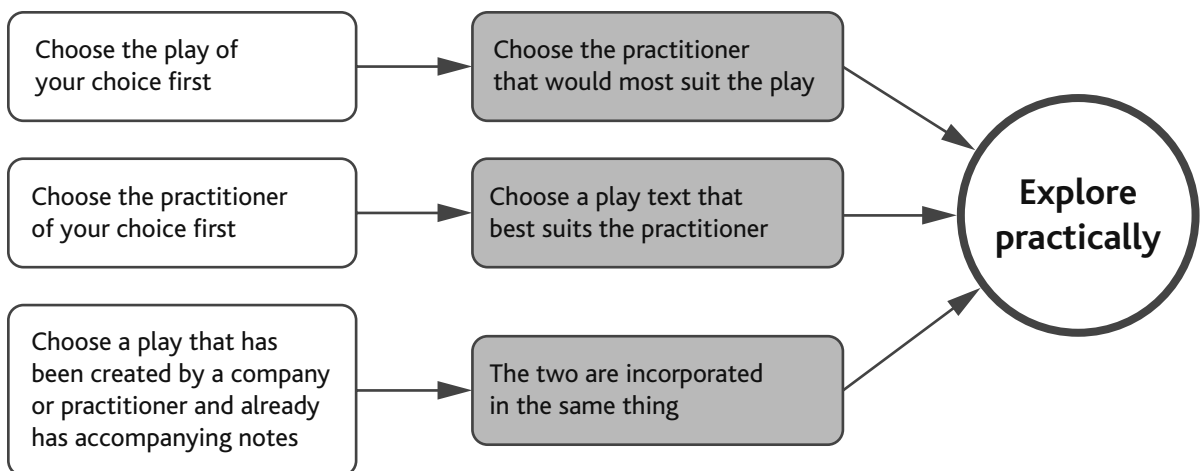
For the live performance evaluation, students can write either about a third play or about one of the two plays explored practically and in their Exploration Notes. Knowing what plays are going to be on at local theatres may therefore inform your choice of plays for the practical explorations. If you choose to cover three plays in this unit, your planning will of course have to take into account extra time for introducing the third play to students.

For the plays to be explored in practical activities, choose two contrasting texts that will give students a firm foundation for the rest of the course: the exploratory and analytic skills developed by students in this unit apply to all subsequent units.

Pick plays with which you are familiar and which you have always wanted to teach, but bear in mind the following points when making your choice:

- The two plays must be contrasting in style or period.
- One text must take into account a recognised practitioner. Of course, both plays could do this and you could use the same practitioner or a different one for the second text.

Given the freedom of choice with regard to plays, you will find that there are many different practitioners you could choose. The following diagram suggests some possible routes for planning this unit.



Delivery and assessment

Practical exploration work

Practical drama and theatre activities lie at the heart of this unit. The texts should be explored with energy and imagination.

Both play texts should be explored in depth through a wide range of practical workshop activities that are tailored to give all students the opportunity to achieve. The freedom to choose your texts for this unit means that you can select activities to suit the plays and your own students, provided that they connect to the assessment criteria. The activities below are suggestions of what the practical exploration of plays could involve:

- You could provide a controversial title such as: 'Devise a workshop to show that the protagonist was certifiably insane'.
- Students should be able to explore a range of characters. You could experiment with the possible movement style of a range of characters and explore how a practitioner's ideas might be applied to a particular character or scene.
- Students could prepare to lead a workshop, either as an individual or paired activity.

Exploration Notes

Students should complete their Exploration Notes alongside their practical exploration work. They may write up their notes in class time, though it is usually a better use of time if they do it for homework.

Exploration Notes must be presented on paper and include a total word count. Remind students that they must observe the word limit and that the teacher-assessor will not mark any work that exceeds the word limit of 3000 words.

Encourage students to use drawings, sketches, diagrams, images and so on as a means to enhance their notes, as appropriate. It is worth pointing out to them that notes are most effective when written in the first person, e.g.: 'When I played this character in our workshop, I found that ...'

Exploration Notes should be accurate both in terms of knowledge and understanding, and in reflecting an individual student's own learning. The notes should be balanced between the two texts.

The completed set of Exploration Notes should be marked using the assessment criteria. It is expected that the teacher-assessor will annotate the notes to help the moderator understand the final mark.



Evaluation of live theatre

While it is good practice to encourage students to see as much live theatre as possible, their evaluation of a live theatre performance should refer to one play only. This may be one of the two plays explored practically or it may be a third play. As the evaluation task stands alone, it can be completed at any time during the AS year, as long as it is completed by the coursework deadline date.

It is important for students to understand that the focus of the evaluation is on the performance, not the play. The evaluation should reflect the qualities of the production seen; statements and opinions should be justified with clear examples to support them.

The written evaluation must not exceed 1000 words and it is worth pointing out that successful evaluations may well be shorter than this: the emphasis should be on the quality of the evaluation rather than the quantity of writing. Students may find that appropriate sketches, diagrams and other appropriate illustrations help to communicate their meaning.

Unit 2: Theatre Text in Performance

In Unit 2 the focus is on students understanding how play texts are realised and communicated in live performance to an audience. Marks are awarded by a visiting examiner who attends the performances at the centre's chosen performance space.

Planning

Unit 2 builds on the knowledge and experience gained from the exploration of plays in Unit 1. As with Unit 1, Edexcel does not set or recommend specific play texts for this unit, allowing centres to select texts that will best suit their students. It is important that the texts chosen will support each student's achievement in all criteria in both Section A and Section B. In the two sections there are opportunities for students to show a range of skills by careful choice of text that offer the opportunity to explore different styles and genres.

When choosing play texts for Unit 2, consider the following points:

- the skills of the students
- the accessibility of the text to students
- whether the text offers sufficient challenge at AS level
- the resources that your centre has.

Note that the number and gender mix of students should not be a consideration as the use of multi-role and cross-gender casting is perfectly acceptable.

Assessment

Section A

In Section A, students work either as individuals or in pairs by offering one of the following:

- a monologue
- a duologue
- a design skill.

Students must choose a suitable play text from which they will select their performance piece. It is essential that they consider the entire play text so that they are aware of where and how their performance piece fits the whole play



Section B

In Section B, students work as members of a performance group on a play text that is chosen and directed by the teacher.

Students offering **performance** skills will be assessed on their:

- vocal skills
- movement skills
- characterisation
- ability to communicate with other performers and the audience.

Students offering **design** skills will be assessed on:

- realising their design in performance conditions
- their use of materials and equipment
- their ability to interpret a design concept.

Unit 3: Exploration of Dramatic Performance

At the heart of this unit is the response to and exploration of a stimulus, theme, issue or play, and how that may be shaped and developed into an original piece of live theatre.

Choosing the starting point

The initial stimulus material, theme, issue or play for this unit should be chosen by the teacher. There is no prescribed form of material, but it must have the potential to be a starting point for students to devise a piece of drama which will ultimately be performed to a specified audience.

The starting point could be drawn from a range of possibilities, such as a theme, issue or idea, a poem, a visual image, a film extract, an historical event, a piece of music or an artefact/collection of artefacts, or a recognised published play text. Remind students that the devising process should incorporate consideration of style and influence of one or more recognised theatre practitioners.

The production process

There is no one specified way of delivering this element of the unit, but you may wish to consider one or more of the following approaches for the practical production process.

- The way in which the chosen stimulus is presented to the students: for example, a teacher-led workshop could be used as a means of presenting the stimulus and the initial exploration of it.
- How influential theatre practitioners or theatre companies have influenced the development of devised theatre, strategies for the devising process and the performance of it: for example, a workshop with a recognised theatre company or on a recognised company that specialises in devised work could form preparation for the experience of the process of devising.
- Regular analytical and evaluative discussion of the devising process followed by documentation in a drama journal or log.

Encourage students to consider:

- how an original piece of theatre may be created for and performed to a specified audience in relation to the original initial stimulus material, theme, issue or play
- how the response to the stimulus material may be explored with imagination and creativity
- how the influence of recognised theatre practitioners — which may include recognised theatre companies — affects their choices and decisions in relation to the development of the piece as a whole and specifically the final performance
- how research, practical exploration, development, shaping and refining of those ideas may have an impact on that audience
- how effective the final performance is in relation to intended and actual audience response
- how their experience of drama and theatre from the AS course of study may inform the decisions they make.



Supporting written evidence

Again, there is no one specified approach to the Supporting Written Evidence, but you may wish to consider some of the suggestions below:

- Students could keep a drama log or journal for each session that could then be used to inform the Supporting Written Evidence Document. It should be evaluative, analytical and reflective in tone.
- Facilitate students' regular consideration of the devising process in relation to the published headings for the Supporting Written Evidence.
- Encourage students to use diagrams, drawings and sketches to enhance their written work. These should be clearly annotated in detail and should be included in the Supporting Written Evidence Document where appropriate.

Remind students that written evidence is most effective when written in the first person, either as 'I' or, due to the group focus of the unit, in the collective 'we' when appropriate.

Assessment

The assessment focus for this unit is based on process and product (the final performance) and comprises:

- the continual assessment and evidencing, by the teacher-assessor, of how practical drama and theatre is employed throughout the devising process by the student.
- the assessment of the student's Supporting Written Evidence Document in relation to the process.
- the assessment of the student's evaluation of both process and product. This should be structured in response to the published guidelines and should not exceed 3500 words.
- the assessment by the teacher-assessor of the student's performance through their chosen individual skill — as either a performer or a designer — in relation to the final outcome, that is, the piece of theatre in performance.

Research, exploration, development and structure

The research, exploration, development and structure elements are evidenced through:

- the continual assessment of the student's involvement in the process of devising and specific evidence gathered through the student's involvement in and input to the devising process
- the written evidence within the student's Supporting Written Evidence Document.

The teacher-assessor should annotate the student's written submission indicating where the evidence lies in support of the mark awarded in relation to the published criteria in order to assist the moderator.

Performance

The performance element is evidenced through the final performance and is assessed by the teacher-assessor. The evidence should be captured on either video or DVD.

An assessment should be made for each individual student and their chosen skill (either a performer or a designer) against the published criteria.

The teacher-assessor is required to complete a written candidate profile for each student and indicate, through reference to specific moments in the performance, how the final mark is arrived at.

Evaluation

The evaluation element is evidenced through the student's written documentation of an evaluation of both the process and performance.

Unit 4: Theatre Text in Context

Your planning for Unit 4 will begin with choosing one of the three set texts for Sections A and B and choosing a time period for Section C. The time period studied for Section C must be different from that studied for Sections A and B. As a live performance of the Section C text is essential, this may dictate which text you choose for Sections A and B.

Planning and delivery

Sections A and B

In Sections A and B, students are required to have an understanding of the way a director works with a company in preparing a text for performance.

The text should be explored in practical workshop activities to enable students to recognise the influence a director may have on a production of a play through the rehearsal process. Section A is about process and Section B is about performance, with the candidate developing and shaping ideas for a proposed production from the perspective of a director. Remind students that the focus is not on the play text but on the play in rehearsal.

The work of the director is essential to Section A and Section B. Understanding of the work of the director will be gained from practical activities related to other units and these may include specific practitioners alongside the more generally understood 'role' of the director within the shaping process.

There is no attempt to define a director's 'role' in this section but students should draw on a range of their experiences of 'the director' from other aspects of the course. However, while there are opportunities to apply knowledge gained in other units, candidates should make sure that their response for Section A focuses on the question and the extract, and that for Section B they keep the director's interpretation in relation to the question at the centre of their answer.

Students need to have an understanding of the chosen text in its historical context. This should be seen alongside an understanding of the ways in which a director may work with a company (specifically this should include actors and designers but it does not exclude other practitioners such as choreographers, vocal coaches or devisers) in order to achieve a specific interpretation of the text in performance.

Section C

The focus of Section C is the requirement to see a live production of a play written and performed in one of the following time periods:

- 525BC—AD65
- 1564—1720
- 1828—1914.

The time period chosen for this unit must be different from that in which the text chosen for Sections A and B was written. Your planning for this unit will therefore need to be structured around finding a performance that will be suitable and appropriate for Section C. This performance may be seen at any time during the A2 year.

Candidates will need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the impact of a play in performance as a member of an audience and to relate that understanding of 'now' to the 'then' of the original performance conditions of the play.

Primarily the delivery for this section will be centred around the performance seen and the impact of this on students as members of that audience. Delivery will include research opportunities alongside practical exploration of the performance opportunities, as well as understanding of performance gained from other aspects of the course.

An understanding of all the elements of performance will be valuable in delivering this section.

Assessment

Section A

The assessment focus in Section A is on the candidate's understanding of how a director may work with a company during the rehearsal process to create an interpretation of the chosen text.

Candidates will be given an extract from the chosen play that will form the basis for the questions and will allow them to demonstrate their understanding in relation to the specific extract. The questions will focus solely on the extract and explore a rehearsal structure that will enable specific criteria to be met.

The assessment is asking:

- What is the purpose of rehearsal?
- How is this achievable in relation to this extract?

Section B

The assessment focus in Section B is on how the candidate may realise an interpretation of the chosen text in performance for a 21st-century audience.

Candidates should consider the role of the director in interpreting texts and bringing them to life for an audience, and how a director may influence and/or inform an audience through the overall approach to the text, with specific examples in support of any decisions that are made.

There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to this question except that the interpretation offered by the candidate must remain true to the playwright's original intentions and therefore have regard for the historical context of the play.



The assessment will look for the candidate's ability to recognise the elements of performance that come together under the director in order to engage the audience. In broad terms these elements may include:

- actors
- design
- staging/setting
- themes and contexts.

Section C

The assessment focus in Section C is on the live performance of the chosen play in relation to its original performance conditions.

The candidate will need to demonstrate an understanding of the play in its contemporary interpretation in relation to an understanding of how it might have been presented in its original form.

Research will inform responses in this section but, as in Sections A and B, it is the performance of the play that should be at the centre of the response and the focus of the question.

Student Guide

What do I need to know, or be able to do, before taking this course?

It is useful to have taken Drama at GCSE level but not essential. It is important that you are interested in gaining a greater understanding of how theatre and plays work, and that you are keen to be involved with performances.

What will I learn?

The course demands practical, creative and communication skills in almost equal measure. You will extend your ability to create drama and theatre, either in a performing or production role. You will also be required to write about drama and to develop your powers of analysis to become an informed critic. The course will involve taking part in drama productions, as well as studying plays and playwrights.

Is this the right subject for me?

You need to be curious about issues and ideas and have a creative instinct for communicating your views through drama. You may be keen on acting, writing or on the visual and technical side of theatre and wish to develop your skills in some or all of these areas. Equally you will be interested in going to the theatre to see plays performed by different theatre companies.

What can I do after I've completed the course?

This AS and Advanced GCE can lead to further study in Drama, Theatre Studies and Performing Arts in Higher Education at degree or HND level. It can be used as part of your course to broaden your studies and may lead on to a career in the performing arts industries.

Drama and Theatre Studies AS and Advanced GCE complements a range of subjects and is useful in building confidence and improving presentation skills in a range of careers.

Next steps!

Your subject teacher at your school or college should be able to guide you further. You can also find further information, including the full specification and assessment materials on the Edexcel website: www.edexcel.org.uk

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We will inform centres of any changes to this issue. The latest issue can be found on the Edexcel website: www.edexcel.org.uk.

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