

# 2025 ASSESSMENT REPORT

## SDD315120 DRAMA

### Practical Component

#### Timing of Programs

Most solo work presented was to time. However, we still had candidates presenting work that was under time. Students are penalised for undertime work as outlined in the Drama External Assessment Specifications.

Specific guidelines need to be met regarding the group play time and total program. This year we saw some group plays running more than 5 minutes undertime. In many cases where groups ran under the time the plays were duologue heavy or there was little to no thematic linking.

A broad suggestion for consideration:

##### Group of 3 = 30 minutes

- 15-minute play extract (as per TASC guidelines)
- Total Solo Presentations – Minimum 6 minutes / maximum 12 minutes
- Creative Elements – Thematic linking between 9 to 3 minutes depending on length of play and combined solos.

##### Group of 4 = 40 minutes

- 20-minute play extract (as per TASC guidelines)
- Total Solo Presentations – Minimum 12 minutes / maximum 16 minutes
- Creative Elements – Thematic linking between 8 and 4 minutes depending on length of play and combined solos.

#### Creative Elements

The importance of the thematic linking cannot be understated. The linking material needs to be polished, refined and provide a contrast between the solo and the play. The thematic linking should strengthen and create a well-rounded performance program with intention that clearly articulates the chosen theme.

Where students utilised a variety of form, e.g. creative movement, solo and unison singing or speaking, tableaux, spoken word, mime, placards in tableaux and silence, and clear theatre practitioner techniques, the panel saw a wide range of skills from each performer.

The following guidance was provided in the 2024 Assessment Report regarding Creative Elements (Criterion 6) and remains relevant:

The importance of the thematic linking cannot be understated. The linking material needs to be refined and provide a contrast between the solo and the play. A contrast might be – attitude, voice, movement, etc. The thematic linking should strengthen and create a well-rounded performance program with intention. The thematic linking should provide the students with an opportunity to perform a clear, smooth full performance program with continuity. (Students shouldn't stop and start their performance to set up props or set up or pack up after the play to continue with a solo.)

Consider the following questions:

- How does the thematic linking introduce their theme and how do they use it to create a continuous 30 or 40-minute exam performance?
- What are your students bringing to each element?
- What talents are they showcasing?
- How are students showcasing their performance toolbox? All centres are required to ensure that the thematic linking content (dialogue, text, ideas, etc) is clearly marked and included in the exam program booklets – this is the fifth year this has been requested. Unrehearsed improvised dialogue should be discouraged.

Examiners noted that this year the following linking techniques worked well:

- use of text and movement principles
- movement with soundscapes
- manipulation of time
- statistics with meaning and projection
- tableaux with words overlaid
- game show style.

We still saw some stop and starting of the program to move sets and props. This does not allow for a continuous thematic linking program.

Please remember that standing still and repeating the same word at the start of the program with no movement or linking into the first item as the only linking element does not satisfy the creative elements requirements.

All centres are required to ensure that the thematic linking content (dialogue, text, ideas, etc.) is clearly marked and included in the exam program booklets.

## Solo Performance (Criterion 1 and 6)

Each assessment report for the last four years now has mentioned timing of the solo. Teachers are reminded that the length requirement of the solo is 2 to 4 minutes. Students are placed at a disadvantage if they do not meet the minimum time of 2 minutes. There were several undertime solos; for example, 1:04 to 1:30 was seen at a number of centres.

White generally the choice and quality of the solo was excellent this year, low projection, poor articulation and inadequate breath control made some performers difficult to hear and understand. Panels continue to see characterisation and dramatic presentation of poetry and prose.

Many solo selections allowed the students to demonstrate vocal contrast. For dramatic effect, students should utilise projection rather than yelling and shouting. Vocal transitions between beats need to build rather than jump from quiet to a sudden yell or shout.

### Placement of Performers

The same reminder as last year about proximity of performers to examiners. Please ensure that the performers are not presenting work so close that they are almost overlooking the examiners' desk. In some centres students stood less than one metre away from the examiners' desk and stared directly at the examiners.

## Dramatic Extracts (Criterion 1,2 and 6)

It was refreshing to see some new extracts being performed. Less borrowed old cuts were seen. If teachers are using work that they have not directly sourced themselves, and has been borrowed from another school, please check with the teacher of the borrowed work for permission (the teacher may have spent significant time on making edits and their work needs to be acknowledged. They may also have their own students performing those works). Ensure that teachers have read the relevant plays for context. Teachers often make cuts for their students that might not work for students at another school. Another reminder to teachers that the selection of the play extract should not rely heavily on duologue work.

## Administrative Matters

- Adequate parking for examiners must be provided.
- Provide an appropriate secure room for use before and after exams for use by the examiners.
- Ensure desks, supportive seating and all paperwork are ready for examiners pre-arrival.
- All creative scripted material and other linking information needs to be included in the program booklet.
- Stapled or spiral bound exam booklets – no folders.
- Do not retype solo works. Some solo pieces have been borrowed from old examination booklets where there are typos, retyped incorrect words and a lot of omissions, or under time.
- Teachers are reminded of the importance of referring to previous Assessment Reports, External Assessment Specifications and the course documentation on the TASC website in order to prevent teachers from giving students incorrect advice and information.

# Written Component

## General comments

- A number of students wrote about pre-recorded/videoed shows for Section A, resulting in penalties being applied.
- Teachers are reminded to encourage students to read all parts of exam questions.
- It is correct to underline the play titles they refer to in their essays every time it is used. This year less than 20% of student responses had underlined play titles.
- If typing, responses candidates should *italicise* play names
- Students are required to write in first person, past tense.
- Essay structure needs to be adhered to in student responses with an introduction, clear body paragraphs and a conclusion.
- A one-paragraph response that rewords the question does not meet the minimum standard, nor does it demonstrate a genuine effort to answer the question. Responses that do this will be awarded a 'z' rating.
- Teachers are reminded that the course document and the External Assessment Specifications (EAS) are the primary documents for course delivery and external assessment requirements. Other relevant materials can be accessed under *Supporting Documents* on the course page.

The following question breakdowns provide examples of what the markers are looking for but are not limited to these suggestions.

## Section A

### Question 1

#### Introduction

- introduce the two live theatre productions (include title, playwright/director and where/when)
- identify the key themes or ideas of each performance (name them)
- state what elements will be analysed (3).

Key theme/idea: (e.g. isolation, identity, power, freedom) how was this communicated through:

#### Lighting

- describe the colour palette, intensity, transitions – angles, position
- describe types of lighting – wash, spot, gobo, cyc, projections, etc.
- explain how lighting highlighted emotional tone or symbolised key ideas
- give examples.

#### Sound/Music/AV

- note the type of sound used (live, recorded, ambient, underscoring, instrumental, diegetic, non-diegetic, sfx)
- explain how rhythm, volume, silence, transitions, mood, continuity, motif's, directional, etc. reinforced themes/ideas
- give examples.

## Costuming

- describe the style, period and colour choices and textures
- show how costumes reflected status, transformation, relationships and symbolism
- give examples.

## Use of the Acting Stage

- comment on set design (realistic, symbolic, minimalist), type of stage, spatial arrangement and actor movement
- comment on colours, levels and locations
- explain how proximity or distance between characters conveyed meaning of theme/ideas
- give examples.

Examples must highlight how each element was used to communicate the key theme/idea.

## Conclusion

- summarise how the selected technical elements in both productions worked together to enhance the storytelling
- reinforce how lighting, sound/AV, costuming and stage use each contributed to conveying the key themes and engaging the audience.

## Marker Observations

- Students should provide multiple examples for the element they are discussing.
- There was a lack of specific terminology – e.g. “lights out” used instead of blackout as the correct terminology, and “front of the stage” and “back of the stage” instead of using downstage and backstage.
- Students must ensure that themes are correctly mentioned. Comedy or humorous entertainment is not a theme but a style/genre.
- Naming the type of stage is appropriate.

## Question 2

### Introduction

- introduce the two productions (title, playwright/director, where and when)
- mention Director’s vision – briefly outline the main ideas or intentions that engaged the audience
- state what elements analysing to engage the audience (2).

How were the elements used to engage the audience?

### Acting

- describe the acting style (naturalistic, stylised, physical theatre, etc.)
- discuss voice (pitch, accent, mood, volume), physical (stance, gesture, facial expressions), relationships (eye contact, timing, proximity)
- explore key performances or moments that connected emotionally or intellectually with the audience
- give examples.

## Direction and Stage Decisions

- discuss staging choice (proscenium, thrust, in-the-round) and how it shaped audience involvement
- discuss pacing, use of space, transitions, audience interaction, cross casting, gender, blocking, climax, contrasts, movement, exits, entrances
- give examples.

## Technical Production Elements

- analyse how lighting, sound, multimedia, or set design, costumes or props enhanced the director's vision
- mention how these elements supported mood/atmosphere or drew focus to key moments
- give examples: projected visuals or sound motifs reinforcing emotional beats.

## Conclusion

- summarise how both directors used the selected elements to the audience
- reinforce that these choices shaped not only the aesthetic but the emotional and intellectual experience of the audience.

## Marker Observations

- Overall, this question was answered very thoroughly. Better responses discussed the actors' use of voice and body when discussing acting, not just one aspect.
- Some responses focussed on theme and not enough on "engage the audience" and seemed to find it difficult to adapt to what the question asked and what they had prepared for.
- Stronger answers were clearly separated into distinct paragraphs and spent equal time on each play and element.
- There was some use of cliches in weaker answers.
- Some compared the plays which was not asked for in the question.
- Sophisticated terminology and well-prepared examples featured in strong responses.

## Question 3

### Introduction

- introduce the two productions (title, playwright/director, where and when)
- identify one actor from each production and the character/s they played
- discuss how each actor used voice and physical skills to portray their character/s.

How were vocal and physical skills used to portray character:

*Actors:* [Name] as [Character]

*Character overview:* Briefly describe the actors role, motivation and key traits.

### Vocal Skills

- comment on tone, pace, volume, pitch variation, accent, pause, mood
- explain what vocal choices revealed
- give examples.

## Physical Skills

- describe posture, stance, gesture, facial expression, movement style, pace of movement, leading centre, energy levels
- give examples
- where there were multiple characters – explain how these were differentiated?

## Effect on Audience

- explain how these combined vocal and physical choices helped the audience understand or empathise with the character.

## Conclusion

- summarise how both actors effectively used voice and body to create character
- ensure there is a distinction between actor and character in discussion
- ensure at least 2 examples per skill are mentioned.

## Marker Observations

- Students needed to address the question. The candidates who did not do as well wrote a pre-planned response that discussed the success of the performances and did not relate it back to the question – in many responses students did not even mention the content of the question.
- The advice is – read the question then tailor your response to it, referring to the question in your answer.
- Essay structure – opening and closing paragraphs were often absent.
- Spelling – learn to spell the names of plays and performers and check details. Making up actor names or confusing them between plays was noticeable.
- Conventions such as underlining the title of a play were lacking.

# Section B

## Question 4

### Introduction

- identify the production (title, playwright)
- briefly summarise the plot or main focus of the performance
- identify the key themes or ideas (e.g. power, identity, love, injustice, isolation, etc.)
- state – explaining which three elements discussing how the technical production elements communicated these themes to the audience.

Key Themes/Ideas must be mentioned and **how** represented through:

### Lighting

- describe lighting colour, intensity, direction and transitions
- explain how these choices supported the emotional tone or symbolised themes
- example idea: harsh white spotlights isolating characters to show moral scrutiny; warm tones softening moments of connection.

## Props, Set and Staging

- identify key props and how they were used symbolically or practically
- give examples
- describe the overall set design (realistic, abstract, minimal)
- explain how space, levels and positioning reflected ideas or relationships (blocking)
- note any significant stage configurations (thrust, traverse, in-the-round) that affected audience engagement.

## Costuming and/or Makeup

- describe the colour palette, style and texture of costumes
- explain how costume changes or makeup reflected character development or themes
- examples.

## Music, Sound and/or AV

- identify how live or recorded sound and music shaped mood, tension, or rhythm
- explain how motifs, silence, or AV projection enhanced themes
- give examples.

## Conclusion

- summarise how the combined technical elements worked together to communicate the production's key ideas
- reinforce how these choices deepened audience understanding and emotional connection to the themes.

## Marker Observations

- On the whole students that tackled this question were well prepared and wrote in detail.
- The most successful responses wrote a clear and cohesive essay with structure and strong argument and examples.
- There was variation in the use of terminology.
- Using examples helped students to analyse.

## Question 5

### Introduction

- name the major production (title, playwright, etc)
- briefly summarise the plot or main focus of the performance
- identify the key character(s) being discussed
- state what will be analysed (3).

How did the elements contribute to the portrayal of character?

### Background Research

- research into historical context, social status, any other relevant research
- study of accents, dialects, or speech patterns relevant to the role
- observation of real-life behaviour or similar characters to inform authenticity
- examples.

## Use of Voice and Body

- tone, pitch, pace, volume and rhythm choices to communicate emotion or status
- use of accents or speech patterns to reflect background or personality
- strategic use of pauses or silence to emphasise moments
- posture, gesture, facial expression and movement style that reflect character traits
- physicality to show age, health or emotional state
- use of proxemics (distance from other characters) to indicate relationships or power dynamics
- give examples.

## Costumes or costume items

- discuss clothing and accessories reflecting social status, personality or character transformation
- consider how makeup and hair contributing to age, health or identity
- look at costume changes marking shifts in character development or narrative
- give examples.

## Genre

- describe the genre or style
- discuss choices in communicating the key moments (exaggeration, timing or movement suited to genre conventions)
- explore how the genre informed the portrayal of character
- give examples.

## Conclusion

- summarise how three elements (research, voice and body, costumes or costume items and genre/style) worked together to create a believable and engaging character.

## Marker Observations

- In this question the genre/style paragraph needed to be stronger. Students didn't understand what genre or style were and how this related to portrayal of character.
- The use of a topic sentence would strengthen some responses.
- A lot of responses included the name of school. This is to be avoided.
- Responses must be written in first person, past tense. The students are not currently performing in the play – they performed in the play.
- Many responses, while providing a good discussion of physical and vocal techniques used by the actor, did not score well because they did not address all parts of the question. Students forgot to write about how the choices they made help them to portray their character.

## Question 6

### Introduction

- name the production (title, playwright, etc)
- briefly summarise the plot or main focus of the performance
- briefly describe the ensemble and the importance of group performance in the story
- state what stagecraft skills (3) discussing how (listening and eye contact, audience awareness, dramatic timing and spatial awareness) contributed to the ensemble.

How did the stagecraft skills contribute to the ensemble?

### Listening and Eye Contact

- actively listening to each other to maintain responsiveness and flow
- use of eye contact or lack of to signal cues, reactions and relationships between characters
- strengthens cohesion and synchronisation within the ensemble
- give examples

### Audience Awareness

- actors modulating performance to engage the audience (voice projection, gesture, orientation, waiting for laughs, etc.)
- awareness of audience sightlines and attention to ensure clarity of interactions
- give examples.

### Dramatic Timing

- coordinating speech, pauses and gestures to maximise comedic, tragic or emotional effect
- ensemble working together to create rhythm and pace that maintains tension or engagement
- give examples.

### Spatial Awareness

- conscious use of stage space to maintain balance, levels and sightlines
- awareness of other actors' positions to avoid collisions and maintain focus on central action
- give examples.

### Conclusion

- summarise how the stagecraft skills enhanced ensemble cohesion
- emphasise how the skills (listening, eye contact, audience awareness, timing and spatial awareness) contributed to a polished, engaging and dynamic ensemble performance.

### Marker Observations

- Many responses lacked basic terminology. E.g., “middle of the stage” instead of centre stage.
- More context, specific examples needed.
- Stronger responses demonstrated understanding of why certain techniques were used. E.g., pause, rapid cueing by explaining what the ensemble was aiming to convey.
- The more robust answers gave strong context to their examples.
- There was some confusion between dramatic timing and “getting cues right”.