



Advanced Higher
Coursework
Assessment Task



Advanced Higher Drama

Project–dissertation

Assessment task

This document provides information for teachers and lecturers about the coursework component of this course in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed. It **must** be read in conjunction with the course specification.

Valid from session 2023-24 and until further notice.

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Contents

Introduction	1
Marking instructions	2
Instructions for candidates	3

Introduction

This document contains instructions for candidates for the Advanced Higher Drama project–dissertation. You must read it in conjunction with the course specification.

This project–dissertation has 30 marks out of a total of 100 marks available for the course assessment.

This is one of three course assessment components. The other components are a performance and an assignment.

Candidates must not use the same theatrical production and/or theatre practitioner that they use in their assignment.

Marking instructions

The marking instructions for the Advanced Higher Drama project—dissertation are in the course specification.

Instructions for candidates

This assessment applies to the project—dissertation for Advanced Higher Drama.

This project—dissertation has 30 marks out of a total of 100 marks available for the course assessment.

It assesses the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ identifying and exploring a relevant performance issue
- ◆ exploring and investigating the influence, theory and practice of influential theatre practitioners
- ◆ applying creative and critical thinking to synthesise ideas and arguments

In this assessment, you have to produce a dissertation of 2,500 to 3,000 words on a performance issue of your choice. The word count includes quotations but does not include title, footnotes and bibliography. This word length is appropriate to the complexity of the task, and allows you to conduct an in-depth study of your chosen performance issue.

You must include the word count with the submitted dissertation. If the word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty is applied.

Your teacher or lecturer will let you know if there are any specific conditions for doing this assessment.

Your performance issue can be the same, different, or a combination of the production role used in your performance assessment.

Your teacher or lecturer may guide you as to the likely availability and accessibility of resources for your chosen performance issue.

In this assessment, you have to:

- ◆ **Identify and explore a relevant performance issue to research**
This means choosing a specific performance issue that interests you, for example directing, technology, actor and audience relationships, or use of theatre space. You should do exploratory research and arrive at a focus for your performance issue.
- ◆ **Draw on theoretical knowledge and understanding of a performance issue**
This means that you need to find out how theatre practitioners and critics see this performance issue. You can find this in what they have written and/or spoken about on your performance issue.
- ◆ **Analyse specific features of performance and practice in relation to your performance issue**
This means finding out how theatre practitioners have explored your performance issue. You can find this in viewing live work, recordings, photographs, and in written descriptions by critics and other theatre analysts.

- ◆ **Evaluate the choices of theatre practitioners as relevant to your performance issue**
This means making judgements on what you have found out about how theatre practitioners have explored your performance issue, for example whether they have been successful, effective or innovative.
- ◆ **Synthesise information from a range of sources to produce a sustained and coherent line of argument**
This means you need to select the most appropriate information and use this to develop your own opinions, for example outlining how you see the performance issue as you become informed by your research.
- ◆ **Express an argument leading up to an evaluative conclusion**
This means you must combine your analysed examples of theory and performance evidence into an overall piece of persuasive writing that naturally leads up to your conclusion about your performance issue.
- ◆ **Organise, present and reference using appropriate referencing conventions**
This means that you should structure your paragraphs and examples in a clear way that makes sense and helps you build your argument. You must clearly acknowledge when you use, for example, quotes, other people's diagrams, illustrations, and if you summarise other people's ideas.

Below are possible suggestions for the focus of your dissertation:

- ◆ acting
- ◆ design
- ◆ directing
- ◆ actor–director relationship
- ◆ spectacle and impact
- ◆ technology in theatre
- ◆ politics in performance
- ◆ realism in theatre
- ◆ choice and use of the performance space
- ◆ community theatre

The above is not a prescribed list. These are possible starting points you may wish to investigate and explore.

You must choose a suitable title for your dissertation. This can be decided at any point during the task.

The following information will help you understand the requirements of the project–dissertation.

A Analysing features of performance, theatre practice and/or aspects of theory that explore your chosen performance issue (10 marks)

How has your performance issue been explored by theatre practitioners?

Once you are clear about the performance issue you are going to research, you can begin to collect material exploring a range of perspectives on this area. You should collect examples from performances and theories that you think help explain your performance issue, or that draw contrasts and comparisons.

It is important to gather your research material from a range of primary and secondary sources. You should keep a note of any sources used and how they relate to your performance issue. You must give specific details of the sources consulted.

To gain analysis marks you must:

- ◆ describe specific features of performance, theatre practice and/or aspects of theory relevant to your performance issue
- ◆ explain and develop these features (through exemplification, reasons, and/or evidence)
- ◆ use valid sources, such as reference to theory, critical perspectives and performances

Analysis involves a close examination of both theoretical ideas on drama work and practical examples of how drama has been developed and presented. Effective analysis involves going beyond description to draw out and relate implications. The quality of analysis is dependent on the understanding and depth of knowledge in the research area. Factual accuracy is a factor of analysis, as is clarity of referencing.

Marks are awarded for:

- ◆ level of detail – whether you reach sufficient depth with each example
- ◆ quality of analysis – how effectively you develop your argument from the material
- ◆ relevance – how well you have selected appropriate and convincing material
- ◆ balance of theory and practice – how well you have analysed both complex ideas on your focus area and performance examples
- ◆ accuracy and clarity – how well you have avoided errors and misunderstandings, and how successfully you give references to sources

B Synthesising by comparing and contrasting different ways your performance issue has been explored (10 marks)

What are the different points of view on what you have researched? How does this compare with the work of a current or historical practitioner or company?

When presenting your analysed examples you need to combine, compare and contrast the material to draw out wider implications to your performance issue. You should organise your dissertation so that you can make comparisons between your sources in a clear and creative way.

It is essential that you consider evidence supporting different perspectives, and that you look at the performance issue in a balanced way. You should make decisions which support some viewpoints, but you will not produce a good dissertation if you are biased in your arguments. You should make use of primary sources and refer to more critical, secondary viewpoints.

You must link your wider research to the work of a theatre practitioner. Do this in a way that shows your depth of understanding about your chosen performance issue and the implications on contemporary performance.

To gain synthesis marks you must:

- ◆ organise your material so as to draw out contrasts and comparisons
- ◆ show a breadth of research (for example from across different forms and styles, between early and late work of a practitioner or company)
- ◆ show a depth of understanding of your chosen area (combining a series of examples for building or challenging an argument)
- ◆ critically consider the work of a practitioner or company

Synthesis involves the linking of knowledge and/or information from within or between sources.

Marks are awarded for:

- ◆ analysis and organisation of material to support an insightful argument – how well you combine your material to draw out meaning
- ◆ breadth of material – the range of material you cover within your focus area
- ◆ different views and/or interpretations – how well you include a range of perspectives
- ◆ similarities and contradictions – whether you draw out comparisons in what you discover
- ◆ primary and secondary sources – how well you use different sources

C Expressing an argument leading up to an evaluative conclusion (10 marks)

Develop and clearly express your opinion, as informed by your research. What conclusions have you reached?

Throughout your dissertation, you should stay focused on your chosen title. Your structure should help you to develop a fluent argument between the different perspectives that you have found on your chosen performance issue. You should discuss more than a simple collection of analysed points, and express your own opinions about what you have discovered, in your own voice. Above all, your project–dissertation is an opportunity to be curious in an area that you have chosen to explore, and you should express this sense of enquiry in your dissertation.

Developing an evaluative conclusion through-line demands control and clarity in expressing a convincing argument. You should select, explain and organise drama material towards a conclusion.

To gain marks for expressing an argument leading to an evaluative conclusion you must:

- ◆ maintain a focus to your chosen title which connects the researched material into an overarching thesis
- ◆ express and reflect on the research in your own voice, offering evaluative comment on your sources
- ◆ build to a conclusion of how you perceive your area of research

Marks are awarded for:

- ◆ focus of response to the dissertation title – how carefully you stick to your title
- ◆ rigorous, creative and independent thinking on your chosen performance issue – how well your ideas stand up to form your argument and how original your ideas are
- ◆ effective structure in presenting discussion – how effectively you set out your dissertation
- ◆ clear and lucid expression – how clearly you express your opinion
- ◆ logical build-up to an effective conclusion – how much your material sets up your overall conclusion

Visual evidence, references and appendices

You should include visual evidence when the analysis requires it. You must reference sources. You may include visual materials in the body of the dissertation or as an appendix.

Extended, text-based appendices are inappropriate at this level; references to sources are preferred in the bibliography.

You must not submit time-based media, for example audio and video material. References to these are acceptable in the bibliography.

Before you begin work on your project–dissertation, it is important that you read SQA's booklet *Your Coursework*. This provides you with information about the rules around coursework, including authenticity and plagiarism. Examples of plagiarism include:

- ◆ using material from the internet without citing the source
- ◆ using material from a print publication without citing the source

You must write your dissertation in your own words, unless you are quoting from a referenced source.

You must acknowledge any sources consulted in footnotes, or in a reference list at the end of your dissertation. You must give specific details of the sources consulted. Guidance on referencing is below.

When there is doubt over the authenticity of a dissertation, it will not be accepted for submission.

You may use any system of referencing in your project—dissertation. However, it is recommended you use the Harvard referencing system.

Harvard referencing

In the main text, give the author's surname, the year of publication, and possibly a page reference in the text, and then list the full reference at the end of your document, as below.

Books

- ◆ author(s) or editor(s)' surname and initials
- ◆ year of publication
- ◆ title
- ◆ edition (if not the first)
- ◆ place of publication
- ◆ publisher
- ◆ page number (if relevant)

For example:

Willett, J. (1977) *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, Oakland: UCP.

Willinger, D. (ed.) (2018) *Ivo van Hove Onstage*, New York: Routledge.

Electronic resources

- ◆ date you accessed the source
- ◆ URL
- ◆ type of electronic resource (for example discussion forum, web page)

For example:

McMillan, J. (2019) *Stef Smith on reimagining A Doll's House: "I couldn't just wrench the play out of Ibsen's hands"* [online]. Available from:

<https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/theatre/stef-smith-on-reimagining-a-doll-s-house-i-couldn-t-just-wrench-the-play-out-of-ibsen-s-hands-1-4887877>

[accessed 12 March 2019].

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	We have amended the marking criteria for clarity and to match the corresponding update to the course specification.	September 2023

Note: you are advised to check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

Security and confidentiality

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