

GCSE

Drama (8261)

Notes and guidance: Requirements for recording and submitting performance evidence

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Introduction

Please read this document carefully so you'll be familiar with our requirements. If you have any questions, please contact us on 01483 556301 or email drama@aqa.org.uk as soon as possible.

General guidance

You must film all assessed performances, capturing recordings in a supported digital file format. The preferred format for recordings is mp4, as this is the most widely supported format across media players. A full list of supported formats is provided later in this document.

Recordings should be saved onto USB.

Recordings must be made with a single camera. For end-on staging, the camera must always be in a fixed position from an audience perspective from start to finish. For other types of staging, such as in-the-round, traverse and promenade, you must ensure the students are fully visible on camera at all times.

The whole performance must be recorded and the recording must not be edited subsequently. Each saved file should contain only one performance.

For Component 3, you must submit all recordings to AQA. AQA must be in receipt of the recordings within 10 working days of the performance/the visit taking place.

For Component 2, all recordings must be stored under secure conditions before submitting them to the moderator.

All media submissions must be password protected before sending these to your examiner. Further guidance on encryption can be found on our [website](#).

Please refer to the specification for full details of the assessment tasks and centre responsibilities for administering the tasks.

Special considerations

To ensure special considerations can be applied, it's advisable to record **interim** work (such as a dress rehearsal or recording of the complete performance, rather than general rehearsal footage) in case any student is injured or unwell at the time of the final assessment. Please also refer to AQA policy on special considerations on the AQA [Special consideration](#) web page.

This recording is assessment material and used for moderation/examination or marking/marking reviews

Before the performance

During the rehearsal process, be aware of where students are moving/standing to ensure that, when the performance is filmed, the camera-view will not be blocked at any point.

- Test the camera and any accessories, such as microphones, by recording a small piece of a rehearsal and playing it back. It's really important that the microphone is positioned to best record the voices of the performers and any sound design within the performance.
- Use a tripod to stabilise the camera and position it from an audience perspective, ensuring that the performance won't be obscured eg by the back of people's heads. The camera should not be hand held during the performances.
- Ensure the camera doesn't go automatically to auto-focus during the performance as this can cause blurring. Some lighting effects can cause this to happen, so make sure you've tested these on camera before the performance.
- Ensure that all of the performance space can be seen without any further refocusing (see also below).
- Ensure the performance space is well lit. Check that the intensity of these lights doesn't adversely affect the camera's ability to focus. Ideally, performances will take place under stage lighting, but, where stage lights aren't available, ensure that there's sufficient light to clearly see the performers' faces and any design elements.
- Ensure that the costumes worn by the performers differentiate between them sufficiently, and be aware that the performers must be easily seen against any background colouring.

At the start of the performance

- Audience members need to be advised this is a formal examination.
- Each student must identify themselves at the start of the performance (with the cast in a line). They must be filmed in the costume/make-up/hair they'll be wearing for the performance. They should slowly and clearly say their name, their student number, their chosen specialism (performer, lighting designer, sound designer, set designer, costume designer, puppet designer, or director) and the character(s) that they'll be playing, where applicable.
- Each student must hold an A4 sheet in front of them with their name and student number clearly printed on it.

During the performance

- For end-on staging, always film the performance in a fixed position from the audience perspective. End-on, thrust and proscenium arch staging configurations are all perfectly acceptable. If you have groups who intend to adopt other types of staging, such as in-the-round, traverse and promenade, you must ensure the students are fully visible on camera at all times.
- Ensure that extraneous noise is kept to a minimum. It can adversely affect the performance and the concentration of the performers.
- During recording you should ensure that, as far as possible:
 - The full stage area is in view throughout
 - The camera is in a fixed position
 - The camera is close enough to capture facial expressions and gestures of performers (occasional zooming/panning is acceptable to allow this).

Design students

Where there are design students, all close ups of set, costume, puppets or other artefacts created for the performance should be filmed before the performance commences (and therefore be included at the beginning of the recording). The focus of this is on the work, so there must not be a commentary by the student.

Video and audio recordings as part of written evidence for Component 2

Video and/or audio recordings may form part of a student's Portfolio/Working notebook. In this case, the video recordings must be submitted as separate files in one of the supported digital file formats. Audio recordings must be submitted as separate files in mp3 format. Filenames should include student name and number.

Students submitting a combination of video/audio and written evidence need to make it clear in the written work the points at which the moderator should refer to the video/audio material.

Video recordings as an alternative to written evidence for Component 2

Video recordings may be used in place of written evidence for the Portfolio/Working notebook. In this case, the video recordings must be submitted in one of the supported digital file formats. Audio recordings must be submitted as digital files in mp3 format.

Formats and media

AQA can only accept work recorded in a supported digital file format. The preferred format for video recordings is mp4, as this is the most widely supported format across media players. However, recordings in wmv, mpeg/mpg, avi, asf and mov are also acceptable. The only acceptable format for audio recordings is mp3. Centres should check that recordings made by their devices are playable using Windows Media Player 12 to ensure that recordings will be playable by examiners and moderators.

It's important that recordings are of sufficient quality for examiners and moderators to identify students and assess their performance. However, centres should make efforts to avoid submitting excessively large files. Some possible ways of minimising file size are given below.

- Record high-definition video at a resolution of 720p (1280x720) rather than 1080p (1920x1080). A resolution of 720p will result in files less than half the size of 1080p, usually with no significant impact on quality.
- If your video recorder permits other quality settings to be changed in addition to the resolution, it's often possible to significantly reduce file sizes while not significantly impacting quality.
- If your video recorder provides more limited quality settings, it's often possible to significantly reduce the size of video files after recording with no significant impact on quality using free software such as HandBrake. Such software will also be able to save the output in the preferred .mp4 format, even if the original recording was made in another format.

Typical file sizes for videos are 4 MB–90 MB per minute for HD resolution (720p) and 6 MB–130 MB per minute for Full HD resolution (1080p), depending on compression settings and the amount of movement in the scene.

When posting recordings to AQA, they will only be accepted on USB.

AQA will not accept work which has been recorded onto VHS cassette, DVD, Mini DV tapes or SD cards.

Submitting recordings in an unsupported file format, or on an unsupported storage device, may mean that AQA is unable to mark students' work.

Changing format

If you've recorded work onto a format which is different to those described above, you'll need to transfer it to an acceptable format. There are a number of software packages that are able to do this, or you'll need to find an AV technician to transfer it to an acceptable format for you.

If a technician transfers the material, the final version must be thoroughly checked by the teacher to ensure that names of students are correct and whole performances have been recorded.

After recording

USBs should be placed in an envelope with the information written on the outside, with a label attached to the USB indicating centre number and component number.

Issues

- If no filmed record of the assessed performance exists for A-level Component 3, the 'Enquiry after Results' (EAR) process cannot be accessed.
- It's the centre's responsibility to ensure that recordings are captured in one of the supported digital file formats described above.
- It's the centre's responsibility to ensure that the recording represents as near as possible the students' live performance.

It's the responsibility of centres to keep a copy of the recordings securely and safely in case there are postal difficulties or malfunction of the USB.

Submitting Component 3 recordings

The examiner will take *Statements of dramatic intention*, *Candidate record forms* and *Programme notes* away with them at the end of the visit. During their visit, they'll provide you with the stationery required to send your filmed performances to them. These must reach the examiner within 10 working days of the visit.

So that we can arrange for a courier to collect your materials once the filmed performances are ready to send, please email AQADramaCollections@aqa.org.uk confirming that the exam visit has taken place and you'd like to arrange for the materials to be collected. Please include the following information in your email:

- centre number
- component code and level
- details of point of collection (normally Reception) and a suitable day for collection

We'll then contact you by email to confirm the collection date.

Please make sure you have clearly labelled your parcel with your centre number, component code and date of collection.

The courier will provide a postage label at the time of collection.

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