

Guidance for candidates on solo examinations

1. Candidates are required to arrive at the examination centre 15 minutes before the scheduled time of their examination.
2. Where the syllabus offers an **EITHER/OR** option the choice is made by the candidate.
3. Performance pieces do not all have to be the same length. Candidates may combine shorter and longer pieces but must not exceed the overall time allowed. Approximate timings for prepared material are provided for each grade and these should not be significantly exceeded. The examiner may ask a candidate to curtail an excessively long performance piece in order to ensure that there is sufficient time to complete all remaining sections of the examination.
4. Candidates are awarded marks for the range of performance skills they display. When 'contrasting' scenes or extracts are required, candidates are encouraged to select pieces that provide them with opportunities to display as wide a range of skills as possible.
5. Candidates must hand copies of their prepared pieces to the examiner on entry to the examination room. These should be set out in the published format with accurate punctuation and, in the case of poetry or verse drama, in the writer's original verse format and lineation. Candidates from Grade 5 upwards who perform 'an extract from a play' should provide a copy of the entire play. Photocopies of individual pieces are acceptable. Handwritten copies are not allowed.
6. Candidates may perform their prepared pieces in any order they choose as long as this is made clear to the examiner at the beginning of the examination. Examiners may wish to discuss a particular piece immediately after the candidate finishes it before moving on to the next performance piece.
7. Poems, narrative pieces and monologues and plays from which extracts are taken should normally be published in book form and/or have been previously performed by a theatre company. Candidate's original work must not be performed unless stated in the syllabus (e.g. Speech and Drama Grades 7-8, Performing Text Grades 7-8). Candidates who wish to perform their own original work are also encouraged to refer to the Trinity Guildhall Musical Theatre & Performance Arts syllabus where this option is offered.
8. When performing, candidates should project their voices to fill whatever space is available to an imagined audience, of which the examiner is but a part.
9. Hard and fast definitions of styles and types of poetry and prose are notoriously difficult to make. For the purposes of these examinations, 'lyric' is defined as being primarily the thoughts and feelings, moods and meditations of a single voice in verse or prose form. 'Narrative' is defined as being primarily a description of a series of events developing in a sequential order, told in the first, second or third person, possibly involving direct or indirect speech from one or more characters and/or some form of reflective commentary by a narrator. In practice of course virtually every poem ever written has both lyrical and narrative qualities. In selecting works for performance, candidates should not think in terms of 'Is this a lyric or a narrative poem?' Rather they should ask themselves 'What are the lyrical (or narrative) qualities of this poem with which I could effectively engage an audience in performance?'
10. A number of styles may be adopted for the effective speaking of a lyric or narrative piece and there are no set rules. The delivery is both a vocal and a visual engagement with an imagined audience. While this may not call for the kind of physical skills appropriate for a play extract, the performance may be enhanced by some relaxed and contained body movement, gesture and facial expression that stem organically from the context. The fixed stare and rigid posture sometimes adopted by candidates can appear very unnatural and distracting and significantly inhibit effective communication.
11. Candidates should beware of adopting vocal affectations, especially noted at times in performance of lyric poetry, where sound may be 'beautified' at the expense of sense. Teachers and candidates should read 'A note on language' on page 10 of the syllabus.
12. Monologues and extracts from plays should be performed as though 'on stage' particularly in respect of focus, sight-lines, positioning, movement and engagement with an imagined audience.

Guidance for candidates on solo examinations

13. Play extracts, mimes and monologues may be given with or without costume, scenery, lighting, properties or other staging devices. Candidates will not be given additional credit for performing with such devices. Any props or furniture must be set up and removed within the total time limit allowed for the examination.
14. Where candidates are required to perform 'a monologue' (e.g. Individual Acting Skills Grades 1-4), they may select either a speech from a collection of monologues or an extract from a play. Where candidates are required to perform 'an extract from a play', this must be a speech, monologue or soliloquy from a longer work.
15. Play extracts may be edited and subsidiary characters removed to create scenes suitable for performance as long as the overall structure, sense and dramatic development remain clear. Individual candidates are dissuaded from attempting to play a single character in a scene in which dramatic development depends largely on verbal interaction with one or more other characters who remain – in the context of a solo performance – invisible and inaudible. Candidates should not normally attempt to play multiple characters within a scene, unless this is specifically related to the style and content of the play.
16. Female candidates may play male roles and vice versa. However, candidates should ensure that their performances do not become physical or vocal caricatures of members of the opposite gender.
17. Candidates required to perform a 're-working' of a dramatic extract are encouraged to be as imaginative as possible in preparing the task. A scene may be re-written into the candidates own words, given a different setting or context, plot points altered or reversed or the entire extract re-imagined from a completely different perspective. Any performance skill or combination of skills may be employed, including acting, mime, dance, movement, song, puppetry, stand-up comedy, etc.
18. In some examinations candidates are required to 'respond to questions from the examiner in role' of a prepared piece. The candidate should be prepared to answer questions appropriate to the character at the moment in the play from which the prepared piece comes. So a candidate who performed Viola's 'ring' speech from *Twelfth Night* might be asked questions of her (imagined) life up until that minute, both related to factual elements of plot ('How did you get to Illyria?') and to her current emotional state ('How did you feel when Malvolio threw the ring on the ground?' 'How do you feel about living in the court in disguise?') This process – sometimes known as 'hot seating' – has an established and recognised role in assisting a performer to engage more fully with a role.
19. Where candidates are required to read aloud a passage, selected by the examiner, from the candidate's 'own book', the book should be at a level of complexity commensurate with age, ability and grade. The book the candidate brings into the examination to read from must not contain the extracts used in earlier tasks. It must be a different book.
20. Candidates selecting the Sight Reading option (e.g. in Speech and Drama Grades 4-6) will be given approximately 30 seconds to prepare before being asked to begin reading.
21. Candidates selecting the Story Telling option (e.g. in Speech and Drama Grades 2-6) will be given either a copy of the picture or a laminated card containing the words on which the story is to be based. They will then be given approximately 30 seconds to prepare before being asked to begin.
22. Stimuli for improvisation tasks will usually be based on the content and/or context of one of the prepared pieces. Lack of understanding of the context may make the task difficult to fulfill satisfactorily. A document giving further guidance on examiner expectations for improvisation tasks, along with examples of the types of stimuli that the examiner will provide and a full set of attainment descriptors may be downloaded from www.trinityguildhall.co.uk/drama
23. 'A contemporary writer' is defined as a person who is living now or who has died within the last five years. However, this definition should be qualified further. When exploring material in this category, it is hoped that candidates will choose the work of writers who are writing about current issues and ideas that reflect the world in which we live today in a modern idiom, rather than pieces written decades ago by a writer who is now very aged and/or has been inactive for many years.

24. In Shakespeare examinations, the term 'genre' refers to the generally accepted groupings of Shakespeare's plays – comedies, tragedies, histories, Roman plays and romances (or 'Late Plays'). Particular genres are not specified in the grade requirements, but candidates may be required to perform works from 'different' genres. Please contact the Chief Examiner for further clarification on specific works.
25. When material or stimuli are provided 15 minutes before an examination, candidates must be left alone to prepare for the relevant task. They must not discuss the task or receive guidance from their teachers during this time.
26. In Shakespeare Grade 8 candidates are provided with an extract of text 15 minutes before the examination on which they are required to work with the examiner. If by chance this extract is all or part of one of their prepared pieces they should inform the steward immediately and an alternative piece will be provided.
27. Where a thematically linked programme is required (e.g. Individual Acting Skills Grade 8), candidates should be prepared to cover transitions from one piece to another in an appropriate and creative manner.
28. In all solo and pair examinations, candidates are given the opportunity to display their knowledge and understanding of their performed pieces and aspects of performance skills in conversation/discussion with the examiner. In some examinations reference is made to specific subjects. Candidates will not necessarily be asked questions on all the listed subjects. Candidates should be aware that they may also be asked questions on subjects required at lower grades in the same subject strand. So a Grade 5 Speech and Drama candidate might be asked questions about phrasing and pace which is required at Grade 4.
29. Discussion about authors should focus on the nature of their work and the candidate's personal response to it rather than on memorised lists of biographical facts and dates.
30. If desired, candidates may be accompanied by a prompter for the performance elements of the examination. The prompter may **not** be the candidate's teacher, parent or guardian. Excessive reliance on prompts in performance may be indicative of inadequate preparation and this will be taken into account when awarding marks.

Further guidance is regularly posted at www.trinityguildhall.co.uk/drama

Guidance for candidates on pair examinations

1. Candidates and teachers should refer to points 1-30 in the guidance for individual candidates.
2. Both candidates must make an equal contribution to all scenes and extracts performed and to the conversation/discussion with the examiner.
3. Each scene must be introduced by the candidates before the performance, giving a brief outline of the characters, setting and context.
4. Performances may be given with or without costume, scenery, lighting, properties or other staging devices. Candidates will not be given additional credit for performing with such devices.
5. A 'scene developed through improvisation' should have defined characters, a clear context and some sense of dramatic development. Excessive use of narrators should be avoided. Candidates should be fully familiar with all aspects of such scenes and should have rehearsed them in their final form before the examination. Candidates are not required to provide a script of scenes developed through improvisation unless specifically stated in the syllabus.
6. Play extracts may be edited and subsidiary characters removed to create scenes suitable for performance as long as the overall structure, sense and dramatic development remain clear.
7. Scenes from collections of duologues written specifically for examinations are acceptable at Foundation level (Grades 1-3).
8. For Intermediate and Advanced grades a copy of the entire play must be provided (not a photocopy of the scene). Failure to provide this may limit opportunities for candidates fully to display knowledge and understanding of the play in the discussion task.
9. A 'play written in a colloquial style' will typically be written in an informal, conversational style and employ a recognisable contemporary idiom and vocabulary. A 'play written in a non-colloquial style' will typically be written in some form of heightened or stylised language which is outside contemporary idiom. While this might reflect the period in which the play was written (Sophocles, Shakespeare, Congreve, Molière, Wilde) it might also reflect a contemporary writer's preferred style (Steven Berkoff, Tony Harrison, Glyn Maxwell). All verse drama would be considered to be 'written in a non-colloquial style'.
10. Candidates are awarded marks for the range of performance skills they display. When 'contrasting' scenes or extracts are required, candidates are encouraged to select pieces that provide them with opportunities to display their range of skills, both individually and as a pair.

Guidance for candidates on group examinations

1. Candidates and teachers should refer to points 1-30 in the guidance for individual candidates.
2. All members of the group should as far as possible be given opportunities to make positive contributions to the performance, although it is recognised that the contributions may not be equal in substance or duration. Scenes or extracts in which one performer dominates the stage throughout should be avoided.
3. Each scene must be introduced by the candidates before the performance, who should give a brief outline of the characters, setting and context.
4. Performances for group examinations (other than Plays in Production) may be given with or without costume, scenery, lighting, properties or other staging devices unless specifically required. Candidates will not be given additional credit for performing with such devices. Plays entered for Plays in Production must be fully staged with set, costume, props, sound, lighting and other technical elements as appropriate.
5. A 'scene developed through improvisation' should have defined characters, a clear context and some sense of dramatic development. Excessive use of narrators should be avoided. Candidates should be fully familiar with all aspects of such scenes and have rehearsed them in their final form before the examination. Candidates for Group Drama – Devised Grades 6-8 are required to provide a full script of plays developed through improvisation. Handwritten manuscripts are not permitted.
6. Play extracts may be edited and subsidiary characters removed to create scenes suitable for performance as long as the overall structure, sense and dramatic development remain clear.
7. Groups entered for Group Drama – Scripts and Plays in Production must provide a copy of the entire play(s) to be performed or from which excerpts are drawn. Texts of Choral Speaking pieces must be provided as for individual examinations (see guidance point 5 in the guidance for solo examinations).
8. For a definition of the term 'a contemporary writer' see guidance point 23 in the guidance for solo examinations. For definitions of the terms 'colloquial style' and 'non-colloquial style' see guidance point 9 in the guidance for pair examinations.
9. Candidates are awarded marks for the range of performance skills they display. When 'contrasting' scenes or extracts are required, candidates are encouraged to select pieces that provide them with opportunities to display their range of skills, both individually and as a group.
10. There is no discussion element in group examinations. However, examiners may engage in some informal conversation before and/or after the performance in order to create a supportive atmosphere and enhance the flow of the examination.
11. It may be possible for a live audience to be present for some group performances and Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced Performance Certificates, as long as their presence does not impede the running of the examination session. Please contact Trinity's London office for further information on this.