

## SHAKESPEARE (Solo) - Guidance on alternative pathways

This document will help to guide teachers who have previously entered learners for the Shakespeare (solo) syllabus strand onto alternative pathways.

### Foundation level - Grades 1-3

There are a number of syllabus options to consider for solo exams. At Foundation level (grades 1-3) these are:

- Individual Acting Skills
- Speech and Drama (solo)
- Performance Arts (solo)
- Foundation Performance Certificate (suggested for when candidates have completed up to Grade 3)

All of the aforementioned syllabus strands contain additional tasks or requirements to those in the Shakespeare exams but all are part of the wider requirements of the Acting and Speaking and Performance Arts syllabuses. For example, the requirements for the **Grade 1 Shakespeare (solo)** are:

1. All or part of story from a Shakespeare play told or acted out from a memory
2. A performance of approximately eight lines from the same play, performed from memory
3. A conversation with the examiner

In **Grade 1 Speech and Drama** the requirements are:

1. A short prose passage or short extract from a play or story performed from memory
2. A poem performed from memory
3. A performance of a simple prepared mime
4. A conversation with the examiner

Both **Shakespeare** and **Speech and Drama** exams ask for a similar element in task one, in task two eight lines of a Shakespeare play can be a short poem and the mime can be based on one of the themes from a Shakespeare play if required. As the content of Speech and Drama is learner and teacher choice, the opportunity to use Shakespeare's work is clear.

The **Foundation Performance Certificate** requires a learner to:

- Devise, present and perform a continuous performance programme that includes a range of material and demonstrates performance skills at an appropriate level  
[Some simple costume and staging must be employed and a second performer may be involved in one of the items presented]

The **Performance Certificate** allows a considerable amount of flexibility and therefore is a very good option for a learner wanting to focus on performing Shakespeare. This particular qualification also allows the learner to construct a programme with a clear understanding of the performance qualities of Shakespeare's work. A programme could include a soliloquy, a sonnet, a story told in physical theatre or song and a duologue, dance

or duet. Also, as learners are marked on costume and staging and this option could be a very creative option.

### **Intermediate level - Grades 4-5**

The alternative syllabus possibilities at Intermediate level, (grades 4-5) are:

- Individual Acting Skills
- Speech and Drama
- Performance Arts
- Intermediate Performance Certificate (suggested when candidates have completed up to Grade 5)

As with the Foundation level exams the syllabus strands suggested contain additional tasks or requirements to those in the Shakespeare exams but all are part of the wider requirements of teaching the syllabuses. For example in **Grade 5 Performance Arts**, the requirements are as follows:

1. A progressive dramatic sequence based on a stated theme, incorporating at least two performance skills.
2. EITHER a contrasting dramatic sequence incorporating at least two performance skills, one of which is different from those in Task 1, OR demonstration with commentary of a contributory performance skill
3. A discussion with the examiner

The **Performance Arts** syllabus requires a wide range of skills but the vocal and physical skills used can be effectively focused on Shakespeare and include acting, the speaking of prose and poetry, physical theatre, storytelling, puppetry, stage fighting and contributory skills include costume, staging, music and SFX/LFX (See page 25 of the Musical Theatre and Performance Arts syllabus for further details).

The **Intermediate Performance Certificate** gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate the skills discussed for Performance Arts exams but the flexibility of the Performance Certificates gives a further opportunity to a candidate and teacher to be creative while focused towards the works of Shakespeare.

**Intermediate Performance Certificate** candidates are asked to:

- Devise, present and perform a continuous programme that includes a wide range of challenging material and demonstrates a range of performance skills at an appropriate level
- The programme may contain as many performance items as the candidate chooses as long as the overall time limits are observed (17-20 minutes)

This focus of the certificate can be firmly rooted in Shakespeare and with the additional suggestion of a second performer to be used in one or two items, the scope and performance possibilities are wide and expected to show skills, knowledge and understanding gained from working at an intermediate level (grades 4-5).

### **Advanced level - Grades 6-8**

Advanced level, (grades 6-8), require stronger performance levels and are designed to show a wider understanding of the syllabus strands chosen. However, at this level candidates are given more autonomy to define who they are as performers and choose material that reflects this. Syllabus strands that could be considered are:

- Individual Acting Skills

- Performance Arts (solo)
- Advanced Performance Certificate (suggested when candidates have completed up to Grade 8)

A Grade 8 **Individual Acting Skills** exam candidate is asked to perform a thematically linked programme of four contrasting pieces. The **Shakespeare** syllabus asks a candidate to do the same although the four extracts include an extract from a contemporary of Shakespeare (Middleton, Jonson etc.). The emphasis on changing from a **Shakespeare** strand to an **Individual Acting** strand would then be on the teacher and candidate to offer extracts that suit the tasks given. This may be finding text by contemporary writers based on Shakespeare works or the learner could choose another style of writing and contemporary text unconnected to Shakespeare. In the **Individual Acting** exam the tasks do not include working with a text as in the **Shakespeare** exam, however the tasks ask for an improvisation arising from one of the pieces prepared, stimulus given by the examiner.

The **Advanced Performance Certificate** gives learners an opportunity to focus entirely upon performance and, as with the Foundation and the Intermediate Performance Certificates, the content and context is the learner's own choice. **The Advanced Certificate** provides an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate a sense of ownership and mastery of their material before thinking about progressing to diploma level.

**Advanced Performance Certificate** candidates are asked to:

- Devise, present and perform a varied and challenging performance programme that demonstrates a range of performance skills at an appropriate level
- The programme may contain as many performance items as the candidate chooses as long as the overall time limits are observed (25-30 minutes)
- Effective costume and staging must be employed
- A second performer must be involved in at least one of the items presented and may also appear in up to two other items

The range and scope of performance possibilities makes the certificate a strong option for those candidates who wish to present a varied programme to include a number of performance skills. The **Performance Certificates** allow for an audience and this therefore also makes the exams an attractive end of year opportunity for family and friends to see the work prepared.

For further details and full explanations of the Acting & Speaking and Performance Arts syllabus strands discussed, email [drama@trinitycollege.com](mailto:drama@trinitycollege.com)