

Changes to subject content for GCSE drama, and AS and A level drama and theatre

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

- 1 This is the response of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL). ASCL represents more than 18,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of maintained and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL has members in more than 90 per cent of secondary schools and colleges of all types, responsible for the education of more than four million young people. This places the association in a unique position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of secondary schools and of colleges.
- 2 ASCL welcomes the opportunity to be consulted on the changes to GCSE drama and A level drama and theatre.
- 3 Our members welcome the inclusion of an 'experience of live performance' and consider this to be important aspect of the course. This valuable opportunity of seeing a live performance can also have a direct result on their students' own performances.
- 4 However, whilst we welcome this in principle, we are concerned that this may have implications for those schools outside of larger towns and cities, where the cost of running coach trips to the theatre is much higher. Schools must be adequately resourced to enable these activities to take place for all students in all regions of the country.
- 5 Many drama departments often consist of one person and running theatre trips in the evening will increase workload for teachers; this must be borne in mind and balanced against other requirements of teachers.
- 6 We would also support the view that the professional judgement of teachers as to what constitutes a worthwhile theatrical experience should be encouraged in view of the difficulties this might present to schools
- 7 ASCL also trusts that the relevant subject association will be fully consulted and their thoughts about the practicality and utility of the changes taken fully into account.
- 8 In general ASCL would urge that changes to qualifications be phased in gradually. Examination boards need time to carefully consider new assessment regimes, and teachers need ample notice so that schemes of work and teaching materials can be prepared well before the start of courses leading to new specifications.
- 9 Significant changes to public examinations should be made no more than once per parliament so that there can be proper evaluation of their effect. This would also allow students, teachers, parents, employers and the public time to become accustomed to new content, levels and specifications before they are changed again.

- 10 When making changes to public examinations it is important to take account of all the uses to which they are put by a variety of stakeholders: the students themselves as indicators of their strengths and as qualifications for entry to employment and higher study, end-users such as FE, HE and employers, schools and colleges as indicators of their strengths and weaknesses to inform improvement activities, users of performance tables and other accountability measures in relation to individual schools and colleges, the government in monitoring the performance of the education system as a whole.

I hope that this will be of value to your consultation process. ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to help in any way that it can.

Martin Ward
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Association of School and College Leaders
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