



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



CAMBRIDGE
International Education

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education
Advanced Level Higher 2 (2026)**

**Theatre Studies and Drama
(Syllabus 9519)**

(For school candidates only)

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AIMS

This course in Theatre Studies and Drama aims to:

- Develop students' knowledge and understanding of, and critical thinking about, theatre and drama in a variety of historical and cultural contexts
- Provide students with opportunities to develop practical skills related to performance, in essence the use of the visual, kinaesthetic and symbol systems of drama and theatre to communicate meaning
- Integrate theory and practice as students realise a performance or presentation based on their understanding of critical concepts
- Foster students' interest and enjoyment in theatre and drama both as participant and as informed members of an audience
- Encourage a deeper understanding and exploration of the human condition through their critical thinking and practice of theatre and drama.

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Through both analytical study of play texts and genres and the practical exploration of theories about drama, candidates will demonstrate the ability to:

- (i) analyse and evaluate play texts and theatrical performance within the contexts in which they were written, created or performed
- (ii) communicate informed and independent opinions in a fluent and cogent manner
- (iii) make connections between the theoretical study of theatre & drama and practice in the interpretation of dramatic work, and as part of the theatre-making process
- (iv) apply theatrical skills to demonstrate artistic intention either individually or as a group, appropriate to purpose, context and culture.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Candidates will offer **three** papers.

Paper 1:

Candidates will answer three essay questions, showing knowledge of dramatic texts from around the world, theatre history, traditions and conventions. Candidates will be required to make detailed reference to two play texts and respond to an unseen extract.

Paper 2:

Candidates will write a critical and reflective evaluation and analysis of the processes leading up to their presentation of a chosen individual skill, showing research and knowledge of theatre traditions and conventions.

Paper 3:

Candidates will conceptualise and produce an Individual Presentation of a chosen area of theatre and collaborate in the production of a Group Presentation.

CONTENT OF COURSE

The content of the course will be examined in **three** papers:

Paper	Title	Mark Weighting
Paper 1 (3 hours: open-book, written examination)	World Theatre and Drama Marked out of a total of 75 (3 questions of 25 marks each) weighted to 40.	40%
Paper 2 (written analysis and evaluation of the Individual Presentation)	Critical Commentary Marked out of 30, weighted to 15.	15%
Paper 3 (includes an interview with the Examiner)	Practical Assessment: – Individual Skills Presentation 15% – Group Presentation 20% – Individual Contribution to Group Presentation 10%	45%

SPECIFICATIONS OF PAPERS

Paper 1 World Theatre and Drama

The paper is divided into three sections.

Candidates will answer a total of three questions. All questions carry equal marks. Candidates should make use of the two texts they have studied.

Section A (Compulsory)

Candidates will answer a compulsory question (25 marks) from a choice of two from this section.

Candidates will be asked to study a passage taken from an unseen play text. Candidates will answer one question about the way the extract makes use of dramatic forms and concepts to create setting and atmosphere, to indicate character and themes as well as the use of possible theatrical techniques and the actors' or director's viewpoints.

In approaching the passage, candidates are expected to demonstrate understanding of the elements of drama such as Roles, Relationships, Dramatic Tension, Time and Place, Focus, Space, Mood, Language, Symbol, Movement and Contrast, Dramatic Conventions.

Sections B and C

Section B lists four drama texts from the Classical period from Greek Theatre up to the mid-nineteenth century. Candidates will study one text from this group and answer one question from a choice of two on each text. A detailed knowledge of the chosen text and its relevant context must be shown.

Section C lists four drama texts from the Modern period from the mid-nineteenth century up to contemporary writing including European, American and Singaporean playwrights. Candidates will study one text from this group and answer one question from a choice of two on each text. A detailed knowledge of the chosen text and its relevant context must be shown.

Area of Study 1

Elements of Theatre and Drama in Context

The study of this paper should include a knowledge of:

- (i) theatrical traditions and conventions
- (ii) the social, cultural and political contexts of plays
- (iii) the drama text within its dramatic tradition

Area of Study 2

Production and Performance

- (iv) directorial and production vision
- (v) acting skills.

ASSESSMENT MODE

The examination is open book: candidates will be allowed to bring copies of their set texts into the examination venue.

(a) Materials that can be taken into the examination venue

Only non-electronic original texts (original published editions) should be taken into the examination venue. Candidates are only allowed to bring one hardcopy of each approved text. No photocopies or texts downloaded from the internet are allowed. No other materials, including critical works or study notes of any kind, should be taken into the examination venue. The use of dictionaries is not permitted.

(b) Underlining and highlighting of texts

Only underlining, highlighting and the use of vertical lines are permitted. Nothing else should be written in the texts except the candidate's name. Separate pieces of paper such as sticky notes and tape flags are not allowed.

(c) Folding and flagging of pages

Pages can be flagged with paper clips or by folding the page corners. Page numbers can be highlighted, underlined, or marked out with vertical lines. Any other kind of folding or flagging of pages in texts (for example, use of sticky notes or tape flags) is not permitted.

Paper 1: World Theatre and Drama	
Section A (compulsory)	<p><i>Forms and Concepts</i> Candidates are expected to demonstrate understanding of the elements of drama such as Roles, Relationships, Dramatic Tension, Time and Place, Focus, Space, Mood, Language, Symbol, Movement and Contrast, Dramatic Conventions.</p>
Section B	<p><i>Classical Theatre and Drama</i> The texts for Classical Theatre and Drama offered for study in this section will change every few years. Texts will include Greek drama, Shakespeare and examples of European drama up to 1860.</p>
Section C	<p><i>Modern Theatre and Drama</i> The texts for Modern Theatre and Drama offered for study in this section will change every few years. Texts will include examples of European naturalism, twentieth-century theatre, Singaporean drama and American drama.</p>

The following texts will be examined for Paper 1. Candidates choose a total of two texts, one from each section.

Paper 1	
Section B: Classical Theatre and Drama	
<i>Antigone</i>	Sophocles
<i>Othello</i>	William Shakespeare
<i>Tartuffe</i>	Molière
<i>The Beggar's Opera</i>	John Gay
Section C: Modern Theatre and Drama	
<i>A Doll's House</i>	Henrik Ibsen
<i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i>	Luigi Pirandello
<i>The Spirits Play</i>	Kuo Pao Kun
<i>Fences</i>	August Wilson

Paper 2 Critical Commentary

Each candidate will write a Critical Commentary on his or her Individual Skills Presentation.

The critical commentary is a critical analysis, evaluation and reflection of the creative process leading to the Individual Skills Presentation. It must be submitted before the presentation.

Refer to the *Handbook for the Conduct of TSD Practical Examinations* issued by Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB) for guidelines and regulations on the practical examinations.

Length: The critical commentary should be between 2000 and 2500 words and written in formal, continuous prose. Candidates are reminded that quality rather than quantity is important here, and should **be concise** in their written style. The word length does not include support material included in the annexes (described below).

Content: The Critical Commentary should include the following sections:

- (i) Artist Statement (10 marks)
 - candidates write concisely about their artistic intentions and the vision underpinning their chosen skill or area of study
- (ii) Historical/Contextual Statement (10 marks)
 - candidates show historical and contextual knowledge of the tradition of theatre as well as knowledge of performance theory which their work is grounded in or departing from
 - detailed evidence should be provided and sources should be cited
- (iii) Evaluation of Creative Process up to the point of submission (10 marks)
 - candidates critically assess and evaluate their work up to the point of submission
 - candidates describe and critically analyse the creative process, drawing attention to significant moments and crucial turning points
 - candidates provide a critical justification of their main creative choices.

Relevant support material in the form of photographs, drawings or sketches related to the individual skills are permissible as annexes. It should be noted that the annexes will only be consulted by the examiners when specific reference is made to them in the body of the Critical Commentary. In particular, additional written material included in the annexes will not be considered for the purposes of assessment.

Academic Style: Standard academic conventions should be followed in the construction of the Critical Commentary. Refer to the *Guidelines for Assessment* booklet for more details.

Skills and Requirements

In the Critical Commentary, candidates must:

- present a coherent and carefully considered artistic vision and concept about the individual skill and area of study offered for assessment
- critically analyse their creative decisions in relation to the play text, paying close attention to history, theory and convention
- critically discuss and assess the methods employed or explored throughout the process towards realising the Individual Presentation
- explain and justify their creative choices.

Paper 3 Practical Assessment

An Individual Skills Presentation and a Group Presentation must be undertaken to integrate theoretical and practical work. Candidates may **not** perform any of the set texts listed for Paper 1.

Part 1: Individual Skills Presentation – Externally Assessed by Visiting Examiner

Each candidate will conceptualise, develop and work on an Individual Presentation showcasing an area of specialisation and related skills in theatre.

Candidates' choice of an area or skill for the Individual Presentation must fall within **one** of the two broad categories below:

- (i) **Performing:** acting (repertoire); devised performance (including the option of using mask, puppetry, lighting or sound); stage movement*
- (ii) **Designing:** set, make-up and costume

* For stage movement, candidates may choose to offer a performance based on an existing play text or devise their own short piece of theatre.

The Individual Skills Presentation must not be based on the same material used in the Group Presentation, though candidates may be involved in similar skill areas for both the Group and Individual Presentation. Other skills not listed here may be submitted for consideration on a case-by-case basis.

The marks awarded by the visiting examiner for the Individual Skills Presentation constitute 15 per cent of the total mark for TSD.

Refer to **Appendix A** for the specific examination criteria of individual skills.

Interview for the Individual Skills Presentation

Following each Individual Skills Presentation, there will be an interview with the Examiner.

The purpose of this interview is:

- to give candidates an opportunity to clarify aspects of their performance/demonstration
- to allow the Examiner to follow up on ideas raised in the Critical Commentary or during the performance/demonstration.

Part 2: Group Presentation – Externally Assessed by Visiting Examiner

Group Size: Candidates in groups ranging from four to six in number will be required to realise or devise one dramatic presentation.

Awarding of Marks: All members in the group will be awarded a group mark for their collective work by the visiting examiner. Individually, they will also be assessed by the visiting examiner in terms of their performance in an ensemble. The marks awarded by the visiting examiner for the group presentation constitute 20 per cent of the total mark for TSD.

In addition, teachers will assign individual marks to members of the group according to how well they work as a team and how much they have contributed to the group. These marks will be based on the teachers' observation and judgement of the candidates over the period of time used for the creative process. The marks awarded by the teachers constitute 10 per cent of the total mark for TSD and will be subject to moderation by the Examiner. The final mark for each candidate in the group may vary.

The presentation should offer each candidate sufficient opportunity to develop and present his or her skills and abilities creatively within the context of the Group Presentation.

Choice of Subject: The subject of the Group Presentation is the responsibility of the candidates and must be approved in advance. A form will be issued for this purpose.

The content of the Group Presentation must be a choice of the following:

- An adaptation and performance of a published play text

OR

- A performance of an original work or theatrical presentation of their own invention.

Skills: Candidates will demonstrate through the process of the Group Presentation:

- an understanding of group dynamics and collaboration
- the ability to work creatively in both initiating ideas and responding to the ideas of others
- the ability to evaluate work in progress
- the ability to make and sustain a contribution to the project
- the ability to recognise the potential of the group and fully explore the shape and the meaning of the chosen dramatic vehicle.

Other Requirements

The Group Presentation should also have a clear objective though the emphasis may naturally change as the work evolves. The Examiner should be informed of the type of audience for which the work is intended.

The time taken for the presentation will vary according to the size of the assessment group. The minimum time for a group of 4 would be 15 minutes with a maximum playing time of 30 minutes for a larger group of 6.

Interview for the Group Presentation

Following each group presentation, there will be an interview with the Examiner.

The purpose of this interview is:

- to give the group an opportunity to discuss the conceptualisation, development and execution of the presentation
- to give the group a chance to clarify aspects of their presentation
- to give individual candidates an opportunity to explain their role within and contribution to the group
- to allow the Examiner to follow up on ideas raised by the performance.

Examination Procedure

It is in the best interests of the candidates that the examination not be part of a public performance. For further information on examination procedure for both the individual and group performances, please refer to the *Handbook for the Conduct of Theatre Studies and Drama Practical Examinations* issued by SEAB.

APPENDIX A

EXAMINATION CRITERIA FOR INDIVIDUAL SKILLS PRESENTATION

REPERTOIRE: ACTING

Candidates should be able to:

1. perform **two** different set pieces in the form of a monologue* and a duologue
2. demonstrate a variety of acting skills and convey a range of emotional states showing contrasts in mood and style
3. realise and convey character through use of voice, movement, body, space
4. convey character vis-à-vis other characters on stage
5. relate the performance to any suitable theatrical space
6. deliver the character in appropriate stage lighting, costume and simple setting
7. engage the audience's attention and establish a clear intention and appropriate relationship.

* Candidates may present monologues addressed to any number of characters
(e.g. sleeping partners, imaginary characters)

DEvised PERFORMANCE

Candidates should be able to:

1. devise and present a short piece of integrated theatre
2. combine skills in **two or three** of the performing arts disciplines of acting, dance and singing into a coherent piece of theatre
3. relate the performance to any suitable theatrical space
4. engage and hold the audience's attention.

Candidates may choose to include elements of any **one** of the following skills in their performance:

- puppetry OR mask
- lighting OR sound

REPERTOIRE OR DEVISED DRAMA: STAGE MOVEMENT

Candidates should be able to:

1. demonstrate **three** sets of stage movement in direct reference to a chosen dramatic text, an identified theatrical event or a theatrical tradition
2. explain the various movements and identify their means of communication
3. explain the use of space and physical gesture
4. engage the audience and establish a clear intention and appropriate relationship.

DESIGN: SET DESIGN

Candidates should be able to:

1. present a scaled model of the proposed set design
2. consider the set design within a space known to the candidate
3. relate clearly all aspects of set design to the needs of the dramatic text and theatrical performance
4. demonstrate a knowledge of all areas of stage such as exits and entrances, movable scenery and scene changes in relation to performers and audience
5. administer scene changes where necessary during presentation and explain how actual scene changes would be accomplished during the theatrical performance.

DESIGN: MAKE-UP AND COSTUME DESIGN

Candidates should be able to:

1. design **two** costumes for a performer/performers together with make-up for a chosen dramatic text or an identified theatrical event
2. present the make-up for and demonstrate the related costume on a performer on the stage; the other make-up design and costume could be presented in the form of a small-scale model and a detailed sketch with appropriate labelling
3. relate the chosen make-up styles and costumes to the appropriate historical and cultural contexts
4. relate the make-up and costume design to the chosen/intended effects of setting, movement, lighting or dramatic demands of characterisation and stage directions.