

TEACHER ALERT

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Greetings and welcome to the first Teacher Alert for the year. As the first round of entries come in for early exam tours Speech NZ would like to draw your attention to some guidelines and also give you food for thought as you develop work with your students.

For all syllabuses do read the syllabuses carefully at all levels, we welcome your questions should you be unsure. Please send them to info@speechnz.co.nz

Some of the syllabus guidelines below have arisen from your questions – both from experienced and less experienced teachers.

Speech and Drama Syllabus:

Characterisations: Grade 5 onwards

From Grade 5 and beyond SNZ is wanting to encourage students, ideally to read, or to begin to read, plays as a whole so they develop the skills of looking at characterisation as part of a wider, deeper experience, not just as an isolated monologue.

That is why, at Grade 5, we introduce ‘talking about the play or book’ from which the extract is taken. The use of the word ‘book’ does cover a book of monologues. Many very good monologues are to be found in ‘books’, however it can often be difficult to find the actual play script to begin that deeper study. SNZ realises at Grade 5 this is the beginning of more senior work and thus the ability to read the whole play may be beyond some students. Knowing about the play, and having explored or read some of it may be sufficient. Thus if your student takes a monologue from a ‘book of monologues’ she could be asked to discuss other monologues in the book, particularly if they had a similar theme behind them, or maybe to compare the one performed with another.

As a teacher, the approach to Grade 5 may vary considerably with the maturity and/or experience of each individual student. This is something that SNZ wishes to acknowledge within the broader scope of the syllabus. At the next level you will note the syllabus asks for a ‘play or a novel’.

Discussing the processes involved in Characterisations:

What Speech NZ is aiming for here is for candidates themselves to understand ‘how’ the character works. In discussing the processes used in developing a character SNZ is focusing (see learning Outcomes) on the candidate’s ability to understand the steps used to develop their character. These will inevitably differ from candidate to candidate and teacher to teacher. However the key steps are in discovering the motivation of the character at a given moment in the play. This begins with reading the play to better understand their character and their purpose in the play; with exploring what other characters might say about the character; then looking at the scene and the character (or characters) to whom they are speaking and exploring what they want from that character. For example, Romeo’s motivation in the balcony scene might be “I want to get Juliet to invite me into her bedroom”, while Juliet’s might be “I want to get Romeo to stay here talking without Nurse discovering him”. These will inevitably involve the use of a range of elements and conventions of drama as the work is developed and choices will be made along the way to best meet the needs of the scene.

See also Speech NZ website under drama resources: <https://www.speechnz.co.nz/speech-resources/teaching-resources/speech-and-drama/drama/>

Essentially the examiner is seeking to discover how the candidate arrived at their characterisation.

The use of screenplays is not acceptable in Speech NZ senior grades

From time to time we are asked if these are acceptable either for practical modules or in Theory Papers. If a candidate refers to a screenplay within discussion and/or provides a relevant quotation, that is perfectly acceptable. However screenplays are a totally different genre. When Speech NZ refers to plays or playscripts this is to study the literature and development of plays written for the stage.

It may be that sometime in the future screenplays will become part of a syllabus – but not at this point in time.

Grade 6,7 & 8: Programmes for Literature Modules

Candidates may work collaboratively in presenting programmes for examination.

This can be rewarding for both teacher and the group as students are all studying the one topic, but can explore different aspects for their individual talks.

Each of these aspects would all need to be apparent in a joint presentation for Section 2. The number of students involved would also be reflected in an increased time limit.

It may be they are working at G7 on, say, The Lake Poets and each talk could focus on a different aspect or poet. Then these can be drawn together in Section 2 presentation or devised piece.

Experience has shown that it is best if talks are presented separately, to enable the examiner time to analyse content and write reports, and then Section 2 can be jointly presented. This may be devised, or the presentation of a prose piece (G6) poem (G7) or characterisation (G8), as appropriate to the group and their specified audience.

Teachers and students report that group work in the literature sections is really stimulating as it provokes so much discussion and shared discoveries.

It is invaluable to give the examiner a ‘programme’ of pieces that also reflects the individual focus or aspect for each student. As long as each student covers all the learning outcomes there should be no problem.

Speech NZ encourages shared work at all levels of examinations. This not only opens up a wider range of possibilities for teaching, but also encourages and enables skills in the three C’s – Creativity, Collaboration and Communication.

Grade 7 Module 2:

Section 1: Speak two contrasting poems.

Do keep exploring aspects of ‘contrast’ within this section. Sometimes students may present a lyric and a narrative poem which is a contrast in form, however the tone of the poem or the style of delivery may be almost identical in performance. Do look for contrast in presentation as well as form. For example, a performance of a section of, say, the epic narrative *Beowulf*, would require a totally different style in delivery to, say, Maya Angelou’s, lyric *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Students are able then to show the breadth of their vocal and interpretive ability.

Public Speaking and Communication Syllabus: Senior Grades:

Theory components:

If you are seeking information on theory for some of the grades, the following have recently been added to Resources on SNZ website:

- A chart tabling the difference between informative and persuasive speaking.
<https://www.speechnz.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Informative-and-persuasive-speaking.pdf>
- Monroe’s Persuasive Speaking Structure.
<https://www.speechnz.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Persuasive-Speaking-Structure.pdf>
- A paper on speaking in different venues – which sets out ideas on some information to be considered in setting up a speaking space.
<https://www.speechnz.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Speaking-in-different-venues.pdf>

Diplomas: Practical Modules:

- Remember your students can present work in pairs here as well as in the Grades.

Diplomas: Theory Papers

- Theory papers are now done on-line and use of a recognised referencing system is required at all levels. [Please refer to the Speech New Zealand website for guidance.](#)
- Theory papers are set around the Learning Criteria listed in the syllabus.
- Papers are set with a focus on any of the bullet points as a topic. Working with specific technical skills may well be appropriate in teaching a particular topic, thus inherent in the response to the question would be the ability to show some knowledge of the topic plus knowledge of appropriate practical strategies that might be used.

Certificate of Attainment:

Special needs students are encouraged to sit grade examinations. When entering students please refer to the following guideline:

- 1 Certificate of Attainment is for candidates with any disability which may affect their performance.
- 2 All entries for Certificate of Attainment **must** have the letters 'CoA' clearly noted on the entry form beside the name of the candidate.
- 3 When it is a candidate's first time entering under Certificate of Attainment the entry form **must** be accompanied by a Certificate of Attainment form detailing the specific nature of the candidate's disability and any special requirements. The Certificate of Attainment form is available from your Local Secretary or can be downloaded from our website:
www.speechnz.co.nz/examinations/certificate-of-attainment/
- 4 A new form must be submitted if there is a change in the candidate's condition.
- 5 Approval to sit an exam under Certificate of Attainment will be noted on the form. If the application is declined the form will be returned to the teacher and a reason given or further information sought.
- 6 For module examinations the 'Certificate of Attainment' may be applied to just one module. If one or two modules are sat under Certificate of Attainment the certificate will show CoA beside the module. If all three modules are sat under Certificate of Attainment the certificate will show 'Certificate of Attainment'.
- 7 Speech New Zealand will award a 'Certificate of Attainment' if the examiner is satisfied that the candidate is doing the best work of which they are capable.
- 8 Special group examinations for Certificate of Attainment candidates may be arranged if there are sufficient entries.
- 9 Speech New Zealand may also provide special examination prescriptions for individual students whose needs cannot be adequately met by the standard syllabus.

Guidelines for entering students in different levels over SNZ syllabuses, including Oral Assessment in schools:

Newer teachers often ask questions about the level at which to start students. Our syllabuses all have guidelines under General Information and for most students these are an accurate guide.

There is no lower age limit and we do occasionally have confident young students of six or so sitting Initial grade.

However if candidates start too young and continue to move up one grade each year, SNZ has found that by about Grade 3 or particularly at Grade 4 they frequently lack the maturity to achieve well at this level. When students start young then it is a really good idea to have them work on different

syllabuses in alternate years. Say either the Public Speaking, or, if they are in a group, then the Theatre In Action syllabus can make a stimulating alternative. This means interest is maintained, both for teacher and students – and new skills are developed and honed each year.

Older students can be more problematic as to a starting level, as a number of factors need to be considered: maturity levels, life experience, general communication skills, and, importantly, the reason they are working towards speech exams. It is apparent these students need an achievable goal/challenge without feeling overwhelmed, conversely, they also do not want to feel they are working at a level that is too simple and way behind their age group. For, say, a Year 9 student starting college, who has a natural aptitude, then possibly Grade 4 is a good starting point. If they showed reticence then maybe Grade 3 so they achieve reasonably well in the first year. Starting at Year 11 or 12 it can be tricky. Do take into account work they may have done at school, their communication ability, discussion skills, reading level and broader interests as there are many skills inherent in these that give good background knowledge for more senior grades in either Speech and Drama or Public Speaking. Perhaps a start at Grade 6 is feasible and if they really show promise, then a jump in grades is always possible in the next year.

For Oral Communication Assessments, the guidelines in the syllabus are equally important. If the class is entered at too low a level then the higher achievers have no challenge and may not value the work. It may be that one school class needs to be split to enter, say, Junior and Advanced Junior.

Professional Speaking Syllabus: Certificate level

Impromptu section:

We have received queries about the impromptu section in this Certificate. Teachers who may be new to our examinations might also like to refer to the Learning Criteria Speech and Drama and Public Speaking syllabuses for further guidelines/ideas in teaching various impromptu sections.

The intention of this exercise is for the examiner to set a situation **relevant to the work the candidates have presented.**

These exercises might relate to telephone skills, interviewing or role plays such as handling complaints or possibly negotiating agreement.

A role play is a process of acting out a real-life situation to demonstrate the appropriate communication skills required to handle a given situation effectively. At all times the behaviour of the players should be consistent with the types of behaviour demonstrated in real life situations.

- Participants should listen carefully to instructions and request clarification if they are unsure
- Create a real life situation and work together towards finding a relevant and satisfactory ending.

Telephone Skills: because they cannot see the other person, telephones are extra demanding:

- The examiner will give clear details of the situation that will relate to two people – one making the call, the other answering.
- The exercise can be more challenging when talking on a mobile phone.
- There may be an element of role play within a telephone exercise.

Skills include:

Answering the phone, being courteous, giving clear messages, responding and concluding effectively.

Interviewing is a purposeful, planned conversation between two or more people. It is usually face to face.

- The **interviewer** controls the situation, clarifies the position and asks appropriate questions, and concludes the interview.
- The **interviewee** is motivated by, for example, wanting to be selected for the job. Listens carefully, provides full but not lengthy responses and, in the case of a job interview may also ask questions.

The time limit for impromptu sections will depend on the number of people participating in the exercise: 3 minutes for just one person, 6 minutes for two people. . . However, candidates usually have no difficulty in creating the situation inside the time limit.

Have a good Easter break

Pam

Examinations Division.

Speech New Zealand

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