

performing arts

BTEC National Subsidiary Diploma

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Exam board: Pearson Edexcel



What is this subject about?

BTEC Performing Arts is a nationally recognised vocational subject. The subject provides the opportunity to develop skills in the performing arts which are relevant to the industry. Units in the different art forms are offered to cover the students' range of abilities in the three disciplines of dance, drama and music. Each student will have different skill levels in the different art forms and the course will help the student develop their skills. This is a two year course equivalent to one full A Level with equivalent UCAS points value.

What will I study over the two years?

In the first year the 'Developing Physical Theatre' unit will allow you to gain an understanding of the skills and techniques of physical theatre, its key practitioners and styles and their role in contemporary performing arts. It is assessed by two group practical assessments with accompanying log book and research.

The 'Singing for Actors and Dancers' unit introduces you to a range of different styles of singing to make you more confident in singing, particularly in Musical Theatre.

The 'Performing to an Audience' unit consists of a show based on the works of Bob Fosse, for example Chicago, Cabaret and Sweet Charity. You will study the Fosse style of movement and songs from these shows, for example All That Jazz, Cell Block Tango and Mr Cellophane. You will have the chance to perform solos, duets and ensemble pieces and the opportunity to direct and choreograph numbers if you want to. You will give a matinee performance followed by an evening performance. You will be assessed on performance skills, attitude during rehearsals, response to feedback and some research work including a log book.

In the second year the 'Developing Musical Theatre' unit allows you to take part in a performance of musical theatre and gives you more autonomy in choosing your own numbers for this show. You can choose from past and present shows in the West End.

The 'Developing Movement Skills' unit is based on Laban principles. You will take part in 5 workshops learning movement principles based on actions, dynamics, relationships and space. You will devise 5 pieces and perform them in a workshop environment.

For the 'Audio Performance Acting' unit you perform a solo piece of your choice and put together a group radio programme which could be part of a drama series, a music show, a magazine style programme, a comedy or sports programme. You will learn microphone techniques for recording in the studio in the Music Block.

How is the course assessed?

The course is assessed throughout the two years by a number of coursework assignments. These coursework assignments are centre-assessed and then externally moderated by the exam board. You will be assessed on log books, short written tasks and performance.

What skills will I need and develop in this course?

You will need some experience in two of the art forms, a willingness to try new styles and forms and a desire to work with others. You will develop a range of performance, writing and devising skills. You will also develop self-confidence and presentation skills.

What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

Typical future careers might be performer, critic, therapist, art administrator, arts funder, performing arts coordinator. Higher education might include degrees in the separate art forms i.e. dance, drama, music, musical theatre or in combination with other subjects e.g. English or Art.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general criteria that the college requires, you will need to achieve a minimum of:

- Grade 4 in English Language GCSE
- Some experience of two of the art forms whether through GCSE or other lessons/ grade exams out of school – by negotiation with the Head of Department.

What extra support/enrichment activities are on offer?

Professional companies come to college to perform and take workshops with the students e.g. the Reform Theatre Company from Sheffield. Trips have included Matilda, Five Guys Named Mo, 42nd Street, Rambert Day, Dreamgirls, Wicked, On The Town and Gypsy. Professional Companies such as Sleeping Trees, Cold Dinner and Frantic Assembly come to run workshops in College for the students.

Subject combination advice:

BTEC Performing Arts is an asset for any subject combination. Some students who study Performing Arts might do English, Fashion, Photography, Art, Media Studies, Film Studies and History. Other students choose to study Performing Arts as a contrasting subject and might be studying Mathematics, Sciences or humanities subjects such as Geography.

What is the difference between Drama & Theatre Studies and BTEC Performing Arts?

The Performing Arts BTEC course involves music, dance and acting and is more flexible so you can play to your strengths and can follow a Musical Theatre pathway. BTEC Performing Arts focuses on rehearsal and performance in order to train students for entry to higher education level on a course which is aimed at a career in the industry. The Performing Arts BTEC course is assessed through 100% coursework.

Whereas, Drama and Theatre is 30% acting, 30% written coursework and 40% written exam. Drama and Theatre is not just an acting course, you also learn about design and directing. Drama and Theatre A Level is in some ways similar to English Literature, but with just theatre texts plus straight acting.