

LEAVING CERTIFICATE · HIGHER LEVEL · SAMPLE PAPER 1 · 2027

# Drama, Film and Theatre Studies

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Total marks

**300**

Duration

**2h 30m**

Sections

**A · B · C**

## About this document

A practice marking scheme produced by SimpleStudy to help students and teachers prepare for the Leaving Certificate examination in Drama, Film and Theatre Studies.

*Not an official State Examinations Commission document.*

# Marking Scheme

This marking scheme accompanies SimpleStudy's Sample Paper 1 in Drama, Film and Theatre Studies. It is intended to support candidates and teachers preparing for the Leaving Certificate examination in this subject. It is not an official State Examinations Commission document.

## General Marking Guidelines

- Accept all reasonable responses not explicitly listed in this scheme; the indicative content is not exhaustive.
- Award marks for relevant content even if poorly expressed; do not penalise spelling or grammar unless meaning is unclear.
- Where a candidate contradicts themselves, award the lower mark.
- Where a part requires a named performance, film, focus of study or example, no marks are awarded for that element without one.
- For labelled diagrams, credit accurate labelling and correctness of representation.
- For parts based on a stimulus image (Figures C and E on Paper X, and Figures A, B, D, F1–F3, G1–G3), credit any valid reading the candidate substantiates from the image; the indicative readings below are guidance, not the only acceptable answers.

## Paper Structure

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
Section A	<b>Compulsory Questions.</b> Answer all parts of Question 1 and Question 2.	<b>100</b>
Section B	<b>Exploring Drama, Theatre and Film.</b> Answer Question 3 (Prescribed Drama/Theatre) and Question 4 (Prescribed Film). Each carries 80 marks.	<b>160</b>
Section C	<b>Reflecting and Responding.</b> Answer Question 5(a) or 5(b).	<b>40</b>

## Grading Descriptors (extended-response parts)

- **High (H):** Accurate, well-developed, specific and relevant; sustained discussion supported by precise reference to performances, films, scenes or extracts.
- **Mid (M):** Mostly accurate, some development, relevant; reference present but more general than specific.
- **Low (L):** Partially accurate, limited development, broadly relevant; little or no specific reference.

*Note on mark splits: the paper prints only the totals for Question 1 (60) and Question 2 (40). The internal splits shown for Question 1(a)–(h) and Question 2(a)–(b) are indicative, set to reconcile to those printed totals; examiners should apply the bands holistically.*

## Section A

100 marks

There are two questions in this section. Answer all parts of Question 1 and Question 2.

### Question 1 (60 marks) — Answer ALL parts

Indicative internal split (reconciling to the printed total of 60): (a) 8, (b) 6, (c) 8, (d) 8, (e) 6, (f) 6, (g) 8, (h) 10.

(a) Advantages of shooting on location (**Figure A**) and in a studio (**Figure B**). (8 marks)

Two sub-parts of 4 marks. In each, award 2 marks per advantage (1 to state + 1 to explain). Accept any reasonable advantage; the lists below are indicative.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
(a)(i) 4 marks On location	<p><b>Two advantages, 2 marks each (1 + 1).</b> Indicative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authenticity / realism — real settings give a believable, lived-in world that is difficult to fabricate, increasing audience immersion.</li> <li>Natural light and scale — access to real daylight, weather and genuine large-scale vistas (landscapes, streets, crowds) that would be costly to build.</li> <li>Production design savings — an existing real environment can reduce set-building costs and lend production value ‘for free’.</li> <li>Atmosphere for performers — a real environment can support more naturalistic, responsive performances.</li> </ul>	4
(a)(ii) 4 marks In a studio	<p><b>Two advantages, 2 marks each (1 + 1).</b> Indicative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control — full control over lighting, sound, temperature and continuity, independent of weather or daylight hours.</li> <li>Repeatability / scheduling — scenes can be reshot reliably under identical conditions; no travel or permits.</li> <li>Technical infrastructure — rigging, green screen, grids, soundproofing and effects equipment are built in.</li> <li>Safety and privacy — a closed, managed environment for stunts, effects or sensitive scenes.</li> </ul>	4

(b) Why you would use three-point lighting in film production (labelled diagram optional). (6 marks)

Up to 2 of the 6 marks may be awarded for a correct labelled diagram (key, fill, back light). Remaining marks for explaining purpose. A candidate may achieve full marks through prose alone.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
(b) 6 marks	<p><b>Purpose of three-point lighting.</b> Award for identifying the three lights and their function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Key light</b> — the main, brightest source; sets the dominant direction and exposure on the subject.</li> <li><b>Fill light</b> — softer, opposite the key; reduces/controls shadow contrast so detail is not lost.</li> <li><b>Back (rim) light</b> — behind the subject; separates them from the background and gives depth/three-dimensionality.</li> </ul> <p>Overall: a flexible, controllable standard that models the subject, manages shadow, and creates separation and mood. Credit a labelled diagram showing the three positions relative to subject and camera.</p>	6

(c) Lighting effects in **Figure C** (Atlanta Lyric’s *Young Frankenstein*, on Paper X). (8 marks)

(i) Identify two lighting effects — 2 marks each = 4. (ii) Explain why used — 4 marks. The image shows a dark stage with a deep-blue wash, a large moon backdrop, and figures isolated in tight pools of light. Credit any defensible reading of the actual image.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
(c)(i) 4 marks	<p><b>Two lighting effects, 2 marks each.</b> Indicative (from the image):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coloured wash / blue gel creating a night-time mood across the stage.</li> <li>• Tight special / follow spot isolating the central couple against darkness.</li> <li>• Strong low-key contrast and silhouetting (high contrast between lit figures and dark surround).</li> <li>• Backlight / moon backdrop projection (gobo) establishing setting and depth.</li> </ul>	4
(c)(ii) 4 marks	<p><b>Why these effects were used — award for reasoned interpretation, e.g.:</b> the blue wash and moon establish a romantic, eerie night setting fitting the comic-gothic tone; the tight pool of light focuses audience attention on the central relationship and heightens emotional intimacy; high-contrast low-key lighting creates the parody-horror atmosphere central to the production. Accept any well-argued reading consistent with the image.</p>	4

(d) Special effects in **Figure D** (Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*). (8 marks)

(i) Why CGI was used — 4 marks. (ii) Name another special effect (1) + explain its use (3) = 4.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
(d)(i) 4 marks	<p><b>Why Scott used CGI — reasoned interpretation, e.g.:</b> to recreate the vast Colosseum and ancient Rome at a scale impossible or unsafe to build practically; to populate the arena with enormous crowds; to restore/extend historic architecture convincingly; to achieve historical spectacle within budget and safety constraints. Award full marks for a developed, plausible reason tied to the scene.</p>	4
(d)(ii) 4 marks	<p><b>Name a non-CGI special effect (1) + explain (3).</b> Indicative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical / mechanical effects (animatronics, miniatures) — tangible on-set realism actors can respond to.</li> <li>• Prosthetics / make-up effects — wounds, ageing, injury that read convincingly in close-up.</li> <li>• Pyrotechnics — controlled fire/explosions for danger and spectacle captured in-camera.</li> <li>• Matte painting / forced perspective — extend sets and environments economically.</li> <li>• Practical stunts and rigging — falls, combat and wire work for visceral action.</li> </ul>	4

(e) Composition in **Figure E** (Kurosawa's *High and Low*, on Paper X). (6 marks)

Comment on TWO of: set, props, actors, space — 3 marks each. The image is a wide black-and-white interior with two men seated far apart. Credit any two valid elements the candidate ticks and substantiates.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
(e) 6 marks Any two, 3 each	<p><b>Indicative material for each element:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Space</b> — the wide horizontal gulf between the two figures emphasises social/psychological distance and tension; negative space dominates the frame.</li> <li>• <b>Set</b> — the spare, ordered modern interior frames and contains the characters, reinforcing formality and class.</li> <li>• <b>Actors</b> — static, separated placement and posture conveys a strained, formal relationship rather than intimacy.</li> <li>• <b>Props</b> — sparse furnishings direct the eye and avoid clutter, keeping focus on the human stand-off.</li> </ul> <p>Award 1 mark for identifying the element's use + 2 marks for development tied to the image, per element.</p>	6

(f) Accessibility of a theatre performance or film for a chosen audience (Deaf/hearing-impaired or neurodivergent people). (6 marks)

Two ways — 3 marks each: 1 for naming a valid measure + 2 for explanation. Must address the ticked audience. Accept theatre or film measures.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
(f) 6 marks Two ways, 3 each	<p><b>Deaf / hearing-impaired — indicative:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Captioned/surtitled performance or closed captions/subtitles on film.</li> <li>• Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreted performance.</li> <li>• Induction/hearing loops and assistive listening devices.</li> <li>• Visual cueing and clear sightlines to interpreter/captions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Neurodivergent — indicative:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Relaxed' performance: adjusted lighting/sound, relaxed attitude to movement and noise.</li> <li>• Visual story / pre-visit guide setting expectations in advance.</li> <li>• Reduced startling effects (stobes, sudden loud sound); chill-out space available.</li> <li>• Clear signage and predictable structure; sensory information published ahead.</li> </ul>	6

(g) Character revealed by TWO of Figures F1–F3 (all Maggie Smith roles). (8 marks)

Choose two images; 4 marks each. F1 = *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969); F2 = *The Way of the World* (1984); F3 = *A German Life* (2019). Credit interpretation of character drawn from costume, posture, setting and expression in the chosen images.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
(g) 8 marks Any two, 4 each	<p><b>Indicative readings (2 marks observation + 2 marks interpretation per image):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>F1 – Miss Jean Brodie:</b> poised, central, surrounded by attentive pupils; dress and upright bearing suggest authority, self-assurance and a charismatic, controlling teacher.</li> <li>• <b>F2 – The Way of the World:</b> elaborate Restoration costume and composed, theatrical pose suggest status, vanity and the comedy-of-manners world the character inhabits.</li> <li>• <b>F3 – A German Life:</b> an elderly woman alone at a domestic table in muted light; weary, reflective posture conveys age, memory and the weight of testimony.</li> </ul> <p>Accept any character trait the candidate substantiates from the chosen image.</p>	8

(h) Define two terms and explain their use: **apron stage** (theatre) and **cross-fade** (film). (10 marks)

5 marks per term: 2 for an accurate definition + 3 for correct explanation of its use.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
<b>Apron stage (theatre)</b> 5 marks	<b>Definition (2):</b> the part of the stage that projects forward beyond the proscenium arch, in front of the main curtain line, extending towards/into the audience. <b>Use (3):</b> brings actors closer to the audience for intimacy and direct address; useful for soliloquies, scenes played 'out front', and increasing the sense of contact between performer and auditorium.	5
<b>Cross-fade (film)</b> 5 marks	<b>Definition (2):</b> a transition in which one shot/scene gradually dissolves into the next, the outgoing image fading down as the incoming image fades up (also a dissolve; applies equally to a sound cross-fade). <b>Use (3):</b> signals a change of time or place, a smooth passage of time, dream/memory, or a soft connection between two images; gentler than a hard cut and can imply relationship between the two shots.	5

## Question 2 (40 marks) — Unprescribed focus of study — Answer ALL parts

Candidates may **not** refer to any play or film prescribed for examination in 2027 in this subject or any other Leaving Certificate subject. 'Characteristic' = one or more features, conventions or techniques. Indicative internal split: 20 + 20.

**(a) Unprescribed Drama/Theatre:** name the focus of study, identify one characteristic, and discuss its effective use with reference to a scene/extract. (20 marks)

Name focus of study – 4; identify one characteristic – 4; discussion with reference – 12 (banded). No marks for the unprescribed-focus elements if the focus named is in fact a 2027-prescribed text.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
<b>(a)</b> <b>20 marks</b>	<p><b>Name focus of study (4):</b> any valid unprescribed genre/period/style/form in theatre, e.g. Greek tragedy, commedia dell'arte, Theatre of the Absurd, Naturalism, Brechtian epic theatre, melodrama, physical theatre, verbatim theatre, pantomime.</p> <p><b>Identify one characteristic (4):</b> a feature/convention/technique genuinely associated with the named focus (e.g. for Brechtian theatre — the alienation effect / direct address / placards).</p> <p><b>Discussion with reference (12), banded:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>H (9–12):</b> sustained discussion of how the characteristic works, anchored in a specific named scene/extract the candidate has engaged with.</li> <li><b>M (5–8):</b> some development; reference more general than specific.</li> <li><b>L (0–4):</b> assertion with little development or reference.</li> </ul>	<b>20</b>

**(b) Unprescribed Film:** name the focus of study, identify a characteristic, and explain one reason a practitioner would employ it, with reference to clips/extracts. (20 marks)

Name focus of study – 4; identify a characteristic – 4; reason with reference – 12 (banded). Same band boundaries as 2(a).

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
<b>(b)</b> <b>20 marks</b>	<p><b>Name focus of study (4):</b> any valid unprescribed film genre/period/style/movement, e.g. film noir, German Expressionism, the Western, the musical, Italian neorealism, the French New Wave, documentary, science fiction, the slasher.</p> <p><b>Identify a characteristic (4):</b> e.g. for film noir — chiaroscuro low-key lighting; for the French New Wave — jump cuts and location shooting.</p> <p><b>Reason a practitioner employs it, with reference (12), banded:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>H (9–12):</b> clear reason tied to effect on the audience/storytelling, supported by specific clip/extract reference.</li> <li><b>M (5–8):</b> some development; general reference.</li> <li><b>L (0–4):</b> assertion, minimal reference.</li> </ul>	<b>20</b>

## Section B

160 marks

Answer Question 3 (Prescribed Drama/Theatre) and Question 4 (Prescribed Film). Each question carries 80 marks and is assessed holistically against the four criteria below.

### Assessment Criteria (Questions 3 and 4)

Criterion	Descriptor	Max	Band Marks
<b>Knowledge &amp; Understanding</b>	Accurate, relevant knowledge of the focus of study and the designated performance/film; understanding of form, genre, style and the practitioners' craft; appropriate subject terminology.	<b>30</b>	H: 25–30 M: 16–24 L: 0–15
<b>Analysis &amp; Discussion</b>	Critical discussion of how characteristics/aspects function and their impact; quality of argument; engagement with the candidate's own opinion as required by the question.	<b>28</b>	H: 24–28 M: 15–23 L: 0–14
<b>Supporting Reference</b>	Specific, accurate reference to the designated performance/film and at least one other relevant performance/extract within the focus of study.	<b>14</b>	H: 12–14 M: 7–11 L: 0–6
<b>Communication</b>	Clarity of expression; logical structure and flow; coherent, appropriately registered response.	<b>8</b>	H: 7–8 M: 4–6 L: 0–3

Total = 80. Apply holistically: place the response in a band for each criterion, then award a mark within the band.

### Question 3 — Prescribed Drama/Theatre (80 marks) — Answer 3(a) OR 3(b)

Answer one option only. If a candidate answers more than one, mark the best-attempted and ignore the rest. Use the criterion grid above.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
<b>3(a)</b> <b>80 marks</b>	<b>Prescribed focus of study, two characteristics, impact on the designated performance.</b> Award against the grid for: naming a valid prescribed focus of study in theatre; identifying two genuine characteristics of it; discussing their impact on the designated performance of the set play; and supporting with specific examples from the designated performance <b>and at least one other</b> performance/extract within the focus of study.	<b>80</b>
<b>3(b)(i)</b> <b>80 marks</b> <b>Verbatim Theatre</b>	<b>Olivia Williams as Alice in Mosquitoes (National Theatre, dir. Rufus Norris).</b> Reward discussion of three aspects of the performance (e.g. vocal delivery, physicality/movement, emotional range, relationship with other characters, handling of the play's scientific and emotional register) that contribute to the production's success, with specific reference to Williams's Alice and to the designated performance as a whole. <i>Examiner note: the question as printed names Mosquitoes (dir. Rufus Norris). The prescribed verbatim-theatre set play in Circular 0061/2025 is Home (National Theatre, 2013; playwright &amp; director Nadia Fall). Mark the candidate against the production named in the paper.</i>	<b>80</b>

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
<b>3(b)(ii)</b> <b>80 marks</b> <b>Tragicomedy</b>	<b>Caitríona Ennis as Minnie in <i>The Shadow of a Gunman</i> (Druid, dir. Garry Hynes).</b> Reward discussion of three aspects of the performance contributing to the production's success, with specific reference to Ennis's Minnie and to the designated performance as a whole.	<b>80</b>
<b>3(b)(iii)</b> <b>80 marks</b> <b>Non-naturalistic production elements</b>	<b>Séan T. Ó Meallaigh as Diarmuid in <i>Tóraíocht</i> (Fíabín, dir. Mikel Murfi).</b> Reward discussion of three aspects of the performance contributing to the production's success, with specific reference to Ó Meallaigh's Diarmuid and to the designated performance as a whole.	<b>80</b>

### Question 4 — Prescribed Film (80 marks) — Answer 4(a) OR 4(b)

Answer one option only. Use the criterion grid above.

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
<b>4(a)</b> <b>80 marks</b>	<b>Prescribed focus of study, at least two characteristics enhancing storytelling.</b> Award against the grid for: naming a valid prescribed focus of study in film; discussing at least two characteristics that significantly enhance cinematic storytelling; supporting with specific examples from the prescribed film <b>and at least one other</b> example within the focus of study.	<b>80</b>
<b>4(b)(i)</b> <b>80 marks</b> <b>Style: Spielberg</b>	<b>Examine <i>Jaws</i> — sound and editing.</b> Examine the extent to which sound (e.g. Williams's two-note motif, diegetic/atmospheric sound) and editing (e.g. shock cuts, the Vertigo/dolly-zoom, withholding the shark) are used effectively. Support from the film as a whole and/or the scene in <b>Figure G1</b> .	<b>80</b>
<b>4(b)(ii)</b> <b>80 marks</b> <b>Genre: European Art Cinema</b>	<b>Examine <i>An Cailín Ciúin</i> (dir. Colm Bairéad) — repeated visual cues/motifs.</b> Examine how recurring visual motifs (e.g. water/the well, the gate, hands, light through doorways) shape the viewer's response. Support from the film as a whole and/or the scene in <b>Figure G2</b> .	<b>80</b>
<b>4(b)(iii)</b> <b>80 marks</b> <b>Genre: Romance</b>	<b>Examine <i>Past Lives</i> (dir. Celine Song) — genre identification.</b> Examine how <b>any two</b> of set, costume, lighting or dialogue identify the film as Romance. Support from the film as a whole and/or the scene in <b>Figure G3</b> .	<b>80</b>

## Section C

40 marks

Reflecting and Responding. Answer Question 5(a) or 5(b). Assessed holistically against the four criteria, scaled to 40 marks.

### Assessment Criteria (Question 5)

Criterion	Descriptor	Max	Band Marks
<b>Knowledge &amp; Understanding</b>	Relevant knowledge of the performance/filmmaking context and of the ACTs/creative-critical processes engaged with.	<b>15</b>	H: 13–15 M: 8–12 L: 0–7
<b>Analysis &amp; Reflection</b>	Quality of personal reflection and reasoning; clear connection between process/engagement and personal response or directorial choices.	<b>14</b>	H: 12–14 M: 8–11 L: 0–7
<b>Supporting Reference</b>	Specific reference to the named performance (5a) or to filmmaking learning/wider film study (5b).	<b>7</b>	H: 6–7 M: 4–5 L: 0–3
<b>Communication</b>	Clarity, structure and coherence of the response.	<b>4</b>	H: 4 M: 2–3 L: 0–1

Total = 40.

### Question 5 (40 marks) — Answer 5(a) OR 5(b)

Part	Acceptable Answer(s)	Marks
<b>5(a) 40 marks</b>	<b>One live theatrical performance attended.</b> Discuss how engagement in the critical <b>or</b> creative process during the ACTs informed the candidate's personal response to that performance. <b>A specific live performance must be named; if none is named, cap at the Low band.</b> Reward genuine reflection that links the candidate's own process work to how they responded to the performance, with specific reference.	<b>40</b>
<b>5(b) 40 marks</b>	<b>Director of a low-budget short film — prioritise TWO of:</b> quality of camera, lighting, sound, production design, actor(s). Provide a rationale for each choice. <b>Marks are for the quality of justification, not which two are chosen.</b> Reward reasoning grounded in filmmaking learning/wider film study (e.g. 'sound and lighting give the biggest perceived production value per euro; poor sound reads as amateur faster than a modest camera'). Both choices must be justified.	<b>40</b>

**Paper total:** Section A (100) + Section B (160) + Section C (40) = **300 marks.**

*This marking scheme is indicative. Examiners should use professional judgement and credit all reasonable responses not listed here. Indicative answer content for image-based and prescribed-text parts should be checked by the examiner against the candidate's actual reading and against the current SEC specification. Prepared by SimpleStudy for study purposes; not an official State Examinations Commission document.*