

Drama Australia Guidelines

2026

Drama Education in Initial Teacher Education

“These guidelines provide clear and consistent standards to support the high-quality preparation of future drama teachers.”

Drama Australia is the peak national association for drama in education in Australia. The organisation was established in 1976 to support all aspects of drama learning and teaching. These principles have been developed by Drama Australia to assist Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers, education authorities and accrediting authorities in the design and implementation of ITE courses relevant to play, drama, theatre and theatre studies. They apply to educators working within Early Childhood, Primary Generalist, Primary Specialist, Special Education, and Secondary Specialist teacher education programs.

Drama is both a mandated subject within the arts curriculum and a powerful pedagogical approach for learning across the curriculum. Drama requires well-prepared drama teachers because the artform’s unique pedagogies, processes, and performance practices demand deep disciplinary knowledge and skill to teach safely, authentically, and effectively. These guidelines for initial teacher education in drama have been written to provide clear, consistent standards that support high-quality preparation of future drama teachers and ensure the integrity, rigour, and relevance of drama education across diverse learning contexts.

Principle 1

Drama education should be a compulsory and inclusive area of study for all pre-service teachers preparing to teach in early childhood and primary education. For ITE students preparing to teach in secondary education, drama should be offered as a discrete curriculum area. Within Bachelor of Education programs it should be supported by a minor or major study in drama/theatre e.g. four discipline focused subjects (teaching drama to Year 10) or six discipline related subjects (for teaching to Year 12). These discipline subjects must include practical performance work. For students with an existing Bachelor degree entering a Master of Teaching program, the same number of discipline related subjects should be evident in their study history.



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Principle 2

Learning experiences in drama education courses should be experiential, aesthetically rich, embodied, and practically oriented. Given the embodied nature of drama learning, the delivery of drama education, particularly for those training to teach drama, should occur in person wherever possible.

Principle 3

Initial teacher drama education programs should reflect:

- a commitment to equity and diversity
- inclusive practices that are responsive to cultural, linguistic, and diverse learning needs and backgrounds. (See also *Drama Australia's Equity and Diversity Guidelines for Drama Education*).

Principle 4

Classroom-based experiences must be an integral part of the development of teaching expertise for all pre-service teachers undertaking drama education courses.

“Classroom-based experiences are integral to the development of drama teaching expertise.”

Principle 5

All students completing ITE courses must be required to complete a school-based assessment task relevant to drama education to provide evidence of their ability to implement the requirements of various drama curricular.

Principle 6

All ITE courses in or associated with play/drama/theatre or theatre arts content, curriculum, or pedagogy should be informed by research and where relevant, industry practice, and include study and practical experience in the following areas:

- The nature and purpose of all forms of dramatic activity
- An age-appropriate range of dramatic forms, genres, and styles
- Curriculum development in play, drama, and theatre, including consideration of educational and school policies
- Child and adolescent development, with a focus on how young people learn through play, drama, and theatre

Principle 6 *(cont'd)*

- Pedagogical strategies appropriate to the age, stage, and experience of learners
- Classroom practice including planning, implementation, and reflection
- Contemporary pedagogical approaches specific to play, drama, and theatre education
- Approaches to drama teaching that are inclusive of student diversity
- Assessment/documentation practices that are authentic, developmentally appropriate, and reflective of drama processes.

Principle 7

Education authorities, sectors, and schools should ensure that ongoing, high-quality professional learning opportunities are available to support the continued development of qualified drama educators and/or those who are not formally qualified but are nevertheless responsible for the delivery of drama, theatre and/or dramatic play in their particular learning contexts.

“High-quality drama education is supported by qualified educators and ongoing professional learning.”

Principle 8

Teacher educators responsible for preparing pre-service teachers in drama education should themselves:

- Hold formal qualifications in drama education
- Have practical classroom teaching experience in drama
- Hold undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications relevant to drama education.

Principle 9 *(for secondary school drama programs)*

For teachers who do not hold a recognised qualification in drama education but are assigned responsibility for drama teaching, concurrent training programs should be made available.

Out-of-field teachers are strongly encouraged to undertake professional learning offered by Drama Australia’s member state and territory associations, and to consider undertaking further formal study in drama education.

Principle 10 (for primary ITE programs)

Drama should be taught to pre-service teachers as a discrete subject, with purposeful opportunities to make connections across the curriculum. The unique content, knowledge, pedagogy, and approaches to assessment that underpin drama in the primary years should be valued and prioritised. In most primary ITE programs, drama is one of four or five arts subjects being delivered. Time should be provided in ITE for arts education to ensure all arts areas (Drama, Dance, Music, Visual Art, and Media) have sufficient and equal time, staffing and resources.

“Purpose-built spaces are essential to support the physical, creative, and pedagogical demands of contemporary drama education.”

Principle 11

Drama should be delivered in a purpose-built space conducive to practical work. Facilities must provide adequate open floor area, flexible staging resources such as rostra, and access to specialist technical equipment including theatre lighting, sound systems, and multimedia technologies. Appropriate acoustic design, ventilation, and safe flooring are essential to support the physical demands of drama learning, along with secure storage for props, costumes, and technical equipment. Purpose-built spaces ensure that drama can be taught safely and in alignment with contemporary performance practices encountered in schools. (See also: Drama Australia’s Guidelines on Working Conditions for teaching and Learning in Drama).

The Drama Australia Guidelines for Drama Education in Initial Teacher Education have been developed by members of the Drama Australia Board, including:

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