

ESU PERFORMING SHAKESPEARE COMPETITION

Volunteer Judge
Handbook
2023-24



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION
discovering voices

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPETITION

Welcome to the English-Speaking Union's Performing Shakespeare Competition!

Dear Volunteer Judge,

Thank you so much for offering your time and expertise to adjudicate this event. It is a unique national competition for students in Years 7-9 at the very start of secondary education. Now in its thirteenth year, it is the ESU's fastest-growing competition. More and more schools are adapting their Key Stage 3 curriculum to facilitate whole year group involvement in this programme as it clearly has an enormous impact on children's enjoyment and engagement with Shakespeare.

In this document you will find the format of the competition, the timings and a guide as to the standard of performance with respect to the approximate number of marks to be awarded.

It is essential that our judges adhere to the criteria for judging. Teams have been coached to these criteria and will be expecting feedback relating to them. Please do not ever refer to a student's gender, dress sense, hairstyle or any physical characteristic, including voice. Such remarks are at best inappropriate and at worst hurtful. Also, you may come across unfamiliar names: please give the student the respect of your best attempt at pronunciation!

It is important that all judges, no matter how experienced, have read the Judge Role Description, signed the ESU Volunteer Agreement and have completed our online training. This is because the ESU, as an educational charity, and you, as volunteers, both have a duty of care to the young people who take part in our programmes. The training

not only covers the rules and judging, but also alerts you to key safeguarding issues.

Full information about the competition can be found **here** and the Role Description, Volunteer Agreement and online training can all be found at **here**.

You will be informed when to arrive at the event's venue and other such details by the ESU. You will need to bring with you all that you need to judge the competition.

When you get together as a panel, one judge will be appointed chair of the panel. Usually there are three judges, but should there be an even number, the Chair Judge will have a casting vote on any controversial decision. The Competition Lead will take you through the mechanics of the marking sheets, the deliberation (decision-making) and the results and awards ceremony.

At the end of this document are details on the art of giving feedback. There is a very reasonable expectation from students and teachers that they will learn something about acting. The most important thing to remember is to keep an overwhelmingly positive tone and to make sure that points for improvement are given in the most constructive way. We want every child to come away from the event with a feeling that they have gained something from the experience, whether or not they won.

We do hope that you also enjoy the competition – certainly, most judges to whom we speak are surprised and delighted by the quality of what they see and hear.

Thank you once more for giving so freely your time and expertise; good luck!

Tom Kirkham,
Senior Branch and Volunteer Officer
volunteering@esu.org

AT A GLANCE

What makes the ESU's Performing Shakespeare unique?

This competition is a collaboration between schools and the English-Speaking Union. While there is a competitive element, experience shows that this is just a framework to support the engagement of Key Stage 3 students with the joy of interpreting and performing Shakespeare, as well as the development of their acting and oracy skills.

The ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition is separate and distinct, but fully complementary with, Shakespeare's Globe in the heart of London, England.

Why enter?

Students who participate in this competition develop key skills for the future.

- Confidence in their oracy skills by using Shakespearean texts as a starting point for analysis and development of expression and delivery skills
- An excellent introduction to Shakespeare's plays, and an enhanced understanding and enjoyment of Shakespeare through the use of speaking and listening skills
- An introduction to performance and the opportunity to develop their acting skills
- The confidence to proceed to take part in our other two competitions: the School's Mace and the ESU-Churchill Public Speaking Competition
- A chance to improve their public speaking skills in the oracy component (a 2-minute verbal introduction, contextualizing your Shakespearean extract and explaining why it is important to you)

Who can enter?

- All state, independent and grammar schools throughout Wales and England, as well as home-schooled children
- Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 (Key Stage 3, ages 11-14)
- Entries may be either a monologue or a duologue, as desired



NEUTRALITY OF JUDGES

Adjudication is an inherently subjective activity. Therefore, however detached and erudite a judge may be, there will always be those who will disagree with their verdict, as everyone will respond differently. The judges' decision is, of course, final.

However, these differences can sometimes be tempered if the adjudicators' independence and neutrality is evident. Adjudicators should not have an obvious affiliation with any of the participating schools in the area finals or grand final.

Judging in the first round in schools will be arranged by the schools themselves.

If a judge feels that they have a conflict of interest, they should say so as soon as possible. Early disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest (or the appearance of any) will help the ESU to protect the integrity of the competition and ensure fairness for all competitors. If any judges or organisers have a conflict of interest with any of the performers, they should not be on the judging panel. Potential conflicts of interest include:

- Being a friend or relative of a participant
- Being a teacher, retired or current, headteacher or governor of a participating school

Judges should not discuss their feedback during the rounds, they should rate performances individually and on their own merit.

Judges will retire to a separate area or room to discuss their thoughts before announcing the winners. Each judge will be given individual time to collect their thoughts before they discuss the performances with each other.

Usually there are 3 judges but should there be an even number, 2 or 4, the Chair will have a casting vote on any controversial decision. However if the panel of judges are unable to come to a decision and the chair judge is unable to steer the panel in into making one, It is the responsibility of the Competition Lead to make that decision.



FORMAT



The competition has four rounds:

Round One: an internal school selection process in which each school selects an agreed number of entries to proceed to the second round

- Schools run their own internal competitions using the ESU's judging criteria, but without the specific involvement of ESU staff and volunteers
- Schools must have completed this by January 17th
- There is no limit to the number of entries per school
- This internal school competition can be as large or as small as the school wants it to be
- Teachers should work with pupils to select a Shakespearean monologue or duologue for the competition:
 - The ESU provides some sample extracts, but these are not exhaustive; we welcome entries from any of Shakespeare's 37 plays
 - A performance of a Shakespearean sonnet will not be accepted
 - Monologues must be performed by a single entrant
 - For those who wish to perform as a pair, a suitable duologue should be chosen
 - Several students from the same school may perform the same monologue or duologue in any round of the competition
 - Students should perform the same piece at each stage of the competition
 - Students may not use props, music or costume in their performance; one chair per actor is permitted only
 - There are links on the competition webpage to the many teaching resources produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company Education Department and the ESU
 - Students are encouraged to wear all black clothing, but this is not a requirement
- Before the extract is performed, pupils should introduce their piece with their oracy component, explaining why they have chosen their piece as well as any relevant historical context and information about their interpretation thereof
- The acting should be no longer than three minutes in duration
- The overall timing of each entry will, therefore, be a maximum of five minutes in total
- Schools rank their monologues and duologues in place order and the ESU lead organiser informs each school of the number of monologues and duologues which can proceed to the second round
- Schools must then submit their entry details to the ESU for the second round by Monday, 30 January, including the name(s) of the student(s), as well as that of the character(s) and the scene(s) that will be performed

Round Two

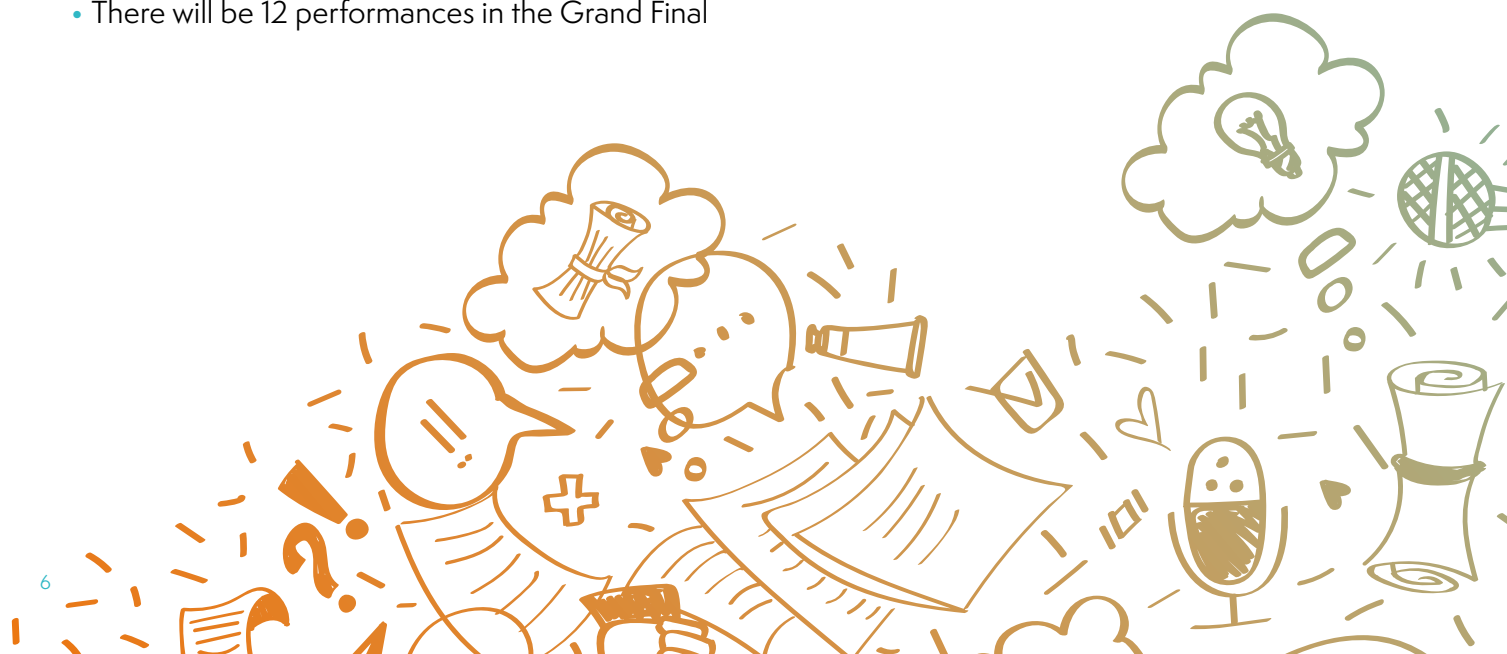
- Local participating schools will be asked if they can provide a venue for this round
- Dates and venues will be announced on Wednesday, 9 February
- Round Two will take place throughout March
- The format of the competition, with a two-minute oracy component and three minutes for acting, will be the same as Round One
- The ESU will provide 3 judges who will deliberate and decide which schools will progress to the Regional Finals

Round Three: The Regional Finals

- There are twelve Regional Finals throughout Wales and England
- There can be up to 24 performances in each Regional Final
- Regional Finals take place throughout May
- Date and venues will be announced on Monday, 17 April
- The timings and the format - a two-minute oracy component, followed by a 3-minute performance - are the same as in previous rounds.
- The winner of each Regional Final proceeds to the Grand Final
- Two judges' commendation winners (runners-up) will also be selected; they will be called upon to proceed to the Grand Final if the winners are unable to attend

Round Four: the Grand Final for England and Wales

- This is organised by the ESU Competitions Team
- This will take place at Shakespeare's Globe and will be held on Friday, 14th June 2024 (subject to change)
- There will be another one-hour acting workshop prior to the Grand Final performances, as well as a tour of Shakespeare's Globe
- There will be 12 performances in the Grand Final





GENDER, DIVERSITY & CLOTHING

Gender

The ESU does not focus on gender within the competition. Students may play a character of any gender, regardless of their own gender identity. Participants are not to be judged on appearance, nor on the type of monologue or duologues they perform, but on how well they perform them. It is important that the panel removes any biases on how they believe the scene should be performed in regards to gender stereotypes, and more important to focus on the emotion displayed.

Diversity

Whilst adjudicating the competition, judges will not, under any circumstances, take into account or comment on race, religion, ethnicity, gender or socio-economic background of the participant, or likewise on clothing, hairstyles, accents or physical qualities as they are not relevant to the performances. The participant, however, may themselves wish to raise these issues when they talk about the reasons behind their choice of piece.

Clothing

Participants are free to wear whatever they like provided that it is comfortable, neutral or dark clothing (ideally black) without slogans or anything that could be perceived as a costume. Smart clothing for the Grand Final is not required and should play no part in judging decisions.





KEY DATES

June 2023: Registration opens online: schools fill out a short form and will receive immediate confirmation that their registration has been received

Wednesday, 27 September: Registration closes

Wednesday, 9 February: Dates and venues will be selected for the second round and emailed out to schools

March 2024: Round Two – Second round heats take place

May 2024: Round Three – Regional Finals take place

Friday 14 June: Grand Final for England and Wales





COSTUMES AND PROPS

No costumes of any sort are permitted (see the advice on clothing above).

No scenery, props or furniture are permitted with the exception of one chair per performer only.

The competition is about oracy and acting and not the use of external factors to support the performance.

ORACY WITHIN THE COMPETITION

The ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition has two elements:

- Oracy – two-minute introduction which the actors give to their chosen text.
- Acting – three-minutes of monologue or duologue.

Both elements are covered by the three minutes of monologue or duologue.

The oracy aspect concerns the two-minute introduction which the actors give to their piece. The oracy component should include:

- > the details of the play and scene selected. This should include, but is not limited to, what piece they have selected, and which act and scene they are performing. Students should also include a very brief description of the scene the audience will see. This should not be a synopsis, just a brief description of the scene to be performed.
 - > the name of the character(s) they are playing. The student(s) will introduce which character they will be playing and provide an overview of what the character is feeling. They will provide context as the scene begins, which will be helpful to the audience and judges.
 - > an answer to the question 'I/We chose this piece because'. This is the student's opportunity to express why they chose this particular scene. What message they are trying to convey and how they relate to the character and their situation.
 - > what they aim to show/achieve by the way they play the scene. This is integral to the oracy component of the competition, as students will be able to describe their motivations and what message they are trying to communicate to the audience.
- The fourth marking criteria – Success in Realising Artistic Intention – involves understanding what the actor is hoping to convey.



MARKING CRITERIA

The marking criteria was written with the help of a group of drama teachers and actors, as well as advice from some ESU Branches. It considers the Arts Council Level Descriptors for Key Stage 3 Drama, as well as GCSE marking schemes.

Performers are expected to 'colour' their performance by bringing vocal and/or physical skills into their interpretation of character and situation. The application of performance choices will be reflected in the Technical Skills mark. Please see below for non-exhaustive lists of performance choices.

There are four categories:

> **Vocal skills**

The performer modifies their use of:

- pace (rhythm, pauses)
- accent
- inflection
- intonation
- pitch
- projection

> **Physical and technical skills**

The performer modifies their use of:

- movement (pace, stillness)
- body language
- facial expression
- gesture
- space

> **Interpretation of text**

- The performer is inventive in their performance choices and demonstrates understanding of the text and character's emotion/story.

> **Success in realising artistic intention**

- The performer connects their Shakespeare piece to what was described in the oracy component of their performance. For example, if they disclose the feeling of heartbreak Juliet is going through, in the oracy component, it needs to be visible in their performance.



TIMINGS AND MARKING

Students are encouraged to explore Shakespeare's plays themselves and select a speech which calls out to them and seems to connect with their own experiences or, indeed, from a play being studied in class.

Timings

- The pupil(s) should start by introducing the piece; this section should be no longer than two minutes. The fourth marking criteria – Success in Realising Artistic Intention – is used to assess this.
- The subsequent acting should be no longer than three minutes in duration. The acting is assessed using all four of the marking criteria.
- The overall timing of each entry will, therefore, be of no longer than five minutes in total
- Each student must only perform their extract in full once. They may be allowed to restart the extract if they make a mistake (the ESU recommends that the student is allowed to restart twice, before being encouraged to take a break to steady any nerves and come back to try again later in the running order). They must not, however, be given feedback and then repeat the performance again in its entirety.

Key to Performance Grading

There are five performance gradings (five being the highest) to help you work out the overall standard of a performance. They each have a descriptor to make the performance easily categorised.

- 1 = 'Emerging Talent'
- 2 = 'Rising Star'
- 3 = 'Class Act'
- 4 = 'Leading Light'
- 5 = 'Show Stopping'

Criteria is laid out for gradings 1, 3 and 5 (see page 14). 2 and 4 are not described (or there would just be too many words) but fall in between the grades on either side.



JUDGES' FEEDBACK

It is imperative criticism is delivered in a constructive manner. Judges are to be professional, courteous, and focus on the positive aspects of what a student did while performing.

Volunteer Judges should remember that the majority of the competitors do not progress beyond the Regional Final. It is therefore essential that judging is of as high a quality as possible at this stage in the competition to give all participants a sense of achievement and the awareness of having learned valuable skills from their experience. The students and their teachers will want to know what criteria were applied to find the best monologue/duologue.

Feedback is of two types: general and individual. The first must happen, the second can and should occur if time allows.

General Feedback happens after you have deliberated on your decisions and returned to the auditorium and BEFORE you announce the winners. This is your chance to offer constructive feedback and advice to all of the participants. This is often done by dividing up the feedback areas between the judges, a division of labour that should be sorted out before the performances start.

The Sandwich Method:

Before you provide feedback, try to have a clear idea of what you would like to convey to the students; be positive and critically encouraging.

Start by illustrating the key aspect(s) you were looking for.

Then mix in a couple of things that were particularly challenging about the role and suggest ways to improve, without giving the feeling that you are telling anybody off. Do not make specific references to the competencies or difficulties encountered by specific participants. Nor should specific examples of strong performances be highlighted.

Finish by returning to the praise and highlighting the significance of what they have just achieved.

For example: *I like the way that you effectively used the space in order to display the emotions your character felt. Going forward, if you utilised a couple of longer pauses, it could really add weight to the display of these emotions. However, the way that you identified and described the feelings of the character in the opening overall showed your wider understanding of the play and its context effectively. Well done.*

Individual Feedback is given after the results and presentation of awards. Some students will want to make a swift exit but for those who have the time, feedback can be a useful learning experience and students should be encouraged to request it.





There must be a teacher or parent present when you give individual feedback. The vast majority of students – qualifying for the next round or not – are just keen to find out how they can do better. Very few students, however, can occasionally be a little tense if they have not received the verdict which they wanted and it is sometimes useful to have another adult present.

The students, teachers and parents must accept the panel's decision and you should refer to your mark sheets for detailed comments, but the actors have no right to see them. If you have a queue, move swiftly remembering these young people often have a long journey home. If a school or students have to leave before receiving feedback but they have requested it, please do share any notes or comments with the ESU Competition Lead at the heat so they can add your feedback to their Heat Feedback Report. The ESU Competition Lead will complete this after each heat and send to the ESU Competitions Team with the results of the heat and any feedback or comments.

When providing feedback, consider:

- How well has this student fulfilled the role?
- In which areas did they do well?
- What other techniques could they have used to make their performance stronger?

If appropriate, give examples of how skills they demonstrated can be helpful in future careers, education etc. and give real-life examples.



FEEDBACK TEMPLATE



Use the this page to jot down notes using the below format and support you when delivering individual feedback:

MY FEEDBACK: the role of...

.....

What I was looking for; how my expectations were fulfilled:

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What other techniques could have made the role even better:

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Conclusion

How can the skills they have learned doing this competition benefit them in their future lives? If you have relevant experience in your job/career/life where public speaking has been a useful/important skill to you, do say so.



ESU COMPETITION LEAD

What is an ESU Competition Lead?

The ESU competition Lead is a designated ESU paid member of staff who will attend and oversee the running of each competition heat, online and in person. The competition Lead will also be on the judging panel with you. Unless there is a full judging panel of volunteers. Then the ESU Competition Lead will support with facilitation of the heat.

What will they do?

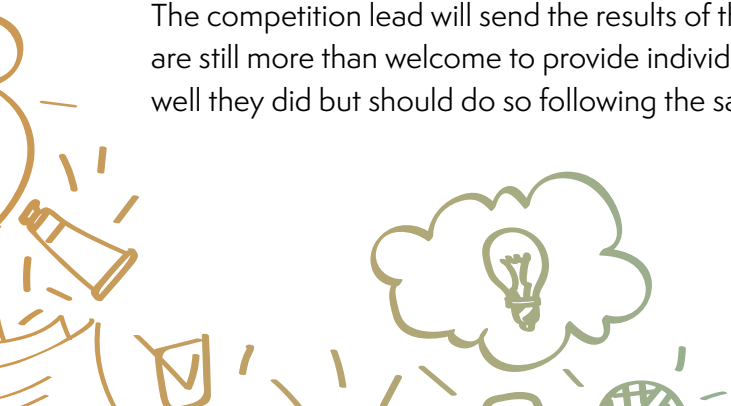
- Support and promote the charitable objectives of the ESU, acting as an ambassador for the organisation and promoting education programmes and opportunities to support our work.
- Assist the ESU Competitions Team in ensuring competition heats run smoothly, act as point of contact for schools and volunteer judges on the day of heats.
- Sit on judging panels at ESU competition heats (which may include acting as chair judge) offering fair, positive, constructive and unbiased feedback based in our judging criteria.
- Provide accurate heat results in a timely manner to the ESU Competitions Team.
- MC Zoom and in-person heats, engaging both students and audience whilst following ESU scripts.
- Support volunteer judges and ensure they have a positive and rewarding experience.
- Provide oversight of safeguarding requirements, in line with ESU policies.
- Signpost teachers and volunteers to resources and additional support, such as through the ESU website.
- Undertake training sessions for continual professional development.
- Follow and promote the ESU's safeguarding and equity policies.

Can I still take up specific roles on the panel?

Yes! This role is not designed to take away from any role that our volunteers may wish to fulfil, and neither will they act as Chair of Judges (unless appropriate within a particular panel). This role is there to enable our volunteer judges to focus on what they love to do - judging and MC'ing. If you request to be a volunteer judge, then you may act as Chair Judge and have the casting vote on split decisions. Unless there is a full judging panel of volunteers. Then the ESU Competition Lead will support with facilitation of the heat.

Who will provide feedback?

The competition lead will send the results of the heat to the competition team at the ESU. Volunteers are still more than welcome to provide individual feedback to students if the requests to hear how well they did but should do so following the sandwich method as stated above.





EQUITY POLICY

The English-Speaking Union is committed to providing opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds to access and develop communication skills. We expect all ESU events to be welcoming, inclusive, and to foster a safe and supportive atmosphere in which all individuals feel that they are able and encouraged to express themselves.

In such a safe space, individuals should feel that:

- They are afforded the same high level of respect that is due to all
- They are never in a position where they feel under physical or psychological threat
- They will never be judged on things they cannot change
- Their opinions and beliefs can be challenged, but will always be respected
- If their safety or well-being is threatened, others will listen and support them

The responsibility is placed on all individuals (students, school staff, ESU staff and members, judges etc.) to ensure that such a safe space is created and maintained. Any person who is found to breach these rules may be excluded from this or future events.

If any individual feels that these guidelines have been violated, whether the incident was directed against them or not, they should:

- Approach any member of ESU staff at the event
- Contact a member of staff at the ESU if an issue is not, or cannot, be resolved satisfactorily at the event
- If an issue remains unresolved, direct any complaints towards the ESU Safeguarding Lead, Gavin Illsley (gavin.illsley@esu.org) or to the deputy: Cait Lees (cait.lees@esu.org) or Tom Kirkham (thomas.kirkham@esu.org)



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

The ESU is a unique educational charity and membership organisation dedicated to giving young people the speaking and listening skills and cross-cultural understanding they need to thrive.

For more information about the ESU and our other educational opportunities, please email a member of the team at volunteering@esu.org or visit our website at esu.org.

You can also find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/the.esu
www.instagram.com/theenglishspeakingunion
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