



Drama Cocurricular Ensembles Program 2025

Rationale

The Drama Faculty plans and delivers experiences to develop student attainment and extend students' experiences with theatre craft, performance skills and production knowledge in line with the NSW Drama Syllabus for Stages 4-6.

The Drama Company Program is one of several co-curricular initiatives the Drama Faculty provides, along with Whole School productions (collaboratively produced across PA) and other Industry partnerships, the purpose of which, is to enhance and extend the experience and performance skills of all students who study Drama at Newtown High School of the Performing Arts.

The strength of the program is its ability to identify and cater for High Potential and Gifted students of all backgrounds, whether they enter the school through audition or from our local intake. Students are usually grouped into ensembles with their peers but can work in companies where year groups are mixed together on ability across stages. This is at the discretion of the Drama faculty and may shift from semester to semester.

The quality of the Company Program is maintained through a collaborative approach from the entire Drama staff and with industry professionals who are employed as director/producers to connect our students with professional production experience that extends students learning in a mode that sits outside the scope of the traditional drama class structure. Each company is assigned a director. A director may be an on-staff teacher or external director, employed by DoE through the school.

Participation Requirements

Drama companies collaborate with a Director to create a piece of work for the showcase seasons. Often these works are original pieces of theatre devised by the director or scripted by the director in collaboration with the cast.

This means that it is imperative that students attend all rehearsal times in order to participate to the full extent in the creative process. A student's inability to regularly attend company rehearsals may affect the size of their role in the final work.

As places in drama companies are limited, the Drama faculty works on a semester-by-semester basis, in order to accommodate as many students as possible. Auditions occur twice a year and students will be informed of the preparation requirements prior to the audition date.

In Year 7, to enter into the co-curricular program **all** students are welcome to audition regardless of their mode of entry into the school. It must be noted that the Drama co-curricular program is an extension to the Drama curriculum **not** a replacement and so in Years 8 and above, students must be enrolled in Drama as part of their pattern of study in order to audition.

NOTE: Students who are **not** enrolled in a Drama course may be considered for audition with express permission from the HT Drama.

Students are **not** required to participate in both semesters and are also **not guaranteed** to be included in casts for each semester. It is **expected** that auditioned Drama students will audition for a place in the program but it is not compulsory. Auditioned Drama students do not take preference over other students and are ranked solely on their performance in the workshop audition.

AUDITIONS

Drama Auditions are held in Year groups across all years. For all Drama auditions, students will perform in front of the audition panel (usually two Drama faculty representatives) and other students. All students must audition every year.

Selection criteria for the audition

Students will participate in a workshop that will accommodate activities designed to assess:

1. Clear Performance Skills – vocally and physically
2. Effective Characterisation – belief and conviction
3. Staging Choices and effective use of space
4. Ability to effectively collaborate with others
5. Focus and ability to follow instructions for the duration of the workshop.
6. Ability to effectively improvise. Make offers, extend situations and advance scene-work.

Students will be ranked on their marks for each of these areas.

When and where will the auditions be held?

Auditions will take place during Weeks 3 - 4 of Term 1 **2025** and then in the week 10 of Term 2. All auditions are held in the Drama Studios after school (3.30-5.00pm).

What do I need to prepare?

Auditions will be conducted in workshop settings. Students do not need to prepare but come ready to work in a range of groups and performance modes.

Students who are not successful in audition are advised to seek future opportunities to audition. Students may seek feedback from the HT Drama as to how they can improve in the future.

Students who are unsuccessful in their audition will be placed on a reserve list and should a place become available, students may be offered a place at the discretion of the HT Drama. Please note that at times it may not be possible to join a company who are well into a rehearsal process and so an offer is not always guaranteed.

PARTICIPATION

The Drama Companies within the Co-Curricular Program are a commitment for **2025**, and it is important and expected that students will:

- Attend each week on time and staying to the end of each rehearsal, establishing a reliable and committed pattern of attendance
- Participate fully, following direction instruction and working collegially with peers
- Participate respectfully and with a mindful attitude to the ensemble nature of the groups
- Be available for occasional weekend rehearsals. (Note: These are usually the few weeks leading up to the final performance week and are always communicated well in advance.)
- Attend all performances as required, whether onsite at NHSPA or offsite
- Communicate any unavoidable absences directly to the ensemble faculty contact with at least 24 hours' notice including on days when the student is absent from school for sickness or any other reason.
- Sign a Commitment Contract, which is an affirmation that students and parents agree with and understand these requirements.

Note that students may be replaced if they miss more than 3 rehearsals for any reason. This is at the discretion of the Head Teacher and company director.

Note that the school's Behaviour Management Plan applies to company rehearsals, events and performances, including HT and DP contracts where appropriate, and should students require a contract during a company rehearsal process, they may be removed from the company.

Attendance Requirements

In exceptional circumstances or in the case of illness/injury, advance notice of absence via email from the parent/caregiver should be given. The student must also discuss the absence with their director. Students who miss rehearsals without reasonable explanation will be replaced from the company with a suitable student from the reserve list.

Students are expected at performance events, whether they are within the school (such as Showcase) or at offsite events (such as competitions).

Levies

The fee for participation is **\$200** for each semester. Levies contribute to covering expenses such as directors, costume, maintenance of theatre equipment, copying and props. Once levies are received by the school for company participation, students will be placed on the official roll for the company. Non-payment will result in removal from the company roll.

We encourage you to communicate with the school if there are financial constraints to consider. Please contact Ms Argyri if you need to arrange for a payment plan to reconcile these levies in instalments.

Faculty contact

Please forward all concerns regarding issues with attendance or concerns to the HT Drama Mr Kavanagh

daniel.kavanagh@det.nsw.edu.au

EXTERNAL ENSEMBLES RUN BY OTHER ORGANISATIONS

NHSPA has an enriching Drama Co-Curricular program which extends and enriches students, developing their ensemble skills, performance skills and production experience.

Should a student choose to also apply to participate in **external organisations** that provide performance opportunities, such as The Arts Unit, ATYP, Schools Spectacular etc, it is understood that such participation is **extra** time and commitment to their responsibilities to NHSPA Curriculum and the Drama Co-curricular Program, as core experiences in their enrolled school.

In the specific case of The Arts Unit's ensembles, TAU's own policy is that any student participating in their weekly ensembles must also maintain membership of their school's equivalent ensemble, in order to maintain those skills in many settings.

"All high potential, audition-based programs require the School Principal to endorse the student's participation. It is certainly our expectation that students will be involved and active in their school community to qualify for our programs, as part of being a school-endorsed student. The Principal Endorsement process allows schools to assess the suitability of the student to represent the school in this way, according to the unique context." (Genevieve de Souza, Drama Performance Officer, The Arts Unit.)

Potential participation in Arts Unit ensembles and companies should be discussed and negotiated with The NHSPA Drama Faculty. Participation in the school's company program may be postponed in particular instances but on a case-to-case basis, based on a student's regular commitment. When considering applying for a TAU ensemble or event, students and parents/carers must check the following:

- Have considered affects to their attendance at school, so as not to fall below the minimum 85% attendance required. NHSPA expects 95% attendance as a standard goal for all students
- Have checked assessment calendar to ensure they can meet assessment requirements
- Have checked Drama Showcase dates as to avoid conflicts on performance and tech dates
- Have discussed with your company director impacts to any missed rehearsals
- Have sought application supporting teacher sign off from a Drama faculty teacher at NHSPA, as it is the school that wears the attendance implications

Where an endorsement form is sought from the school by a student for TAU (e.g. a regular weekly ensemble) or TAU on your behalf (e.g. Schools Spec), the Principal must endorse your TAU application. The Principal will not do so without the recommendation of the Drama Faculty.

In order for us to recommend that The Principal endorse your TAU application, you must:

- Have had a conversation with the Head Teacher Drama as to time involved and avoiding clashes. Where there is a clash, NHSPA must be prioritised
- Have had your TAU form endorsed by Drama Faculty and the Head Teacher Drama
- Have checked the following:
 - Have considered affects to their attendance at school, so as not to fall below the minimum 85% attendance required, remembering that NHSPA expects 95% attendance as a standard goal for all students
 - Have checked assessment calendar to ensure they can meet assessment requirements
 - Have checked Drama Showcase dates as to avoid conflicts on performance and tech dates
 - Have discussed with your company director impacts to any missed rehearsals