



AUSTRALIAN
GUILD OF MUSIC
& SPEECH

Speech

Syllabi

Information for Teachers



2026
agms.edu.au



AUSTRALIAN GUILD OF MUSIC & SPEECH

Speech Syllabi – Background Information for Teachers 2026

Australian Guild of Music & Speech Ltd
P.O. Box 864,
Upper Coomers QLD 4209
Australia

ABN: 22 664 671 701
W: agms.edu.au

FOREWORD

We welcome you to join the **Australian Guild of Music and Speech Ltd** (AGMS) family. Founded in 1969, the **AGMS** is a proud Australian, **education and examination body**.

“ *Empowering your success
is our passion* ”

The **AGMS** is driven to provide engaging, relevant, high-quality frameworks, to mould solid foundations for the next generations of musicians and speech & drama performers and educators.

The **AGMS** is unique in that there are not only examinations available for music and speech & drama students from introductory to advanced levels, including Certificate (C.Mus.AGMS), Associate (A.Mus.AGMS), Licentiate (L.Mus.AGMS) and Fellowship (F.Mus.AGMS) diplomas, however, then transitions to the **Australian Guild of Music Education Inc** (AGME) for tertiary level courses and qualifications, including Certificate I to IV, Advanced Diplomas, through to Bachelor of Music degree programs.

Below gives an insight into the values we share with our members:

Music/Speech.	We champion the inherent value of all types of music/speech and its enormous contribution to the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical development and self-esteem of individuals and communities. We leverage our position to spread the love of music/speech and drama.
Kindness.	Our approach is student-centric and, at all times, we are positive, encouraging, friendly and supportive. We assist the learner to recognise and celebrate their achievements.
Service.	We understand the needs of teachers and respond efficiently and flexibly. Our systems and processes are simple and make exam organisation and reporting easy.
Integrity.	Our examination process is academically sound, impartial, transparent and delivers assessments which are consistent with international standards.
Excellence.	We strive for best practice in examinations and only partner with the best examiners and educators.

Via an **Academic Advisory Committee**, the **AGMS** has formulated this syllabus.

We look forward to growing with you on your pathway of excellence.

Yours in the arts,
The AGMS Board of Directors.

CONTENTS

SPEECH SYLLABI – BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
OBTAIN THE SYLLABUS DOCUMENTS	5
STRUCTURE OF THE SPEECH SYLLABUS PACKAGE	5
PROFESSIONAL SPEECH DIPLOMAS CONFERRED BY THE AGMS	6
GRADE SET	6
NOTES FOR TEACHERS	7
SUGGESTED REFERENCE BOOKS	10

SPEECH SYLLABI – BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



INTRODUCTION

Speech is interwoven with every facet of life.

Language is not only a means of communication but is also a vehicle for thought. Coherent thought becomes impossible without adequate words.

The vocal expression of the words of others releases the performer from him or herself and so heightens perception and deepens sensitivity.

It is at once an experience and a discipline which absorbs the whole energy and being.

Voice and language are the instruments of speech. Mastery over both is essential if the speaker is to express with clarity and confidence the thoughts of his own mind, and interpret with beauty and meaning, the thoughts of others.

From the Guild's 1988 syllabus

Written by the late Hilda Mitz

Speech teacher, adjudicator, Guild examiner, mentor

OBTAIN THE SYLLABUS DOCUMENTS

Download the syllabi as PDF files from the **AGMS** website using this link:

agms.edu.au

STRUCTURE OF THE SPEECH SYLLABUS PACKAGE

- Speech Syllabi Background Information for Teachers
- Syllabus no 1: Practical Speech and Drama
- Syllabus no 2: Speech and Drama Performance
- Syllabus no 3: Theory of Speech and Drama
- Syllabus no 4: Communication and Public Speaking

PROFESSIONAL SPEECH DIPLOMAS CONFERRED BY THE AGMS

Certificate Performer	C.S.D.AGMS
Associate Performer	A.S.D.AGMS
Associate Teacher	A.T.A.S.D.AGMS
Associate Communication and Public Speaking	A.S.D.AGMS
Associate Teacher Communication and Public Speaking	A.S.D.AGMS
Licentiate Performer	L.S.D.AGMS
Licentiate Teacher	L.T.S.D.AGMS
Licentiate Creative Drama	L.S.D.AGMS
Fellowship	F.S.D.AGMS

GRADE SET

The Grade Set below must be read in conjunction with each individual exam level, where any variations of the pass mark are stated.

100–95	High Distinction
94–90	Distinction
89–85	A Honours
84–80	B+ Credit
79–75	B Credit
74–70	C+ Pass
6–65	C Pass
64–0	NGS Not Grade Standard

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Practical Examinations

General

- The Guild examinations for individuals are mostly set to standard rather than age, as a student beginning to study Speech may be perhaps 6 years old, 16, or even 66 years of age.
- All items are prepared unless specified otherwise. Where items are impromptu, this is stated. Other terms such as 'examiner's choice' or 'The examiner will ask the candidate questions ...' indicate to teachers that student preparation is required, and that the examiner will, for example, select from a supplied list of mimes, or ask questions he/she deems appropriate.
- Prepared prose, poetry and drama items are to be memorised.
- When two or more texts are chosen for a particular practical exam, the teacher and student should aim to vary the themes and styles to allow the candidate to illustrate his/her versatility in speaking and acting skills.
- Entering/leaving the examination room
 - Individual candidates entering/leaving the examination room are to address/thank the examiner in a formal yet friendly way.
 - Choirs will enter/leave the examination room as a whole, and are to address/thank the examiner in unison.
- Presentation of an ID is not required.
- Students must know the order of items in their exam, and be prepared to commence each item when the examiner is ready.
- Candidates should announce both title and author for every item. No further explanation is required.
- Students should not bow as this is not a public performance, nor should they say thank you after each item.
- Movement is essential in some items such as drama, mime and improvisation. Adequate space must be made available, so students are not disadvantaged.
- No props or costume changes are permitted.
- Time limit maximums and minimums must be observed.
- Candidates may sit between items.

Selection of materials

- When selecting material to be used in (for example) verse, prose and drama selections, teachers should ensure that these
 - are of a suitable literary standard
 - suit the age and ability of the candidate
 - suit the examination level and
 - do not include obscenities or inappropriate content.
- Hard copies of selections for recitations (poetry, prose, drama) must be brought to the examination, with full referencing of sources including title and author.
- All books (for readings and prose recitation items) must have been read by the candidate prior to the examination. In practical exams, students must read from the actual book.

Specific to Online exams

- The examiner must have a view of the candidate's full body, head to toe. Please ensure that an allowance is made for candidates to move and still be visible to the examiner. Teachers must prepare students to commence the exam in the correct position, so that time is not wasted asking candidates to move so they can be seen in full.
- Audio quality must be sufficient for assessment to be possible.
- Third parties are not permitted to be present during exams.
- Candidates should enter the exam room alone.
- Copies of selections for recitations are to be provided electronically; the AGMS will advise candidates/teachers of the process.
- For some impromptu reading items, the examiner will send the reading to the candidate via email once the exam has commenced.
 - These file attachments will be in PDF format.
 - Candidates must provide their email address together with the copies of selections for recitations.
 - Candidates must have a tablet or phone ready and their email account open at the commencement of the examination. A tablet may be a better option than a phone, due to screen size.
- Specific instructions regarding online exams will be shown in **red**.

Theory Examinations

- Compulsory theory examinations commence:
 - at Grade 6 for Syllabus 1, Speech and Drama
 - at Proficiency for Syllabus 4, Communication and Public Speaking, and
 - at Proficiency for Syllabus 5, Communication and Public Speaking for Business.
- Where theory exams are compulsory, both theory and practical examination/s (plus any other components such as Teaching Practice) must be passed for the Grade/Certificate/Diploma to be considered completed.
- Poor quality handwriting is not acceptable.
- Answers to each question are to begin on a new page.

Diploma Examinations

- Associate Diploma examinations should not be looked upon as the 'next grade'.
- Vocal maturity, a balanced programme and a professional standard will be expected in all Diploma practical examinations.
- An extensive reading and study programme should be undertaken before entering for any Diploma examination. Required literary standards will rise markedly from Proficiency Certificate to Diploma level.
- The work must reveal expertise in speech technique, artistry and deliverance.
- No candidate can enter for any Associate Diploma until a minimum of 12 months has passed after attaining the Proficiency Certificate.
- No candidate can enter for the Licentiate Diploma until a minimum of 12 months has passed after attaining the Associate Diploma.
- Please note the prerequisites and minimum age requirements for Proficiency and Diploma levels. These are noted on each syllabus.

Examination Dates

- Syllabus 1, 2, 4, and 6 practical examinations for individuals
 - Examinations up to and including Grade/Level/Stage 7 are conducted twice a year, usually in June and October/November.
 - Examinations higher than Grade/Level/Stage 7 are conducted once a year usually in October/November.
- Syllabus 3 practical examinations for individuals
 - Examinations at all levels are conducted twice a year, usually in June and October/November.
- Syllabus 1 and 4 theory examinations for individuals
 - Examinations at all levels are conducted once a year usually in May/June.

SUGGESTED REFERENCE BOOKS

Notes:

- Students and teachers are advised that many of the following books may be found on the shelves of public and regional libraries.
- The following list is by no means exhaustive. Teachers and students should constantly seek books which fill their specific requirements.
- It is inevitable in any contemporary syllabus that publications change, and some will go out of print. This is unfortunate but a circumstance over which we have no control.

Essential Reading

Practical Speech Training	H Johnson
The Art of Speech.....	D Krummel

General

A Dictionary of Literary Terms	J Cuddon
A Year's Course in Speech Training.....	A McAllister
Common Ground: a Course in Communication	R Sadler & K Tucker
Correct Form.....	Debrett's
Essay Writing for Students.....	J Clancy & B Ballard
Essentials of General Speech Communication.....	A Baird et al
How to Perform under Pressure	E Day
Mind the Stop	G Carey
Punctuation.....	C Whitaker-Wilson
Speech and Drama in the Secondary School (series).....	J Dyce
Speech for Life	C Burniston
Speech Training: a Handbook for Students.....	M Horner
The Art of Speech.....	Kathleen Rich
The Way to Good Speech.....	B Storey

Voice

Clear Speech	M Morrison
Finding Your Voice	B Houseman
The Voice Book	M McCallion
Voice and the Actor	C Berry
Voice Production and Speech	G Colson
Your Voice and How to Use it	C Berry

Phonetics/Linguistics/Pronunciation

An Outline of English Phonetics	D Jones
Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary.....	D Jones
Introducing Phonetics, Books 1 & 2	G Cochrane & M McCallum
Introduction to Linguistics: an Australian perspective	J Bernard & A Delbridge
Speaking our Language: the story of Australian English	B Moore
The Changing English Language	B Foster
The Mother Tongue	B Bryson
The Pattern of Spoken English	B Storey
The Pronunciation of English	D Jones

Phonetics/Linguistics/Pronunciation: continued

The Pronunciation of English in Australia	A Mitchell
The Story of English	R McCrum et al
The Treasure of our Tongue.....	L Barnett

Literature

A Short History of English Literature.....	B Evans
Australian Poets and their Works	W Wilde
Australia's Writers	G Smith
The Anatomy of Prose	M Boulton
The Literature of Australia	G Dutton (Ed)
The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature	W Wilde et al
The Penguin New Literary History of Australia	L Hergenhan
Twentieth Century Children's Writers	D Kirkpatrick

Poetry

Art of Versification and Technicalities of Poetry.....	R Brewer
Poetry Reading and Understanding	K Cross & D Marsh
Poetry Speaking for Children	M Gullan
Spoken Poetry in Schools.....	M Gullan
The Albatross Book of Living Verse.....	L Untermeyer (Ed)
The Anatomy of Poetry	M Boulton
The Penguin Book of Australian Verse.....	Harry Heseltine (Ed)
The Poet's Manual and Rhyming Dictionary	F Stillman

Drama

A History of the Theatre	G Wickham
A Pictorial Companion to Shakespeare's Plays	R Tanich
Acting and Stagecraft Made Simple.....	D Bowskill
An Introduction to the Greek Theatre	P Arnott
Child Drama	P Slade
Commedia dell'arte: An Actor's Handbook	J Rudlin
Companion to the Theatre.....	P Thompson & G Salgado
Costumes for the Stage.....	S Jackson
Costume Handbook	A Sinclair
Drama Workshop (series)	E de Fossard
In Shakespeare's Playhouse (series)	R Watkins & J Lemmon
Mime: Basic for Beginners	C and M Straub
Players of Shakespeare	P Brockbank (Ed)
Playing Period Plays	L Oxenford
Renaissance Drama and a Modern Audience	M Scott
Shakespeare.....	I Brown
Shakespeare: the Poet and his Background.....	P Quennell
Stepping Out	J Howe
The Actor and his Text	C Berry
The Anatomy of Drama.....	M Boulton
The Greeks	H Kitto

The Mask Handbook	A Sinclair
The Puppetry Handbook	A Sinclair
The Wonderful World of the Theatre	J Priestly
Theatre (World of Culture)	J Burdich
Who's Who in Shakespeare	P Quennell

Public Speaking

A Guide to Modern Etiquette	I Buttrose
A Lazy Man's Guide to Public Speaking.....	M Le Clair & P Fortune
Body Language.....	A Pease
Chairing and Running Meetings.....	N Valentine
Communicating as Professionals	T Mohan et al
Communication through the Mass Media	R Berry
Confident Public Speaking	C Godefroy & S Barrat-Godefroy
Corporate Communication	B McKenna et al
Debating and Public Speaking.....	N Gunther
Debrett's Guide to Speaking in Public.....	C McKenzie
How to overcome Nervous Tension and Speak Well in Public	A Tack
Lend me your Ears: Great Speeches in History	W Safire
Making Effective Presentations	R Nelson and J Wallick
Public Speaking	M Gray
Public Speaking for Dummies	M Kushner
Say it with Power and Confidence	P Collins
Speak to Me	P Sternberg
Speak with Confidence	M Dayme
Speaking in Public	N Valentine
The Art of Effective Speaking.....	N Gunther
The Art of Speaking Made Simple.....	W Gondin et al
The Australian Debater	A Missen
The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches.....	B MacArthur (Ed)
What do you Say?	A Armitage
Words that Work	S Doenau

PowerPoint

Create Electronic Presentations.....	Software Publications
Make a Presentation.....	Software Publications
PowerPoint Presentations that Sell	A B Coper
Simple Strategies for Effective PowerPoint Presentations	N Canavor and C Meirowitz
The Presentation Coach.....	G Davies
The Right way to use PowerPoint in your Presentations.....	J Weissman

Choral Speaking

Choral Speaking	M Gullan
-----------------------	----------

Teaching and Learning

- How Children Fail J Holt
How Children Learn J Holt
Is Your Child's Speech Normal? J Eisonson
Psychology in the Classroom R Dreikurs & L Grey
Why Johnny Can't Read