

ESU PERFORMING SHAKESPEARE COMPETITION

School
Handbook
2019-20



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION
discovering voices

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPETITION

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

Dear Judge,

This short guide provides an introduction to the competition for teachers and students in participating schools to help you understand the format, the judging process and the organisation of the competition as it progresses throughout the school year.

This is the ESU's fastest-growing competition, now entering its ninth successive year. 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.

Whether you are new to the competition or an old hand, we hope this handbook will answer and questions you might have. You will find supporting material on our website at **esu.org/competitions/performing-shakespeare**

I hope that your school enjoys taking part. Do contact me if you have any concerns or need any clarification.

Matthew Christmas

Lead Organiser

matthew.christmas@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 and is a mixture of workshops and performances. 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, the festival run by the Shakespeare Schools Foundation and school educational programmes for schools run by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and by theatre companies. The ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition is kindly supported by resources kindly provided by the Royal Shakespeare Company Education Department.

Why enter?

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

- They develop confidence in their oracy skills by using Shakespeare's texts as a starting point for analysis and for development of their expression and delivery skills
- They receive an excellent introduction to Shakespeare's plays and enhance their understanding and enjoyment of Shakespeare through the use of speaking and listening skills
- They also benefit from an introduction to performing Shakespeare and an opportunity to develop their acting skills further via workshop opportunities and in front of a live audience

Who can enter?

- All state and independent schools in England and Wales
- Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils (Key Stage 3, ages 11-14)
- A school may enter as many monologue and duologue performances as it wishes





KEY DATES

June 2019: Registration opens online: schools fill out a short form and will receive immediate confirmation that their registration has been received

Monday, 16 December 2019: Registration closes to schools; late admissions may be made at the discretion of the lead organiser

Friday, 10 January 2020: The lead organiser will communicate to each school how many students it may put through to the area final

January – February 2020: Round One: internal school selection processes take place

Friday, 28 February 2020: Deadline for schools to inform the Area Organiser of the student(s) who have qualified for Round Two: area final

Monday, 16 March – Wednesday, 13 May 2020: ESU holds area finals

June (date tbc): Grand Final for England and Wales – this year to be held in Stratford-Upon-Avon



FORMAT

The competition has three rounds:

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


- Schools run their own internal competitions using the ESU's judging criteria, but without the specific involvement of ESU staff and volunteers as these entries are not judged by the ESU
- There is a two-month window to do this in January and February
- There are no longer any video entries
- 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
 - Students are encouraged to wear all black clothing, but this is not a requirement
- Before the extract is acted, the pupil should introduce the piece with details of the play; this should be no longer than two minutes
- The acting should be no longer than three minutes in duration
- The overall timing of each entry will, therefore, be of no longer than 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 round two



Round Two: an area final

- The area finals are organised by ESU local volunteers on behalf of a wider geographical area
- There are as many area finals across England and Wales as the school entries merit
- There can be up to 24 performances (whatever combination of monologues and duologues are selected) in each area final
- Area finals take place between March and May
- Date and venues will be announced in January once registration has closed
- All area finalists take part in an acting workshop as part of the area final
- This workshop will be approximately 1 hour long and will take place before the performances start
- The format of oracy introduction, followed by acting, as well as the timings are the same for round two as they were in round one
- This will be an educational workshop which is key to the ESU Education Strategy's aims of broadening access to our competitions and adding educational value.
- Normally, the two top entries from each area final proceed to round three; this may vary in 2019-20 if a considerably increased entry leads to a need for more area finals than anticipated
- Two judges' commendation winners (runners-up) will also be selected; they will proceed to round three if the winning entries are unable to attend

Round Three: The grand final for England and Wales

- This is organised by the ESU lead organiser
 - This will take place in Stratford-Upon-Avon and should be in late June
 - Precise date and venue is still to be confirmed
 - There will be another workshop prior to the grand final performances
 - The format of oracy introduction, followed by acting, as well as the timings are the same for round three as they were in rounds one and two
 - There can be up to 24 performances (whatever combination of monologues and duologues are selected from the area finals) in the grand final
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GENDER, DIVERSITY & CLOTHING

Gender

The competition is not gendered in any way. A student of any gender – and the ESU does not accept a binary definition of gender – can play a character of any gender. Not presenting as or looking like the gender of the character being played does not make the actor's performance less convincing.

While participants should feel free to play any characters whom they find interesting, it may be the case that performers feel a connection to a character of their own gender. This is completely understandable.

Judges understand, for instance, that as many Shakespearian fight scenes are performed by male characters, this means that those participants who are boys are disproportionately likely to perform these. In addition, judges will appreciate that a romance scene is not inherently less powerful than a death scene. It is also important for all to remember that having a deep voice is not the equivalent of nor a substitute for stage presence or 'gravitas'. Likewise, displaying emotion when acting is not to be seen as a female trait. Participants are not judged on appearance, nor on the type of monologue or duologues they perform, but on how well they perform them.



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 area and grand finals is not required and should play no part in judging decisions.

All performers, whatever their gender, should wear clothing that they feel confident in. Good examples include leggings, tracksuit trousers, t-shirts, hoodies and trainers. It is also sensible to ensure that hair, where possible, is tied back so that it does not fall across the face and blur the actor's interpretation of the piece.



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
- Acting

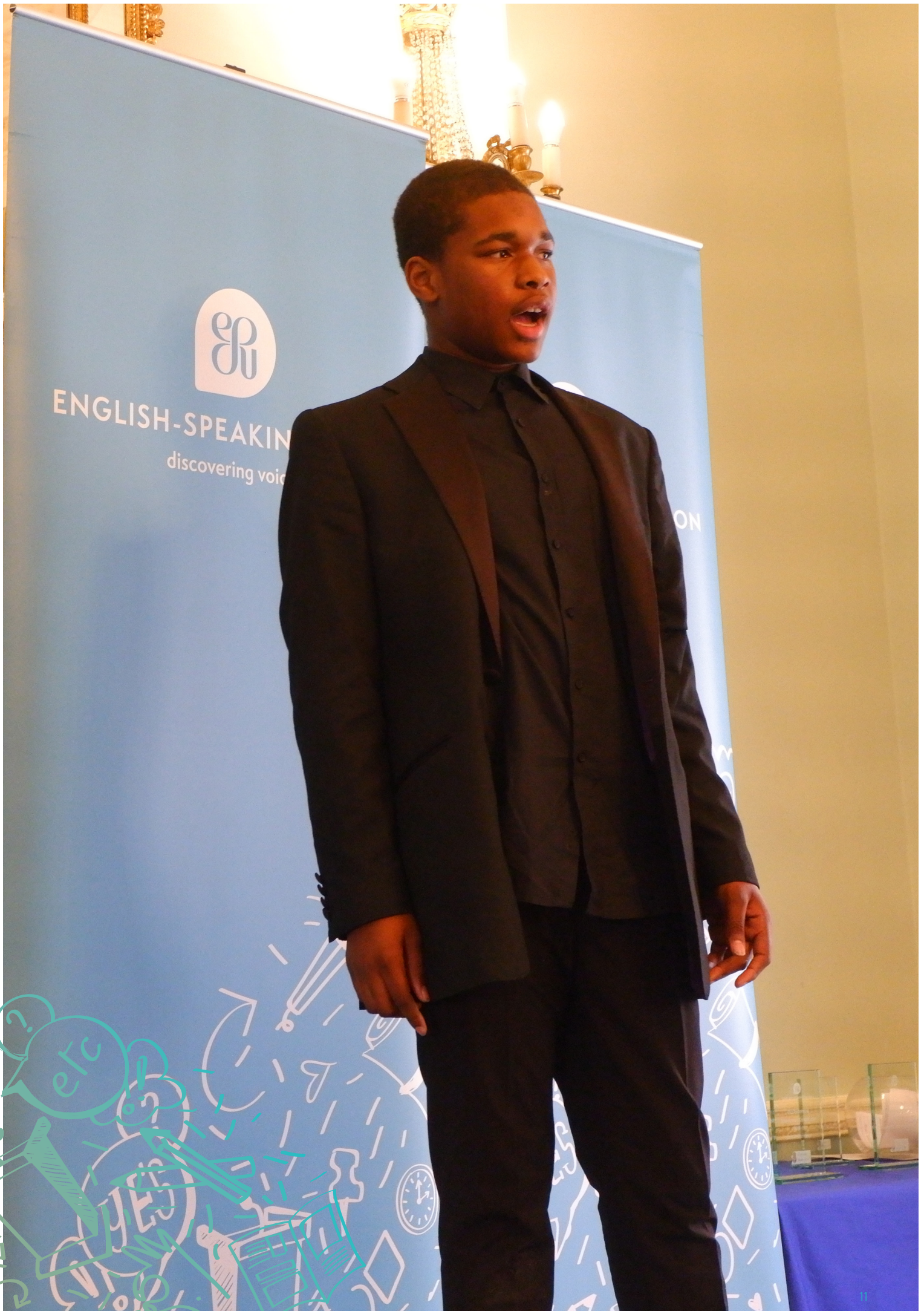
Both elements are covered by the three minutes of monologue or duologue.

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

This should include:

- > the details of the play and scene selected
- > the name of the character(s) they are playing
- > an answer to the question 'I/We chose this piece because'
- > what they aim to show/achieve by the way they play the scene





MARKING CRITERIA

The marking criteria was completely rewritten in 2018-19 with the help of a group of drama teachers and actors, as well as advice from some ESU area organisers.

It takes into account the Arts Council Level Descriptors for Key Stage 3 Drama, as well as GCSE marking schemes.

There are four categories:

- > Vocal skills
- > Physical and technical skills
- > Interpretation of text
- > Success in realising artistic intention

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.

A List of Performance Choices

Performers are expected to 'colour' their performance by bringing vocal and/or physical skills to bear on the 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.

Vocal Skills

the performer modifies his/her use of:

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

Physical & Technical Skills

the performer modifies his/her use of:

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



MARKING CRITERIA

Performance	1 (Emerging Talent)	2	→ 3 (Class Act)	4	→ 5 (Show Stopping)
Vocal Skills	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > project their voice so that it fills most of the space > use pauses in a way which may seem at odds with the context of the piece > deliver the text acknowledging the metre of the piece in places 	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > project their voice so that it fills the entire space at moments throughout the performance > use pauses at one or more significant moments > deliver the text structuring their performance in accordance with the metre of the piece 	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > project their voice so that it fills the entire space throughout the performance > use pauses to structure their performance > deliver the text drawing upon the metre of the piece to communicate a coherent sense of character and situation 	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > apply an extensive range of performance choices to bring nuance, purpose and add resonance to the interpretation of character and situation > use stillness to structure their performance > orientate their entire performance 'audience out' and using space in an inventive way <p>(Duologue only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The performers will collaborate in an inventive way to bring energy and definition to the interpretation of characters and situation 	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > project their voice so that it fills the entire space throughout the performance > use pauses to structure their performance > deliver the text drawing upon the metre of the piece to communicate a coherent sense of character and situation
Physical and Technical Skills	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > apply a narrow range of performance choices > use stillness in a way which may seem at odds with the context of the piece > orientate most of their performance 'audience out' <p>(Duologue only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The performers will demonstrate the ability to support each other at moments throughout the performance 	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > apply a wide range of performance choices with purpose to affect a clear, confident and consistent interpretation of character and situation > use stillness at one or more significant moments > orientate their entire performance 'audience out' <p>(Duologue only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The performers will support each other throughout the performance 	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > project their voice so that it fills the entire space throughout the performance > use pauses at one or more significant moments > deliver the text structuring their performance in accordance with the metre of the piece 	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > apply an extensive range of performance choices to bring nuance, purpose and add resonance to the interpretation of character and situation > use stillness to structure their performance > orientate their entire performance 'audience out' and using space in an inventive way <p>(Duologue only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The performers will collaborate in an inventive way to bring energy and definition to the interpretation of characters and situation 	<p>The performer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > project their voice so that it fills the entire space throughout the performance > use pauses to structure their performance > deliver the text drawing upon the metre of the piece to communicate a coherent sense of character and situation
Interpretation of Text	<p>The performer interprets the text with limited inventiveness to demonstrate some understanding</p>	<p>The performer interprets the text with a degree of inventiveness to demonstrate a reasonable understanding</p>	<p>The performer interprets the text with a degree of inventiveness to demonstrate a reasonable understanding</p>	<p>The performer interprets the text with great inventiveness to demonstrate a thorough understanding and generate an impactful piece of theatre.</p>	<p>The performer interprets the text with great inventiveness to demonstrate a thorough understanding and generate an impactful piece of theatre.</p>
Success in Realising Artistic Intention	<p>The performer enjoys limited success in realising his/her artistic intention as stated in their introduction</p>	<p>Throughout the performance, the performer realises his/her intention frequently</p>	<p>Throughout the performance, the performer realises his/her intention frequently</p>	<p>In terms of his/her artistic intention, the performer enjoys a high level of success</p>	<p>In terms of his/her artistic intention, the performer enjoys a high level of success</p>

WHATS NEXT?

- > Register your school
- > Wait to hear from the lead organiser
- > Advertise the event in school
- > Help pupils to select and rehearse their pieces:
 - either use ones from the Resources Section of the ESU Performing Shakespeare webpage
 - or choose any monologue or duologue from any of Shakespeare's 37 plays
- > Hold an internal competition to select your very best students for the area final

If you have any queries or concerns, please do contact me directly. Good luck!

Matthew Christmas

Lead Organiser: Performing Shakespeare

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 one of the deputies: Matthew Christmas (matthew.christmas@esu.org); Jo Gough (josephine.gough@esu.org); or Robert Saull (robert.saull@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 **competitions@esu.org** or visit our website at **esu.org**.

You can also find us on Facebook at **facebook.com/the.esu** or on Twitter **[@TheESU/@ESUdebate](https://twitter.com/TheESU)**



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