

A-level Drama and Theatre Notes and guidance: Practical guidance

Component 2: Creating original drama (7262/C)

Contents

You can use the title links to jump directly to the different sections of this A-level Drama and Theatre Notes and guidance: Practical guidance resource.

Section	Page
Introduction	3
Groups	3
Non examinees	3
Choice of practitioners	4
Stimulus	5
Working notebook section 1	5
Format of the Working notebook	6
The devising process	7
Working notebook section 2	8
Timing requirements	9
Performance	9
Filming	10
Marking work	10
Paperwork	11
Submitting work	11
Feedback	11
NEA advisors	12

Introduction

The non-exam assessment (NEA) in A-level Drama and Theatre consists of two components. This guidance applies to Component 2: Creating original drama. This component is assessed by the centre and externally moderated. The deadline for submission of the centre's marks for this component is 15 May.

For this component students are asked to devise a piece of original drama based on a stimulus of their choosing and informed by the work of one of the prescribed theatre practitioners. Students may work as a performer, a director, or as a designer of lighting, sound, set, costume or puppet. The process of creating the work is documented in the student's Working notebook, which must be separated into two sections: Section 1 'Rationale and research' and Section 2 'Development and refinement'.

All quotations in bold type are taken from the [Specification](#).

Groups

Students must work in a group consisting of at least two members for this component. This is an Ofqual requirement, and students are not permitted to work by themselves.

There must be between two and six performers in the group, and in addition the group may include one each of the following: lighting designer, sound designer, set designer, costume designer, puppet designer, or director.

Students choosing a design specialism should be part of the group and its decision making processes throughout.

Non-examinees

“Non-examinees are permitted to perform alongside performance candidates, but only where absolutely necessary in order to make the group size up to the minimum of performers. They must be students not staff.”

Non-examinees can be used to cover for the injury, illness or other authorised absence of a performer. A non-examinee may also be used in the following situation: there is only one student taking the Drama examination that year. In this case, one non-examinee (a fellow student) may join the examined student to make a group of two – the smallest group size permitted.

In all situations, a covering letter on headed paper must be included in the paperwork for the moderator that clearly explains the presence of any non-examinee. This includes any student who has left the course since the work was performed.

Choice of practitioners

“Each student must choose a different practitioner to that chosen for Component 3. Performers and director in the same group must select the same practitioner. Designers may select different practitioners. All practitioner choices must be compatible.”

The list of prescribed theatre practitioners can be found in the Specification. Ideally the students will have been taught their practitioner in detail, covering at least the following areas, as outlined in the Specification:

- the social, cultural and historical context in which the practitioner is/was working
- their theatrical purpose and practice
- their artistic intentions
- the innovative nature of their approach
- their working methods
- their theatrical style
- their collaboration with/influence on other practitioners.

This will ensure that students are well-equipped to make their choice of practitioner and of stimulus. The practitioner should be chosen at the start of the process, rather than after the choice of stimulus. It is useful for students to consider the type of stimulus used by their chosen practitioner.

It is important that students apply the methodology of the chosen practitioner throughout the devising process. In this way, the practitioner’s working practices underpin all the artistic choices that the students make, leading to a finished piece that is discernibly influenced by the nominated practitioner. The content of the piece should be consonant with the theatrical aims, usual practice and style of the practitioner. For example, if using Brecht there should be a dialectical or politically didactic underpinning of the piece; if using Frantic Assembly there should be physical exploration and communication of the frailties of the human condition and relationships.

Where students appear to have worked through a list of a practitioner’s ‘features’ to create a pastiche of ‘signature’ effects, the results can lack cohesion and authenticity. Students choosing a design specialism may use the same practitioner as the performers/director in their group, or they may use a compatible practitioner. Examples of compatible practitioners might include: Gareth Fry and Complicité, Paule Constable and Katie Mitchell, Bill Mitchell and Kneehigh etc.

Stimulus

“The stimulus/stimuli for the devised piece must be chosen by the students.”

The stimulus can be anything – there is no restriction. Examples could include: a news story, a folk story, a piece of visual art, a historical event, a work of literature etc. Students tend to be more successful working with a clearly defined stimulus. Where a looser ‘thematic’ approach is taken, the resulting piece often lacks dramatic focus and effectiveness.

It is best where students are enthused about their choice of stimulus and can relate it to clear dramatic intentions.

Working notebook section 1

“In this section students should define their inspiration for the devised piece and document their influences. They should outline their personal dramatic aims and objectives and those agreed upon by the devising group.”

It makes sense for students to write this section near the beginning of the devising process. Students should take a positive approach and should not include references to stimuli and practitioners that have been discarded.

The rationale for the student’s choice of stimulus/starting point should convey their enthusiasm and attraction to the particular story/artwork/theme etc chosen.

Students should explain their influences and how they will affect the piece, with specific examples. Their influences should cover research, the chosen practitioner and **relevant** live theatre productions.

Research can take a variety of forms including reading texts, conducting interviews, viewing documentaries etc. Students should be encouraged to apply this work directly to their work as a theatre maker.

The chosen practitioner’s influence should be explained through specific choices the student and the group are making in relation to the developing piece, rather than through a listing of facts or biographical accounts.

Live theatre productions include digital theatre and should be relevant to the student’s practitioner/choice of topic. For example, students choosing Emma Rice as their practitioner could refer to productions by Wise Children and/or Kneehigh. Students choosing Bertolt Brecht as a practitioner should have seen his plays in production, and should be particularly wary of relying solely on touring companies who adapt some of Brecht’s techniques.

Students should see and refer to a number of relevant theatre productions.

Stylistic and contextual factors that the students need to take into account will vary widely depending on the choice of practitioner, stimulus and time period of their piece. Examples might include student's explanation of how they are practically applying historical context if they are using a folk tale, their explanation of how they are applying expressionism if their practitioner is Shared Experience etc.

Students must define both their **individual dramatic aims and intentions** and the **dramatic aims and intentions of the piece**. These should be distinct from each other and should demonstrate the student's awareness of the connection between theory and practice, and how they are creating meaning theatrically on stage. These should then form the basis for their comparative comments in Section 2 of the Working notebook.

Format of the Working notebook

The Working notebook can be:

- entirely written
- written with accompanying images and/or cue sheets
- written and accompanied by recordings
- entirely recorded.

If entirely written, each section of the Working notebook should be around 800 to 1200 words, and should not exceed 3000 words in total. This word limit is an absolute maximum (bibliographies and headings do not need to be counted, but any quotation does). Words beyond this limit of 3000 cannot be credited.

Images should be used with care, and only used to demonstrate a point that cannot be made with words. Images (including photographs, sketches, drawings, and cue-sheets) should always be annotated. It is generally recommended that this is an approach used by non-performers.

For students using images, each section of the Working notebook should be around 4 to 7 A4 sides, and should not exceed 20 A4 sides in total. Students should still not exceed 3000 words in total, including their annotations.

Recordings can be audio, visual or audio-visual. If combining this work with written work, each section of the Working notebook should be 400 to 600 words combined with 4 to 6 minutes recorded work, and should not exceed 2000 written words combined with 15 minutes in total. Students choosing to submit an entirely recorded Working notebook should use around 6 to 8 minutes of material for each of the 2 sections, and should not exceed 20 minutes in total.

The devising process

“It is expected that during the rehearsal process teachers will support students through the provision of workshops. Teachers may provide guidance and support to students so that they are clear about the requirements of the task they need to undertake and the marking criteria that will be used. Teachers must not direct the performance under any circumstances.”

“Students do not have to be directly supervised at all times during performance preparation but there must be adequate supervision to ensure that work can be authenticated.”

During the devising process, students should be encouraged to keep in mind the approach of their chosen practitioner. It might be helpful for students to consider: how their chosen practitioner conducted rehearsal/devising sessions, practical tasks they used, and their approach to generating ideas, solving ‘problems’, testing ideas etc.

It can also be helpful for students to refer to the requirements of the Working notebook Section 2, where they must give an explanation of collaborative and independent decision making in relation to their ideas, and of the decisions they have made in relation to the theatrical skill. Noting examples of these incidences can be very helpful when writing the Working notebook.

Design students should be a part of the group’s decision making process, and be able to evidence moments of collaborative decision making.

Working notebook section 2

“In this section students should explain how they developed and refined their work during the devising process, reflection on their decision making along the way.

They should demonstrate how theory has informed their practical work.

Students should contrast the outcome of the final piece with their original aims and intentions, identifying how and why these changed during the devising process.”

Students must explain **the approach they have taken**, ie how they got started in generating practical ideas and how they have created the piece. This approach should mirror the approach of their chosen practitioner.

Students must explain **their collaborative and independent decision making in relation to their evolving ideas**. Students should give specific examples of moments where ideas were experimented with, developed and refined. For example, for a student working as a performer this could involve giving a detailed explanation of how a sequence of physical theatre was built up and developed in order to convey the group’s aims, showing how theory connected to practice, referring to the chosen practitioner’s practice and to an example of both types of decision making.

For a lighting design student, this could involve explaining how they have experimented with different lighting states to achieve different effects for a particular scene, showing how theory connected to practice, referring to the chosen practitioner’s practice and to an example of both types of decision making.

Students must explain and give some examples of **the decisions they have made in the application of their theatrical skills**. Performing students should not simply describe their performance in great detail, but give detailed explanations of how they have created and arrived at their performance. For example, a student using Artaud as their practitioner could give some examples of how they have worked on his ideas about breath as a performer throughout the devising process. A costume design student might explain and give examples of how their ability to select appropriate fabric, textures, trimmings and accessories for the design has developed and been refined.

Section 3.4 of the Specification, **“Guidance on theatrical skills”**, contains detailed lists of the skills required for each specialism, and should be referred to throughout the process.

Students should explain **their final ideas for the devised performance, identifying how these ideas connect theory and practice**. This is an opportunity for the student to explain the effects they believe are being created through the finished piece.

Finally, students are required **to compare the outcome of the final devised performance with the initial aims and intentions for the piece**. Students should refer to their aims and intentions from Section 1 of their Working notebook, and identify where and why elements have changed throughout the process. Students should ensure that their focus is on their

theatrical practice; accounts of issues within the group or time constraints do not attract credit.

Timing requirements

A group of 2 performers should create a piece that runs between 5 and 10 minutes long. They should not go over ten minutes.

A group of 3 to 6 performers should create a piece that runs between 6 and 30 minutes long.

“For group performances playing time for each performance should reflect the number of performance students in the group. For example, a group with six performance students should work to the upper time limit.”

Teachers are required to ensure minimum performance times are met.”

Performance length is flexible within the time limit set, and an appropriate length will vary depending on the style of the piece. For example, a piece informed by Gecko, where a group of 4 are all on stage throughout a 15 minute piece, may well be long enough to allow all 4 performers in the group to demonstrate their skills, whereas a Mike Leigh-informed piece with the same number of performers may need 20+ minutes to achieve the same aim.

Timing infringements are a rubric infringement and will be reported to AQA by your moderator.

Performance

The date and location of the performance are entirely up to the centre. As long as marks can be submitted by 15 May, the assessment can be held at any time.

“Each performance must be carried out in live performance conditions and ideally under stage lighting.”

It is highly recommended that the performance of the devised piece is treated as a performance, that the space is cleared and prepared accordingly, and the audience are aware this is an assessment that will contribute to the student’s A-level grade. The audience can constitute one person – the teacher marking the work, but could involve an invited audience of whatever size deemed appropriate to the centre and the work.

Filming

Requirements for filming moderated work can be found here: [Notes and guidance: Requirements for recording and submitting performance evidence \(aqa.org.uk\)](https://www.aqa.org.uk/notes-and-guidance/requirements-for-recording-and-submitting-performance-evidence)

It is recommended that, if at all possible, the teacher doing the marking is not the same person who is filming the work. It is desirable that the dress rehearsal is also filmed, to enable camera work to be checked and to provide evidence of the finished piece.

Filming must take place using one camera, one view point and no editing whatsoever. The playing area should be visible at all times, and close-ups etc should not be used. The moderator needs to have the same perspective as the teacher marking the piece.

Students are required to identify themselves to the camera whilst in whatever costume they are wearing for the piece. They should state their name, candidate number and specialism. This does not have to happen directly before they start the performance. It can be a separate file.

Filmed close ups of set, costume and puppet design must also be included for those candidates. These must not contain any talking from the design candidate or explanation of the work.

Marking work

When marking Working notebooks, teachers should annotate throughout the body of the work, paying particular attention to where students have achieved the requirements for the report. This should not be considered a substitute for commenting on the mark breakdown sheets, which is where the language of the mark scheme should be used to explain the reasoning behind the marks awarded.

When marking performance work, the credit given should reflect the work seen in the piece, not the effort put in throughout the process.

Examples of work to exemplify the standard of marking are updated annually and placed on the Teacher online standardisation portal (T-OLS), available online through [Centre Services](https://www.aqa.org.uk/centre-services). This work is taken from student work submitted in the previous year's examination series and is usually the same work used to standardise moderators during the most recent series. It is highly recommended that teachers responsible for marking the component view this work before starting to mark their own students' work.

Paperwork

A **Candidate record form** must be completed for every candidate. This form includes declarations, which must be signed by both the candidate and the teacher, a record of the relevant information about the piece, mark breakdowns with space for comments by the assessing teacher, and the Statement of dramatic intent.

Statements of dramatic intent should be seen as an opportunity for a student to explain what they are aiming to achieve. Their success at achieving these intentions is assessed as part of their performance mark. They should not replicate the aims and intentions from the Working notebook, as these should ideally have been written at the start of the process, and the Statement of dramatic intent should be written by the student near to the end of the process when their intentions throughout the piece are clear.

Programme Notes must be created for every piece. These should include the following:

- title of the piece
- practitioner used
- each student's name, candidate number and specialism
- an identifying photograph of each candidate, showing them in costume and makeup for the piece.

Centres must also complete a **Centre declaration sheet**.

Submitting work

For full details of how to submit marks and your sample please see [Submit non-exam assessment \(NEA\) files \(AQA.org.uk\)](#)

Feedback

Every centre is emailed a Centre feedback form after results are published. This form has been completed by your moderator and provides confirmation of whether or not the centre's marking was in alignment with the AQA standard. If the total mark for the component (out of 60) was more than a few marks out, the mark will have been altered accordingly. Information about how the marking differed and any particular areas of under or over awarding of marks will be indicated on the Centre feedback form.

The lead moderator's report on the series is also published each year; these reports provide valuable pointers about the work moderators have seen, providing commentary on good and less successful practice in all areas of the component. It is highly recommended that these are read each year by teachers in charge of teaching and assessing the component.

NEA advisers

All centres are allocated a non-examined assessment (NEA) adviser who is an experienced teacher and/or examiner/moderator. They provide guidance and support throughout the academic year on delivering the NEA Components 2 and 3. Under Ofqual rules NEA advisers are not permitted to answer queries about Component 1, the written paper, as this is an examined unit.

Advisers can only respond via email and are not able to have a telephone conversation. Your adviser will not be your moderator and also will not be an adviser for GCSE Drama, as this is a separate team. AQA sends NEA adviser's name and contact details to exams officer every September. Please check with them for details for your subject. If you do not know who your assigned adviser is, you can ask your exam officer to contact AQA.