



Notes and guidance: Practical guidance for non-exam assessment

Component 2: Devising drama (8261/C)

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Introduction

This guide provides information and advice to teachers for to GCSE Drama Component 2 (8261/C). It contains practical guidance for the Devised performance, information on the Devising logs and details of our requirements when submitting student work. It should be used alongside the [specification](#), which should be regarded as definitive.

Working with stimuli

It is a requirement of the specification that centres present students with a range of stimuli. As a minimum, two stimuli must be provided. Centres have free choice in this regard and are permitted to choose any stimuli which they deem appropriate and engaging for their students.

Choice of stimuli

Popular stimuli often include:

- images, artworks, paintings, sculptures and photographs
- music and song lyrics
- films, video clips, sound recordings, interviews and documentaries
- quotations or word clouds
- news reports and articles related to current affairs
- poems, fairy tales and novels
- live performances or theatre in education (TIE)
- installations or exhibitions including physical objects or artefacts
- practical workshops.

This is not an exhaustive list and further suggestions are given on pages 23 to 24 of the [specification](#). The Devising logs available on Teacher Online Standardisation (T-OLS) can sometimes be a good source of example stimuli, as students outline their response to stimuli in Section 1. Teachers can also view the resulting practical work on T-OLS for each candidate.

In selecting stimulus material, consider if the material will:

- engage your particular group of students
- be appropriate for students at GCSE level
- be sufficiently rich and thought-provoking to generate creative ideas for a devised performance of appropriate length.

Stimuli which are more 'open-ended' often allow students to develop their creative response more fully in the devising process, as well as in their written responses to Section 1 of the Devising log. Stimuli which are open to interpretation with a wide range of potential meanings often serve this purpose best.

Students should be presented with the chosen stimuli and encouraged to speculate on potential ideas for how the themes arising from the stimuli might have dramatic potential. Once they have inferred meaning from the stimuli and come up with some potential themes for a performance, it is crucial that students think 'theatrically', considering how these ideas might be brought to life in an original piece of drama. Students may wish to brainstorm

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and/or produce mind maps of potential ideas, themes and settings. In the early stages, encourage students to avoid dismissing ideas and to consider the contributions of all members of the group. Often students include images of their mind maps in Section 1 of the Devising log to illustrate their response, though this should be accompanied with relevant explanation.

Students must select one or more stimuli on which to base their devised piece. This should be discussed and agreed as a group. Teachers should ensure that students are able to make their own choice of stimulus/stimuli in order to enable them to give a personal response in the Devising log. Students must also consider their dramatic intentions for the performance, both as individuals and as a group.

Research

All students are expected to conduct individual research in the early stages of the devising process. Research can include any primary or secondary sources, such as:

- books and newspapers
- online sources including online articles or web pages
- video clips
- images and artworks
- facts and statistics
- verbatim material, such as transcripts, interviews and recordings of real people.

Most commonly, students research the themes of their devised piece. It is also acceptable for students to research their chosen style, genre or practitioner (if applicable). In all cases, research should aid students in meeting AO1 (creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning for theatrical performance).

Research could be used to:

- Continue to develop the ideas, themes and settings from the stimulus/stimuli.
- Provide further possible directions in which to take the devised piece once the initial ideas have been chosen.
- Deepen understanding of the theme and provide related topics.
- Develop characterisation, particularly if playing a real person.
- Examine the practical methodology of a given practitioner.
- Provide textual source material to be utilised in the devised performance.

It is a requirement of the component that the Devised performance is an original piece of drama created by each group of students. Students are permitted to include some text from their research or stimulus material in the piece, provided the Devised performance is a largely original piece of work in the spirit of devising. It is not acceptable to perform existing published scripts (in full or in part) for Component 2.

Centres are reminded of the distinction between stimuli (provided by the teacher) and research (sourced by the individual candidate). It is a requirement for students to utilise **both** of these and to evidence this in Section 1 of their Devising log.

Devising process

Groupings

It is a requirement of the specification that all students work in a group for Component 2. The group must contain between two and six performers. It can also include one student for each of the design specialisms.

Monologues are not accepted as evidence of a Devised performance under any circumstances.

Specialisms

Students must choose to be assessed as a performer, lighting designer, sound designer, set designer, costume designer or puppet designer. Full details of the specific theatrical skills which might be demonstrated by students following each specialism are on pages 17 to 19 of the [specification](#).

It is important that all students in a group work closely together throughout the devising process, regardless of chosen specialism. It is a requirement of the component to work collaboratively and to refer to this collaboration and group work in the Devising log.

Designers

It is a common misconception that designers must produce additional assessment evidence, such as delivering a presentation to camera, providing mood boards, sketch books, portfolios, box models, cue sheets, plots or PowerPoint slides. As with performers, all designers are assessed entirely on:

- AO1/AO4 in the Devising log
- AO2 in the recording of the Devised performance.

It is acceptable for designers to:

- Include any relevant materials in the appropriate section of the Devising log to illustrate relevant points if they wish. Such materials should be appropriately annotated or alongside textual explanation which explains their relevance to the content of the Devising log (outlined on page 26 of the [specification](#)).
- Attach diagrams, sketches, plots or cue sheets to the Statement of dramatic intentions if they wish. These are not marked but can help clarify intentions to the moderator.

Students should **not** include design materials as an appendix to the log. Any such materials should be clearly included within one of the three sections. Any extraneous materials which are not part of a Devising log section are not marked for AO1/AO4.

Only design work evident in the recording of the Devised performance is credited for AO2. Further details of the requirements for designers are provided on page 25 of the [specification](#).

Use of genre, style or practitioner

There is no requirement at GCSE level to devise in a particular style or genre, nor is there any requirement to utilise the ideas of a practitioner. However, many centres find the use of a style, genre or theatre practitioner can give direction and structure to students' work during the devising process. As such, we recommend that students choose one or more performance style for their devised piece. However, this is not a mandatory requirement and need not be the same style for every group. It is entirely acceptable for students to take influence from a range of different styles at GCSE. Examples of styles, genres and practitioners are available in the Lead Moderator Report on the exam (available on [Centre Services](#)) and on page 24 of the [specification](#).

Students often embark on the GCSE with varying levels of experience of devising. Regardless of whether a style is selected, teachers should endeavour to equip students with the required skills beforehand, both in Key Stage 3 and during the GCSE course itself. This could include:

- Practical workshops on particular skills, styles and/or genres.
- Teaching students rehearsal techniques, devising strategies and/or practitioner methodologies.
- Using improvisation to generate material.
- How to research the chosen theme and use the content found in the performance.
- Guidance on how to structure a devised piece (narrative forms, episodic, linear, non-linear etc).
- Watching live or recorded theatre performances, particularly those which were the result of a devising process.
- Younger year groups acting as an audience for older year groups performing devised work.

Some of the above strategies can aid students in avoiding their work becoming rather pedestrian and lacking in imagination. Weaker performance work often involves lengthy roleplays without clear purpose, structure or direction. Students are assessed on the level of inventiveness shown in their performance. As such, it is advisable for students to avoid clichés and to be encouraged to generate creative ideas with originality.

Feedback

It is a requirement of the specification to provide students with opportunities to obtain feedback on their Devised performance during the rehearsal process. This can be written and/or verbal and obtained from teachers and/or peers. Students should consider how they will respond to feedback practically to develop and refine the piece and their own skills in light of the feedback received. Teacher feedback must be provided within the guidelines provided by Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and then link to section 4.2 of the [JCQ Instructions for conducting non-exam assessment](#).

Devised performance

Statement of dramatic intentions

Students are required to complete a Statement of dramatic intentions. This can be found on the last page of the Candidate record form.

Students should aim to give clear and achievable aims which accurately reflect their intended contribution to the performance, avoiding vagueness. The sentence starters given on the form should be used and students are advised to write approximately 150 words.

Where students have not provided evidence of their intentions, they **cannot** be awarded marks for 'success in realising individual artistic intention' (AO2). Teachers can view example statements on T-OLS, as the work of all students on T-OLS includes the Statement of dramatic intentions.

Timings

Teachers should ensure the work of all groups adheres to the minimum and maximum times given on page 27 and 28 of the [specification](#).

If a student's performance is under the minimum required duration, a penalty is applied to the mark by AQA. The size of the penalty depends on the severity of the timing infringement. Centres do **not** apply this penalty, but all centres must complete the [Performance duration declaration form](#) (including where there are no infringements to report).

Recording

Please see [Requirements for recording and submitting performance evidence](#) for further guidance.

Absences and non-examinees

In the event of injury/illness or other authorised absences of one or more group members, you have two options:

- Delay the affected group's assessment.

Or

- Allow the group to go ahead. The group can either use a non-examinee to cover the absent student's role or re-work the performance so that it can run without the absent student. The group can then perform a second time as non-examinees when the absent student returns. Permission must be sought from AQA in advance. A covering note with full details must be submitted with the work as well as a copy of the adviser's authorisation email.

Use of non-examinees

- Non-examinees are permitted to cover for an absent student. You may also use a non-examinee if you only have one student in the year group to allow them to complete a duologue for Component 2.
- Non-examinees should be students from the same year group or the year below. They may be students in the same class who are being assessed in a different group. Teachers are not permitted to act as non-examinees.

Devising logs

The specification is the definitive source of information on the content and assessment of Devising logs. The advice here seeks to supplement the information given in the specification.

Gathering information

It is good practice for students to retain any material they produce during the devising process and to make notes at key moments in rehearsals. This allows students to keep a record of pertinent points for inclusion in the Devising log. This may take the form of a rehearsal diary or notes made under the key headings for each section of the log (page 26 of the [specification](#)) during the relevant stage of the process.

Section 1

Students will need to explain their response to the stimuli/stimulus they chose. If they have taken influence from more than one stimulus, they should explain this fully in Section 1.

Students should give the reader a sense of the journey they underwent in creating and developing ideas, themes and settings in the early stages: from stimulus, through research and towards their initial aims (as an individual and for the piece as a whole).

Retaining images of brainstorming or mind maps from initial discussions on the stimuli may be a useful aid to students and images of these can be included in Section 1 if desired. It is often advisable for students to retain copies of the stimuli and research materials, particularly if some time has elapsed before the writing of the log. Where the stimuli or research is a visual source (such as a painting), including an image of this in Section 1 can provide useful context.

Section 2

This section looks largely at the rehearsal process in which the group works collaboratively to develop their own skills and the devised piece itself. There is a requirement to give a sense of how ideas were created and developed (including the ideas of the individual and those of the group). Students must balance the development of the piece with their own individual contribution within their chosen specialism, explaining how their theatrical skills were utilised in the final piece.

It is this section where a rehearsal diary can be most useful. Documenting key moments in the process where an individual skill was refined or the piece itself developed as a group will give students a bank of examples to write about. Including specific exemplification of scenes, characters and key moments (in both process and performance) is key to enabling students to write with precise detail in this section. Including quotations often allows students to pinpoint these moments and avoid generalisation.

Whilst there is no requirement for designers to submit any additional materials, successful designers often produce sketches, diagrams, mood boards, technical plots, cue sheets, box models, ground plans or prototypes during the devising process to evidence the design evolving at different stages. These are not marked separately but can be attached to the

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Statement of dramatic intentions or included in the appropriate section of the Devising log to illustrate points made in the explanation.

For all specialisms, it is crucial to show evidence of development and refinement of skills and the piece. Students should include explanation of how their work evolved in order to meet the intended dramatic intentions. Students should avoid describing the work as a fixed entity, instead keeping focus on explaining how it was developed and refined.

It is a requirement of Section 2 to refer to feedback. It is advisable to give students plenty of opportunities within the process to obtain feedback. A dress rehearsal or 'work in progress' performance with written or verbal feedback is one means of ensuring that students have meaningful feedback to respond to.

Section 3

This section assesses AO4 (to analyse and evaluate own work). It must be completed after the final performance of the devised piece, as there is a requirement to analyse and evaluate both the devising process and the final devised piece.

Students often watch back the video recording of the Devised performance to gather information for Section 3. Some students also find it useful to obtain written or verbal feedback from the audience after the final performance to guide them in the successes and areas for further development in their devised piece, though this is not a mandatory requirement of Section 3.

In considering how far their theatrical skills developed, students may wish to use snapshots of their work gathered at the various stages of the devising process, using the outcome in the final performance to analyse precisely how far their skills have developed.

Students must discuss the benefits they brought to the group. Students who analyse and evaluate the positive contributions they made as actors, designers and 'theatre makers' in the devising process tend to be more successful. Students should avoid giving a list of administrative tasks they performed or generic interpersonal skills.

Completing the log

There is no requirement to complete the log in one go. It is advisable to break the task down into the three distinct sections or by using the bullet points on page 26 of the [specification](#). It is possible to write Section 1 in the early stages of the process once the initial ideas and aims have been decided, Section 2 towards the end of the rehearsal process and Section 3 following the final performance.

It is advisable to avoid allowing too much time to pass between the process/performance and the writing of the relevant section of the log, in order to ensure that students can recall as much detail as possible and for the task to feel more authentic.

Conduct of non-examined assessments

Centres are reminded that JCQ instructions relating to the conduct of non-examined assessments must be followed. Full details are available on the [JCQ website](#). This includes guidance on the provision of feedback to students.

Devising log formats

Whichever format is chosen, all Devising logs must be clearly divided into the three distinct sections and adhere to the word/page/time limits on page 27 of the [specification](#). There are examples of marked Devising logs in all formats on T-OLS.

Written

An entirely written Devising log must not exceed 2,500 words in total and evidence beyond this must **not** count towards the mark. An accurate total word count **must** be provided on the document. Please note that all words within a Devising log are included in the count.

Annotated photographs and/or sketches/drawings and/or cue sheets

This option is frequently used by designers who wish to include a visual illustration of their designs in the Devising log. Performers can also utilise this option if they wish, for example by including diagrams of their stage positioning or photographs illustrating a freeze frame.

Students should be reminded that any materials included in this format **must** be annotated to attract credit. These annotations are necessary to explain how ideas were created and developed (Sections 1 and 2) and to analyse and evaluate own work (Section 3). Photographs, sketches, drawings and/or cue sheets will not, in isolation, be sufficient to meet the assessment objectives. Presented alongside relevant explanatory annotations and/or sections of text, they can provide a very useful illustration of the points made.

Students should also be reminded that it is the explanation, analysis and evaluation which is marked, rather than the photographs, sketches, drawings and/or cue sheets. The content of the task (page 26 of the [specification](#)) must also be clearly addressed.

Audio/visual recording(s)

Students can submit a Devising log which consists entirely of audio/visual recordings **or** a mixture of written work accompanied by audio/visual recordings. Students must adhere to the maximum lengths outlined on page 27 of the [specification](#).

Students are permitted to use cue cards or notes during the recording of their log, provided these are written by the student and adhere to the published guidance (see [JCQ Instructions for conducting non-exam assessments](#)). It is **not** permitted for students to be guided, questioned or prompted by a teacher during the recording, which would be considered improper assistance.

Acknowledgement of sources

Students must ensure they do not plagiarise, particularly from internet sources. Presenting materials copied from other sources without acknowledgement is regarded as deliberate deception. There is space on page 2 of the Candidate Record Form to record any sources used.

Alternatively, moderators will accept any form of referencing or bibliography within the Devising log which makes the citation of sources clear. Anything which is not the student's own words should be included in quotation marks and the source clearly identified. Failure to ensure proper acknowledgement can result in a malpractice investigation if plagiarism is suspected.

Rubric infringements

Centres are reminded that the following constitute rubric infringements:

- Devised performances which are shorter than the minimum time permitted by the specification. In these instances, a penalty is applied to the mark by AQA. The size of the reduction is proportionate to the severity of the timing infringement.
- Devised performances which are longer than the maximum time permitted by the specification.
- Devising logs which exceed the maximum word/page/time limits. In these instances, teachers and moderators must stop marking at the upper limit.

In addition:

- Performances must not be edited. Each performance must appear in a continuous video file without breaks (though separate performances can be in separate video files).
- Performances must be recorded with a single camera from the audience perspective.
- Performances must contain between two and six performers, and no more than one student for each of the design specialisms. Monologues are **not** permitted under any circumstances.

Submission

Internal standardisation of marking

It is important that all teachers involved in the marking of centre-assessed work:

- Complete the T-OLS which is available on [Centre Services](#). Full details are available on the [Teacher online standardisation section of the website](#).
- Complete a [Centre declaration sheet](#) to declare that internal standardisation of marking has taken place and to authenticate students' work.

Marking

Record your marks for each candidate on the Candidate Record Form. Ensure that the breakdown of marks is fully completed on the form and that marks are totalled correctly.

You should provide comments on the marking of Devising logs on the Candidate Record Form **or** annotations on the Devising logs themselves to justify the marks awarded. There is no requirement to do both. There is no requirement to provide comments on the Devised performance; as there is only one mark in each band, the work should reflect the descriptor of that band to be awarded the mark.

Comments and/or annotations on Devising logs must make clear how marks have been awarded by:

- showing where the content of the Devising log task has been addressed
- using the language from the mark scheme descriptors.

No other comments or annotations should be included.

Further guidance and mark schemes are available on pages 37 to 44 of the [specification](#). Centres are reminded that they **must** cease marking when the upper limit of words/time/pages has been reached, both in the Devised performance and Devising log.

Where students have not separated their Devising log into three sections, centres are permitted to take a 'best fit' approach, inserting a line between Section 1 and 2, and Section 2 and 3. Points must be in the correct section to attract credit. It is **not** permissible to take a 'mix and match' approach where points are credited wherever they appear.

Online mark submission

Please visit [our Submit non-exam assessment \(NEA\) files page on the website](#) for full details on the submission of centre marks and your sample.

The following paperwork should be submitted to neadeclaration@aqa.org.uk no later than **15 May** in the certificating year. Please do **not** send the documents below to moderators.

- [Performance duration declaration form](#)
- [Non-exam assessment, fieldwork and live performance centre declaration form](#)

Moderation process

Moderation is the process we use to standardise marks given by schools and colleges for non-exam assessment. Full details of how the moderation process brings centre marks into line with the national standard are given on [moderation section of the website](#).

Following the publication of results, all centres receive feedback on the internally assessed work. This is sent to Exams officers electronically. The sample will also be returned postally to your centre, although occasionally some work is retained for awarding purposes or for future standardisation and training.

Information and support

The [specification](#) is the definitive source of information relating to the qualification. In addition, centres are advised to read the Report on the exam which is published in August each year and is available on [Centre Services](#). This contains a comprehensive account of each exam series, including details of successful approaches and advice on common pitfalls.

All centres have an allocated NEA Adviser who is able to offer advice on all aspects of the non-examined assessments (Components 2 and 3).