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GCSE

**DRAMA**

8261/C: Devising drama  
Report on the Examination

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8261  
June 2022

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Version: 1.0

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### **Centre Administration**

The Moderation team were pleased to note that the majority of centres had submitted all the required documentation along with the moderation sample. An important requirement of the Student Record Form (CRF) is the authentication of the Devising Log format and word count; whilst most centres acknowledged this some did not and it was clear that the interpretation of the 2,500-word upper limit was often treated with considerable flexibility; please note that moderators are instructed to cease marking once the upper word limit has been reached. Requests for missing Centre Declaration forms and signed CRF's were unfortunately, not an unusual occurrence this year.

The organisation of the Devising Log into the different sections was generally clear, however there were occasions when moderators found it necessary to contact centres for help in identifying the individual sections. Moderators noted that most students had responded to the demands of the task and addressed the individual bullet points in the specification for each section of the Devising Log. It is worth reminding centres that JCQ regulations do not allow the use of writing frames, sentence starters or question headings; there was evidence this year that these were being used by some centres in the creation of the Devising Log responses.

The clarity of marking was evidenced by detailed annotations and summative comments that supported the mark awarded, either on the actual responses or on the CRF. Less helpful were the instances of over-ticking, particularly where almost every other word of a response was obliterated by a large tick; this does not guide the marking but merely shows that something has been read. Many centres had chosen to mark word-processed work using track-changes; this often proved to be a very clear and detailed method.

### **Statement of Dramatic Intention (SDI)**

Although, students identify their aims and intentions for both the group and themselves in Section 1 of the Devising Log these may evolve as the piece takes shape during the devising process. The statement affords students the opportunity to focus on the culmination of the whole process of exploration and determine what it is they want to demonstrate with regard to both their deployment of theatrical skill and intention for their audience. Designers may also attach additional material that has not been included in the Devising Log such as cue sheets and rigging plans. Moderators found some SDI's to be either overlong or rather too simplistic; students should be encouraged to focus on what is achievable in their performance. An SDI which states simply that, *I want to make the audience laugh*, should qualify this by, at least, identifying the theatrical skills they intend deploying in order to achieve this.

### **Changes to the specification in response to COVID constraints 2022 series only**

Monologues were allowed this year which enabled students to work on their own. Other changes were made to the specification too in terms of reduced performance timings and amendments to the mark schemes; these changes have enabled students to respond positively to the demands of the specific criteria for each separate element of the component.

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### **Alternative evidence - 2022 series only (AE)**

The submission of AE was allowed this year and has, in the main, resulted in a positive outcome for those centres who took advantage of this provision in that:

- students have been able to complete Sections 1 and 2 of the Devising Log for group work which has then resulted in a monologue performance because of COVID constraints
- as above when a design skill has either not been either in performance or not fully realised
- Section 3 has been accepted as a stand-alone analysis and evaluation of the final performance
- centres have submitted supporting evidence from students to underpin the assessment of the chosen theatrical skill.

However, there were other centres that failed to address the requirements for AE and did not supply appropriate evidence; where possible, and in order not to disadvantage students, centres were contacted and given the opportunity to send further examples of AE.

### **Group sizes**

Moderators were pleased to note that centres who had applied to AQA for permission to exceed the group size of 6 performers because of extenuating circumstances had included a copy of the email from [drama@aqa.org.uk](mailto:drama@aqa.org.uk). This also applied to centres who had requested to have a non-examinee performer as a stand-in for an absent student. It is important to note that the group size will have an impact on the timing of the devised performance because it is important that every student is afforded the opportunity to demonstrate as wide a range of theatrical skills as possible. Please note that the specification advises that; *performances failing to meet the minimum performance times will be subject to a mark of zero and moderators are advised that they must stop watching a performance once the upper limit has been reached.*

### **Programme notes (PN's)**

These do not have to be overly detailed but it is helpful if the groups are listed in the same running order as they appear on the USB. Moderators appreciated those PN's which had up-to-date photographs of students in costume, and/or clear descriptions of the students; particularly appreciated were those centres that had a specific signifier, which could be seen in performance, such as a coloured wrist band, sash or badge to aid identification. It was pleasing to note that many centres had picked up on an example suggested in a previous report of a helpful way in which students could identify themselves at the beginning of the filmed performance; *My name is... my student number is... I am playing... my identifying feature is my yellow scarf.*

### **Recording of audio, audio/visual logs and performances**

Full details of the AQA requirements for recordings are provided at [aqa.org.uk/drama](http://aqa.org.uk/drama); there is also comprehensive information regarding recording in the specification.

### **USB encryption.**

AQA will provide a password common to all centres for each series which is helpful for the speedy moderation of the performances; problems arose this year when some centres used their own password which was not always readily available to the moderator. Centres that use their own password must inform AQA in order for this to be passed on to their moderator.

### **Guidance on devising**

The section ***Supervising students*** in the specification is most informative and dispels the myth that students are expected to complete this component entirely without guidance.

It is evident that students have been encouraged to draw on the skills they have acquired during their GCSE course either through participation in workshops, theatre visits or from material seen online. It is recommended that students choose one or more genres or performance styles for their devised piece but this is not a mandatory requirement. Students who focused on the work of a practitioner tended to have a good understanding of their practices and philosophy which was sustained throughout the piece. However, moderators reported that weaker work which purported to be influenced by a particular practitioner often ended up being a confusion of various ideas.

### **Strategies for introducing the stimuli**

There was an impressive range of stimulus material for students to be inspired by seen across the moderation team. The best examples were tangible ones such as images, songs, poetry and sculpture which could be open to interpretation, as opposed to a set of instructions such as; *devise a piece of interest to a modern audience or your piece must be about ....*

#### **The most popular strategies were:**

- themed packs which included a range of material such as cartoons, poems, newspaper articles etc.
- workshops on either a practitioner, TIE piece, or a particular skill such as physical theatre or design
- research based using local history, world events / recordings made of live interviews
- music / songs generally linked to other stimuli such as visual images
- visits to places of interest such as museums or art galleries
- linked extracts of plays on a theme such as witchcraft/women in history/sport. Please note that caution is advised when using scripted extracts; they must be part of a substantial devised element and not simply a performance of scripted extracts which would result in a rubric infringement.

#### **Trends in the themes chosen for either stimulus material or the final devised performance were:**

- historical events/local history/gangs/terrorism/crime
- suffragettes/gender issues/domestic abuse/bullying/families
- health/poverty/social care/drug and alcohol dependency/COVID
- myths/fantasy/space exploration/alien life
- murder mysteries/absurdism/comedy spoofs and physical theatre
- environment/climate change/protest.

Moderators noted that students achieved greater success where stimuli were more abstract or open to interpretation. Moderators also felt that when a stimulus was too teacher-led it limited the scope for students to have their own ideas and interpretations.

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### **Trends in styles and genres for the final devised performance were:**

- physical theatre/metatheatre/puppetry
- documentary theatre /verbatim theatre/Epic theatre/tragedy
- naturalism realism/absurdism/comedy spoofs
- comedy/mischief plays/ farce/ black comedy/ melodrama
- Theatre in Education/creative adaptation/murder mysteries
- practitioner based work. A word of caution - if taking this route, it is advised that students have a good knowledge and understanding of the work of their chosen practitioner and introduce form and methods appropriately. Moderators reported seeing random chair duets introduced, often as a time filler, and placards appearing because these were Brechtian as well as too much screaming because this was Artaud.

### **Specialisms**

Please refer to the specification for guidance on theatrical skills. It is always helpful if students have a clear idea of what the expectation is in order to achieve the best outcome of their chosen specialism in the final devised performance.

### **Performer**

It was interesting to see how students who had been focused creatively on group work were able to translate their original ideas into a monologue. It was also clear that teachers had been prepared for change and had encouraged groups to include a monologue for each performer. Most students who performed a monologue were careful to work to the revised upper limit which enabled them to deploy a fully appropriate range of theatrical skills. Less successful monologues tended to be under time, static and lacking in clear characterisation and/or content.

### **Alternative evidence performers**

Most centres were able to supply evidence of practical work, as requested, to support both the marks awarded by the centre and the students notes on their intentions for the performance and the desired effect for the audience.

The most successful performance work demonstrated at least some of the following features:

- highly imaginative responses to the chosen stimuli resulting in well-constructed pieces which gave the performers every opportunity to demonstrate their physical and vocal skills
- a clear understanding of the needs of both the piece and the desired effect for the audience
- generous and sensitive work which allowed for a range of responses
- focused performances with sustained characterisation and development of the role played and, if multi-rolling, clearly differentiated characters
- ensemble work where timing and synchronisation was precise and fully appropriate
- effective use of the performance space and if working with a designer or designers full use made of the designer/s' skills
- had due regard to health and safety constraints
- if used, direct address was confident and, where appropriate, eye contact was made with the audience and delivery demonstrated the understanding of the value of using a pause and staying in character throughout

- if used, mime was effectively used to show action, weight, shape, object, action and reaction.

The least successful work tended to be rather pedestrian and was often the result of a limited range of stimulus material. It was noted that some performances were overlong and tended to feature one performer leading the action which limited the opportunity to develop roles for others in the group. Performances which were at the lower time limit also tended to limit creativity and inhibited the development of both the piece and opportunity for performers to demonstrate a more extensive range of theatrical skills.

Moderators reported that they are still seeing students in performances wearing full school uniform rather than some semblance of costume to indicate character. It is often the addition of simple props and a basic costume which give a sense of performance. Whether to use properties or not is also a decision that students need to make, but poorly mimed props can be incongruous in a naturalistic piece. Other weaknesses occurred when pieces had noisy and, sometimes, unnecessary scene changes with overlong blackouts.

The least inventive work featured performers who:

- had not responded imaginatively to the stimulus and replicated work seen on the television or social media
- had little engagement with either the audience or others in the group and were out of sync within an ensemble
- tended to lose focus and faded from time to time when not actively engaged in the action
- were limited by the work because of insufficient exposure within the piece which inhibited the deployment of a range of theatrical skills
- used poor vocal skills by either failing to project their voice or rushing words so that lines became incoherent to the audience and/or could not sustain an appropriate accent
- often failed to use mime effectively to show action, weight, shape, object, action and reaction
- lacked confidence particularly when performing a monologue or breaking the fourth wall
- if working with a designer or designers did not make full use of the designer/s skills

Teachers are reminded that the performances used for Teacher on-line standardisation (TOLS) are a useful tool and are intended to demonstrate a range of work that reflects all levels of ability for both performers and designers.

## **Design**

It was clear by the number of students who opted to create a design that creativity had been hindered by limited access to equipment. However, designers who were able to fulfil the creation of their design demonstrated resourceful and often inspired and innovative work. Costume and set design remain the most popular options and, where facilities allow, lighting and sound was reported to be successfully deployed with a refreshing originality. The most successful designs came from students whose Devising Logs revealed a thorough understanding of the technicalities associated with their chosen skill as well as how the design would facilitate the realisation of the final devised performance. It was evident that where there had been more than one designer in a group supportive and complimentary collaboration had taken place.

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Teachers are reminded that it is the design that is examined in performance; no other written work is needed except for any designs or cue sheets the student might wish to add to the SDI, however these are best included, as appropriate, in either section 2 or 3 of the devising log. A close up of the costume, set or puppet is required but no other presentation is needed.

### **Alternative evidence design submissions**

Sadly, too many submissions failed to support their evidence with, for example, sketches, diagrams, rigging plans, photographs or cue sheets. The most successful submissions had model box sets, mock-ups of what the set might have looked like, detailed cue sheets, rigging plans, gobo and gel examples, lighting and sound state notes, lists of sounds and duration of a sound, mock-up of costumes, detailed sketches with swatches of cloth, mood boards, detailed scaled drawings of puppets and how they would have been constructed and informative notes on the desired effect of the chosen design within the context of the devised performance.

It is vital that in order to demonstrate a range of theatrical skills that students:

- have the resources to do so
- work cooperatively with **one** group only in order for their design to be integral to the piece
- produce and demonstrate **one** chosen skill only
- ensure that their design is afforded sufficient exposure in the final devised performance
- have due regard to health and safety constraints.

There are useful resources on the AQA website as well as specific details for all theatrical skills in the specification; your NEA adviser may also be able to advise if you have any questions regarding specialisms.

### **Lighting designer**

Lighting is a popular specialism and students opting for this tend to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about how to achieve the intended outcome of their design. It was evident that the most interesting and creative designs were those where the lighting designer had worked collaboratively with the group and in many cases other designers throughout the devising process.

The most successful lighting designs were achieved by students who:

- went beyond a simple design of a general wash and understood how to create mood and atmosphere, location and time of day through the appropriate use of colour, intensity, framing, use of special effects and, if not part of the set design, projections
- worked towards the upper time limit to ensure that a range of theatrical skills could be demonstrated
- were always an active participant in the devising process
- did not always resort to blackouts to indicate a scene change
- reflected an excellent understanding of many or all of the theatrical skills outlined in the specification as well as identifying the equipment used
- produced plans and cue sheets that others could use if they had chosen not to operate the equipment themselves
- understood how to rig their design
- had an excellent understanding of how to work safely.



Less successful lighting designs tended to come from students who:

- did not work collaboratively with the group and had little knowledge and understanding of the needs of the piece
- had limited facilities and/or equipment to work with
- lacked confidence and understanding of how to achieve a special effect
- produced limited designs which featured very general and simple effects which in many performances was a basic wash of a colour to show an emotion
- failed to position lights during a technical rehearsal which resulted in dead areas and facial expressions washed out by bright white light or direct lighting
- had poorly executed or, too often missing, rigging plans and cue sheets
- had little regard for how to work safely; e.g., unchained overhead lamps.

### **Sound designer**

It was encouraging to experience some exciting and innovative sound designs which went beyond simple underscoring of the work. A memorable design was one which used carefully overlaid songs from particular eras to underpin the passage of time alongside different telephone and vehicle sounds which also had the same effect. The majority of sound designers had included intro and outro sound for the piece as well as appropriate and evocative mood sound to cover scene changes and/or blackouts.

The most successful sound designs came from students who were able to:

- select and realise appropriate sounds that contributed positively to the overall effect of the performance
- design and realise sounds capable of establishing the location, period, time and/or to enhance the mood or atmosphere
- collaborate as a member of a group, which may have included other designers, on a devised piece which enhanced the devised performance and allowed an extensive range of skills to be demonstrated
- use appropriate software to mix sound or download material and were able to use equipment which might include floor mics, head pieces, directional speakers etc.
- use levels and their awareness of the intensity of sound to enhance rather than detract from the action on stage
- know where and how to either access or create sound effects
- produce plans and cue sheets that others could use if they had chosen not to operate the equipment themselves.
- demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to work safely.

Less successful sound design work came from students who:

- were limited by the brevity and content of the devised performance
- had a limited knowledge and understanding of how sound might be created and used in performance and simply underscored the action of the piece without any real regard for the action on stage
- produced a basic intro and outro plot and so missed the opportunity to experiment with mixing and streaming

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- did not work collaboratively as a member of a group resulting in the sound becoming something of an add-on to the performance
  - relied heavily on sound clips which were snapped on and off
  - were unable to use anything other than very basic resources and equipment
  - had little understanding of how to work safely; e.g., trailing wires.

### **Set designer**

It was evident that set designers were, in the main, able to respond positively to the constraints of the performance space. Many sets seen were created for an end-on audience either in the school hall or drama studio. A typical problem for moderators was that the centre had not taken the opportunity to pan round the set prior to the performance; this was a particular annoyance when the set was on the school stage but the filming was done at floor level which restricted the view of the set.

Please note that properties are not a stand-alone skill in this specification. See the specification for information on the requirements for set designers.

The most successful set designs came from students who:

- worked collaboratively with the group which may have included other designers
- took into consideration details such as sight lines, levels and use of space
- may have used projected images or messages as part of their design
- used their design to support the action on stage and communicate meaning for the audience
- produced detailed plans and sketches which showed the development of the design and may have made a model box in order to test their design
- considered colour and texture and the effect of lighting on these
- sourced set dressings and properties to establish location and period
- were not afraid to experiment with innovative ideas
- had an excellent understanding of how to work safely.

The least successful set designs came from students who:

- lacked creativity and produced basic designs featuring items which may not have been especially representative of the period or location
- in their devising logs often lacked evidence of research and collaboration and the development of their own ideas and those of the group and lacked detailed sketches and plans for their design
- did not take into consideration the constraints of the performance space
- lacked an understanding of the needs of the piece, the actors and the audience
- produced a design for one scene only when a composite set would have been more appropriate
- had little understanding of how to work safely; e.g., unsecured staging, use of non-slip mats.

### **Costume designer**

Most designers focused on one costume only; those who had designed for an ensemble piece nominated just one of their multiple designs in keeping with specification requirements.

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Please note that hair, masks and make-up are not stand-alone skills but, if identified as part of the costume design, will be taken into consideration. Hiring a costume is not permitted because the design would not be the student's own design.

The most successful costume designs came from students who:

- produced designs which could either be made, adapted or assembled
- worked collaboratively with the group, which may have included other designers, and made appropriate decisions with regard to costume choices in order to support the actor's characterisation and role
- took into consideration the needs of the actor and ensured the fit allowed freedom of movement and gesture
- showed consideration of characterisation and the technical issues of costume changes for performers who were playing multiple roles by, for example, making effective decisions with regard to fastenings where a costume had to be changed quickly
- used research to inform their choice of style and fabrics in order to establish the period of the piece and understood the effect of lighting on certain colours and fabrics
- demonstrated a thorough understanding of the realisation of their design in Section 2 of the devising log and exemplified this through the use of, for example, photographs, mood boards, sketches and diagrams and feedback from others
- had an excellent understanding of how to work safely.

Less successful costume designers:

- relied heavily on what was readily available from either the costume cupboard or the performer's own clothing and accessories, with no attempt to add their own design features
- often appeared to be working in isolation and so had little or no input in the development of the piece as a whole
- failed to consider the whole effect of the costume which often resulted in inappropriate footwear or no footwear at all
- undertook little or no research to help with the development of ideas and lacked an understanding of the effective use of colour, texture and style
- submitted Section 2 responses with little evidence of process and development of skill with only brief notes, diagrams and sketches; often these were missing
- had little understanding of how to work safely.

### **Puppet designer**

Moderators saw very little evidence of puppet design but those who did reported that the puppet tended to be employed consistently and with great effect in the performances seen. It was clear that designers had been influenced by experiencing puppets in live performances as well as those seen on television. One performance on the theme of domesticity featured a designer who used a combination of found puppets, plastic mixing bowls, colanders, sieves, ladles, hanging from a pole attached to a pop-up bin which had been transformed into a nightmarish villain with rubbish sacks for a cape and bin liners for arms. This was manipulated by a performer with a mop head wig, a costume made of aprons and rubber gloves and appeared as a recurring dream; it was evident that purposeful collaboration had informed both the puppet and costume design. In order to succeed in

this specialism students are advised of the need to experiment with shape and size as well as style of puppet.

The most successful puppet designs came from students who:

- were not afraid to experiment with their ideas and whose Section 1 responses in the devising log showed a high level of research into companies and performances such as Handspring and Avenue Q
- focused research into the different types of puppets and how this affected the final design
- worked collaboratively and ensured extensive exposure of the puppet in the final performance as well as the development of the piece as a whole
- evidenced detailed sketches, plans and diagrams in Section 2 of the devising log which were used to make informed choices with regard to the design and the practicalities involved in decisions regarding how the puppet would be operated
- worked closely with the actor who would be operating the puppet to ensure that the size and weight of it did not hinder the performance
- had an excellent understanding of how to work safely.

Less successful puppet designers:

- demonstrated a poor understanding of appropriateness to the piece. One design was a of a rag-doll that was supposed to represent a child but was simply held, as if a doll, by an actor
- had a less than cooperative approach to devising and working with others
- demonstrated some initial enthusiasm and then loss of motivation; often because the designer was working in isolation and the piece had developed without respect for the original design
- were ambitious but lacked the skills needed to develop and realise the design
- evidenced little research into different types of puppets resulting in some inappropriate choices. An example of this was a glove puppet spider that could not be seen clearly by the audience because sight lines and the position of furniture on stage meant that the audience could not see it. Another student simply produced a doll they had borrowed as their puppet
- had limited Section 2 responses with poorly executed designs, notes and sketches which give little insight into the final design
- limited exposure of the puppet in the final performance
- had little understanding of how to work safely.

### **Marking the performance: AO2**

Marks are awarded for the final demonstration of the student's chosen skill. Students are marked as individuals. A mark of zero is awarded only if the statement of dramatic intentions is missing or there was nothing worthy of credit. The mark scheme is for both performers and designers.

**Level of theatrical skill** – this mark relates to the consistency of the student's application of the relevant theatrical skill.

**Range of theatrical skills demonstrated** – please refer to the specification for guidance on the range of skills assessed for each specialism.

**Contribution to the effectiveness of the piece** – this mark must be awarded for the actual contribution made during the final devised performance of the **individual** student and not retrospectively for their contribution during the devising process.

**Inventiveness of individual's work** – marks were lost here because perfectly competent work lacked inventiveness, creativity and a level of originality.

**Success in realising individual artistic intention** – this is an assessment of the degree to which the student has been successful in achieving their own individual artistic intention. Marks were occasionally awarded even though the statement had not been completed.

## The Devising Log

Please be aware that it is only the annotations and student's notes which go towards the overall word count and not headings or the content of an article. Be aware also that JCQ regulations do not permit the use of writing frames or sentence starters or allow teacher intervention in any recorded format. The upper word limit for all written log formats is 2,500 words; evidence beyond this must not count towards the mark awarded. As always, the best approach to the completion of the Devising Log is to use the bullet points in the specification to guide responses. The weakest and often most disorganised logs were those that were written in a drama diary style. These seldom reflected the demands of the separate log sections, as outlined in the specification, and were very difficult to mark with moderators having to take a 'best fit' approach to moderating them.

## Formats

- **Entirely written 400–600 words 2,500 words.** This has proved to be the most popular format. It would be helpful if the word count could be noted at the end of each section, if only to keep students on track. Moderators agreed that overlong submissions would have benefitted by some judicious cutting.
- **Written accompanied by annotated photographs and/or annotated sketches/drawings and/or annotated cue sheets.** 15 sides of A4 including no more than 2,500 words. It was noted that this portfolio approach is becoming increasingly popular but teachers should be wary of those students who take a more *scrap-book* attitude towards the production of the log and spend too much time on adornments and fussy ways of presenting material. There was evidence of some logs being too prescriptive and infringing JCQ regulations because teachers had produced overly detailed instructions which included writing frames and sentence starters.
- **Written accompanied by audio/ visual/audio-visual recording(s).** 200–400 words and 2–3 minutes 1,500 words and 12 minutes. Centres submitting Alternative evidence tended to submit written sections 1 and 2 of the log with a recording for section 3. It is important that it is made clear where each section starts and finishes.
- **Entirely audio/visual/audio-visual recording(s).** 3–4 minutes 15 minutes. Students who used brief notes, generally just the bullet points for each section of the log, tended to offer noticeably more detailed responses than those who simply read prepared accounts. Moderators appreciated having transcripts of the audio recordings but teachers are reminded that this is not a requirement of the specification.

### The Devising log sections

It is important that the Devising log is presented in 3 separate sections as stated in the specification. Many members of the moderating team reported having to use a best-fit approach, particularly when logs were presented in a diary format or with headings that did not match those of the specification; *MY WORKSHOPS*, was one which was taken as pertaining to Section 2. Please note that it is perfectly acceptable and indeed best practice to use the headings in the specification.

### Section 1: Response to a stimulus AO1

The mark scheme is looking for evidence of the student' skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning, which means that ideas need to be linked back to the chosen stimulus and research findings in order for the explanation to achieve the intention of this section of the devising log. It was evident that some logs were written retrospectively with detail about the final performance which would have been better placed in Section 3.

Successful student responses:

- identified and considered the stimuli presented and explored their own individual response as well as those of the group
- considered both their own ideas for possible themes and settings and also those of the group
- stated their chosen stimulus and briefly outlined the intended plot of the piece
- identified their chosen specialism with details of how they saw their chosen character/role/design supporting the piece
- produced their own detailed and useful research findings, explaining these in detail with clear application and relevance to the piece of drama
- explained succinctly why the group had chosen to work in a particular style or genre
- acknowledged the influence of a chosen practitioner and identified how aspects of their work would be incorporated into the piece using relevant information; for example: *When I was researching the work of the costume designer Katie Sykes, I saw a YouTube video of her talking about how she had to design costumes that clearly showed the age of a character... her ideas about colour and fabrics have influenced my own decisions....*
- detailed their own dramatic aims and intentions often identifying particular skills they wanted to develop. An example of this was a performer who stated that their intention was to: *Work on comic timing and over exaggerated physicality because we want our piece, which is a farce, to be fast paced.* Another student stated: *As our group are using a split -stage I know my design must show 2 different areas, an interior and an exterior. I want to be able to use the right type of lamps, gels and intensities to achieve this.*
- identified the group aims and intentions for the piece as a whole
- gave the moderator a clear idea of what the theme and setting for the piece, the student's chosen skill and their role within the group.

Less successful student responses:

- either failed to identify a range of stimuli or spent too much time detailing what each stimulus was
- ignored the stimuli and simply outlined the plot of the piece as decided by the group

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- produced responses which were not clear in making the link between their stimulus and the ideas, themes and settings they explored for the actual content of the devised piece
  - failed to identify any research undertaken or simply stated that they had done some research on a particular topic without saying what this was and what they had found out
  - made no reference to how the research influenced the piece
  - wrote in very general terms about group research and failed to note their findings. *My group researched mental health.*
  - described what they knew about a style/practitioner but did not make it clear that this was research by stating their sources, what they had discovered and how it was applied to the piece.
  - often included material which would have been better placed in sections 2 or 3
  - reflected on the final performance and what they did
  - sometimes failed to explain either their own dramatic aims and intentions or those for the piece as a whole
  - left the moderator uncertain about what the student's chosen skill was and what the theme, setting, style or content of the piece would be.

## **Section 2: Development and collaboration AO1**

It is essential that the focus for this section must be on the actual practical aspects of the devising process. Students need to ensure that they are allowing the moderator to visualise how they are creating and developing their ideas and their skills to communicate meaning through their chosen specialism. Several centres had organised Section 2 as a rehearsal diary with entries on given dates. Whilst this is an acceptable approach, it sometimes meant that the writing became too led by lengthy description of what happened on a particular day, with a lack of focus and relevance to the requirements for this section outlined in the specification and/or the criteria in the mark scheme. Some design and technical students wrote as if they had been instructed by the actors to create a particular design or outcome. Centres should be reminded that design students need to contribute to the development of the piece to the same extent as performers in order to be able to discuss the development and refinement of ideas/the piece throughout their log. The most successful responses tended to come from those students who identified key moments in the devising process when either a particular skill or part of the piece had been developed and refined. Weaker students often tended to treat this section as a 'checklist' of dramatic techniques, rehearsal strategies or practitioner methodologies. Too often, students tended to list these without explaining them in any detail.

Successful student responses:

- explained how they developed and refined their own ideas and those of the group using specific moments in the devising process to illustrate the points made
- identified problems and detailed how these had been resolved; *I realised that I was starting to guess when I needed to bring in the sound for the forest scene because I was either too soon or too late...we wrote an outline script which helped me to put a better cue sheet together. This is the script with the cues shown...it solved the problem...*
- showed that they were able to work cooperatively with others and focused clearly on the devising process giving thorough exemplification of the techniques and strategies employed to move work forward

- used their research findings to inform the development of both their own skill and the piece as a whole, often undertaking further research in order to develop the piece or individual skill. *I found a website about initialise, this is when people like doctors or technicians talk to each other in something like a code. My teacher had told me that I wasn't really convincing as a local politician because of what I was saying and how I said it .... I used initialise in the council meeting scene and started my speech with, the VP is TTMT and we must ANOBO with RMB. I said this standing upright and speaking with great authority. My group thought this was hilarious because I had to explain then in a patronising tone what the initials stood for.*
- accepted and responded positively to feedback in order to develop their own theatrical skill and/or the piece as a whole. Feedback came from several directions, self-assessment, peer review, critique of recorded work, mid-development audience observations; *My teacher said he could see the actors moving awkwardly around the window flat to avoid being seen. I solved this by putting a backing flat draped in cargo netting so it looked like a hedge up behind it.*
- only included a section of the devised script if it illustrated a particular point such as; *I had to mark pauses in the script, shown in red, because I had been rushing this section and by doing this when I rehearsed at home it helped me get the pace and tone right.*
- summed up how they had as individuals used their refined theatrical skills and ideas in the final piece.
- created mood boards and used sketches and diagrams to explain the development of their ideas.

#### Less successful student responses:

- demonstrated a poor engagement with others often criticising decisions made without offering alternative ideas. Too many designers were guilty of this and failed to make any reference to collaboration and the development of the piece as a whole or how their design would support the piece
- focused on script writing rather than the actual physical exploration necessary in the devising process; *We sat in a group and talked about what we were going to do and we wrote a script.*
- included extracts of scripted sections such as poems or monologues they were going to perform. This would be acceptable if they were used to illustrate how the student developed the skills deployed in the performance of these
- often completely ignored any reference to feedback or gave rather generalised and vague responses to feedback including, for example, *we were told to project our voices more* or *we were told we should learn our lines better*. Inevitably, this made the scope for a detailed response to the feedback limited, in that there was little opportunity to discuss the resulting development and refinement
- identified a theatrical skill they developed, but lacked thorough exemplification. For example, comments such as: *I really developed my voice, facial expressions and physicality, I got better and better at mixing sound* were typical examples.
- simply listed rehearsal techniques and strategies without providing any specific outcome of how these had moved the work forward or aided the development of skills. *We used role on the wall. I played around with my ideas for the sound; We hot-seated each other*
- offered incomplete or very basic designs and missed opportunities to demonstrate, through sketches, diagrams, plans and so forth, how their particular design skill had developed along with the piece
- failed to consider how they as individuals had used their refined skills and ideas in the final piece.



### Section 3: Analysis and evaluation AO4

In order to achieve success in this section of the log student responses need to demonstrate the ability to be critical and insightful about their contribution to the devising process and the final performance, plus the development and refinement of skills and their impact on the piece. They should also appraise those areas for further development. Points made should be supported by relevant exemplification. The most successful responses demonstrated consistency in analysis and evaluation. The best responses analysed and evaluated the process in terms of benefits brought and skills development as much as the end product. Less successful responses referred to generic transferrable skills rather than theatrical skills. This was true both in skills development and benefits brought to the group; examples included time management and increased self-confidence rather than theatrical skills relating to performance or their chosen design specialism. Broad comments, such as *I always turned up to rehearsals on time* or *I kept the group motivated* did not offer sufficient detail and depth in analysing and evaluating the creative process and performance itself.

Successful student responses:

- demonstrated confidence in their demonstration of evaluative and analytical skills through thorough exemplification in support of points made
- were reflective and critical and supported the analysis and evaluation with close reference to both the devising process and the final devised performance
- offered inciteful reflections of how far they had developed their theatrical skills and noted a genuine sense of achievement in this
- often wrote about a particular skill they had mastered; *At the start of rehearsals, I was worried that I would not be able to do the physical theatre sections because I am usually very clumsy, however my group understood this and so we always started rehearsals with a physical warm-up using the music we had chosen for these sections to get me used to being in time with the exaggerated body movements we were going to use. Through this I began to relax and began to move more freely and in sync with the others. I was proud of the time section because I became the pendulum of a grandfather clock; as I had been taught, I relaxed completely, almost becoming weightless, focused out front, arms by my side, legs closely together and let my partner swing me from side to side in time with the sound of a clock ticking and then chiming; I felt really elated by the positive comments I received the first time I did this perfectly.*
- effectively analysed overall impact in most cases, with examples from the piece and some considerable depth relating to the effects they had on the audience.
- recognised both the benefits they had brought to the group and the overall impact they had as individuals; *During lock-down I knew it was important to still focus on what we wanted to achieve as a group and so I organised zoom rehearsals. I set an agenda for each rehearsal, starting with a rundown of what we had already done and what needed to be done next. We decided that each character would have a monologue and so we prepared these alone and then critiqued each other when we showed them on zoom. I made notes and shared these with the rest of the group. When we got back to college, we were able to pick up where we left off. Our teacher was impressed by how far advanced we were. Also, without letting on I had printed tee shirts with the name of each character on it. I really felt from the response of my groupmates that I had made a really valid contribution*

- appraised areas for further improvement. *As a designer I worked really closely with the group and realised that the costume I had assembled had helped Anna to become the character. I did do some sewing but in future I would like to develop my skills by making my own pattern and making a costume from scratch.*

Less successful student responses:

- were too general about the narrative progression of the piece - adding a scene here, removing a table etc. without considering the development of their own theatrical skill
- were very short and therefore self-limiting, often because of overlong sections 1 or 2
- had analysed and evaluated the final performance whilst others analysed and evaluated the process and ignored the final performance
- failed to refer to specific theatrical skills and tended to focus on inessentials such as script-writing, group chats about the piece, watching other groups for ideas etc.
- provided little or no exemplification to support very general observations. *I was successful when I did my monologue, my set was ok, the costume I did wasn't finished but what was there looked alright.*
- failed to identify their part in the development and realisation of the piece and therefore were not able to recognise the overall impact they had as an individual
- used this as a section to say, *if I did it again I would...*, but not justifying why they would do this and how theatrically it would work
- either ignored completely or made very little effort to consider areas for further development.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.