



Pearson

Moderator's Report Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Drama & Theatre (9DR0/01)
Component 1: Devising

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9DR0/01 Devising

Introduction

This component is internally assessed /externally moderated.

In this component students will develop their creative and exploratory skills to devise an original performance. The starting point for this devising process is an extract from a performance text and an influential theatre practitioner.

In their creative explorations, students will learn how text can be manipulated to communicate meaning to audiences and they will begin the process of interpretation. They will gain an understanding of how a new performance could be developed through the practical exploration of the theatrical style and use of conventions of the chosen practitioner.

Candidates will produce a **portfolio (AO1/AO4)** in response to their devising experience and performance outcomes. The portfolio can take a variety of forms including written/recorded or a combination of both. Time limits and recommended word counts are clearly outlined in the A Level specification. See page 18 for further details.

The contents of the portfolio should respond to the following 6 statements:

- Outline your initial response to the key extract and practitioner and track how it developed throughout the devising process
- Connect your research material/s to key stages in the development process and to performance outcomes
- Evaluate how your chosen role/s emerged and developed from initial ideas through to the final performance
- Analyse how your contribution was influenced by the selected theatre practitioner and or/theatre makers, and the impact live theatre has had on your own practical work
- Discuss how social, historical and cultural contexts impacted on your work
- Evaluate the creative choices you made and whether or not they were successful in performance.

In addition to the portfolio, Candidates will be assessed as performers/designers in a **devised performance/realisation (AO2)**. The mark criteria for this Assessment Objective is outlined on pages 26-32 of the A Level specification.

Centres are asked to provide a recording of performance work, accompanied by accurate time sheets. Teacher-assessors are also required to complete a

NEA Authentication Sheet for each candidate. Centres are advised to check that they are using the most current and up-to-date form as some administrative details will change during the life of a new specification. The evidence on this form helps the moderator to place the work from each candidate in context and understand where and why final marks have been awarded.

Marks for this NEA component are awarded as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Portfolio | 60 |
| Group Performance/Design Realisation | 20 |
| Total marks for Component 1 | 80 |

There is essential guidance for centres provided in the Administrative Support Guide. This document includes the requisite forms and instructions for Component 1. It is required for all components and includes information about all assessment procedures. It is updated annually with forms and deadlines that apply to the administration of all three components in this AL specification.

In addition to this, centres are reminded that there are a number of resources available to support centres delivering the 2016 specification. Online support material is available through the Pearson/Edexcel website. These include portfolio examples and a detailed guide to completing Component 1.

'Ask the Expert' is another support service that provides centres with answers and information regarding common questions and issues. Centres are also advised that the FAQ page is regularly updated and this is designed to answer questions regarding the delivery of the specification. It is important that centres take the time to look at example materials as this will help gauge the expected standard and requirements of this first component. Support material is regularly updated.

The web address is:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/drama-and-theatre-2016.html#tab-1>

This report is designed to support centres in the delivery of Component 1 and address some of the issues raised. It will also report on the successes of this component and celebrate the work of candidates in the first year of assessment.

There now follows some specific observations from the moderation team, based on centre responses to this specification in 2018.

Component 1: Devising

Performance text/extract

Centres have a free choice when selecting an appropriate **performance text stimulus**. However, it should offer students the opportunity to demonstrate exploratory range and depth that is appropriate to the level of demand for A Level study. As outlined in the specification, the performance text must also be professionally produced and have a minimum running time of 60 minutes. Moderators reported a minor number of cases where these rules were not followed and failure to comply in future series will be regarded as an infringement of the specification. For example a musical is not an appropriate performance text for A Level Component 1. Similarly novels, films, poems and plays specifically written for students working at GCSE level are unsuitable. For example, *Josephine the Angel* or *Let Him have It*.

The **choice of texts** in this first year is generally based on teachers' preference, experience and the suitability of text to cohort. Moderators reported that centres currently choose from a diverse and exciting range of performance texts that immediately engage candidates and encourage them to think about the many different ways in which theatre can be used to communicate ideas to an audience. Popular texts/extracts for this series included: *Things I Know to Be True*, *The Crucible*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *How To Disappear Completely And Never Be Found*, *Find Me*, *Metamorphosis*, *4.48 Psychosis*, *100* and *Pool (no water)*. Several centres opted for a Greek tragedy or a play by Shakespeare and this was often a successful springboard to discussion and exploration of contemporary issues and ideas. Moderators also commented on the popularity of new and modern performance texts being used for this first component. Playwrights including Mike Bartlett, Martin Crimp and Caryl Churchill were also popular starting points for devised work. Moderators reported that some centres would benefit from broadening the dramatic range and experience of their candidates by choosing performance texts that offer significant contrast to their choices for Component 2 and 3.

Candidates begin their devising experience from a performance text stimulus. Teacher-assessors should introduce candidates to a specific extract at the start of the devising process and this should 'springboard' the early stages of the component.

Most candidates were able to write about their stimulus text with clarity and confidence and moderators reported that a vast number of candidates were able to make links between key themes, symbols, characters and ideas that showed a clear understanding of the performance text as a whole. What was less clear was how candidates had engaged with a specific extract from the performance text. This is the focus of the very first statement and directly links to AO1.

The **initial response to the extract** and how the exploration of this specific moment had shaped, developed and influenced the early stages of the candidates devising process is paramount and moderators felt that low and middle scoring work failed to address the specifics of the extract. Candidates who analysed and considered how the ideas of a specific moment had

developed the early stages of their devising journey were more successful in their approach. For example, one centre focused on the poker scene from *A Streetcar Named Desire* and this led to an early improvisation on alpha-male behaviour, mood and atmosphere and the use of nonverbal communication to sign-post characterisation.

It was popular in this first year of assessment to find candidates exploring the opening or final moments to their performance text and this often helped to contextualise their response to the extract, within the narrative arc of the performance text as a whole. For example, one centre explored the opening scene from *How To Disappear Completely and Never Be Found* and an early discussion, which led to research, helped to explore the idea of a missing person. Candidates that were able to detail their early exploration of the extract and outline how creative ideas had developed as a result of their initial reaction were often able to access marks in the higher levels. Responses and connections were often sharper and more perceptive when specifically linked to the initial reaction of the chosen extract.

In a minority of cases, some moderators reported that creative ideas had begun to take shape, *before* the introduction of a specific extract/performance text and this is not the intention of the component. Centres are reminded that the devising process should begin as a result of candidates being introduced and engaged with a key extract from a suitable performance text.

Choice of Practitioner

Centres are also given a free choice in the selection of their chosen **practitioner**. Popular choices in this first year included: *Frantic Assembly*, *Punchdrunk* and *Artaud*. *Brecht* and *Berkoffian* based performances also featured heavily in this first year. This was particularly true of candidates who worked in an overtly physical or choral style.

Less common, but nevertheless successful choices included using the methodology of *Headlong*, *Kneehigh*, *Splendid Productions*, *Katie Mitchell*, *Lecoq*, *The Paper Birds* and *Gecko Theatre Company*. Most centres picked practitioners from the list published on page 7 of the A level specification, although this is not a requirement. However, moderators did stress that the most successful performances came from those that were rooted in practitioner methodology and final performances that had been developed and refined as a result of genuine influence and research were more credible, theatrically inventive and engaging to watch.

Performances that explored a number of different performance styles and methods were sometimes less clear and lacked focus. For example, a few centres explored Stanislavski as their chosen practitioner but incorporated a number of abstract and physical theatre sequences into their devised performances. Whilst it is clear that other theatre-makers and companies may influence the devising process, the style and methodology of the chosen practitioner should dominate and contextualise the overall performance style.

Moderators reported that the best examples of work were those where the influence of the chosen practitioner was central to the performance work.

Performance work

Moderators reported that the majority of centres offered a range of bold and adventurous work that was a pleasure to see. Most candidates had engaged with the task of creating an original performance and candidates generally showed great enthusiasm in performance. The moderating team commented on how well the majority of candidates had been prepared for this aspect of the component.

Unsurprisingly, most candidates chose to be assessed as performers, although there were a few cases of design being offered in this first year. Design work that embraced the influence of the chosen practitioner was often highly inventive, effective and supportive of the performance work. Centres are reminded that design candidates are required to submit evidence of the 'additional documentation' as outlined on page 16 of the AL specification.

Performances targeted to specific audiences tended to work well and moderators commented on the advantages to choosing a specific audience as it often helped candidates to fine tune the aims and intentions of their performance/design realisation. Disappointingly, there were a small number of centres where there was no audience present or such a small number of spectators that their presence did not support or enhance the performance work.

Many centres chose to use a 'pre-show' experience to set up or introduce their performance work. This often involved the audience and the way in which they were asked to enter the theatre or performance space. This can create engaging and provocative work although in doing so, many centres are forgetting the importance of candidate identification at the beginning of the recording. This makes the evidence presented for moderation difficult to view. Centres are reminded that any pre-show activity counts in the time limit for the performance. Moderators will stop watching when the maximum time limit is reached, this will include the pre-show.

Candidates tended to work most effectively when the subject matter was something that resonated with their own lives and experiences or when they had researched their subject matter in depth to fully understand the issues/characters they were exploring.

Popular themes and ideas in this first year included: *Donald Trump, Brexit, The Afterlife, Fairy tales, Social Media/Digital Age, Mental Health, LGBTQ rights, The Grenfell Tower disaster, Terrorism/Extremism and several reported examples of work that alluded specifically to 7/7, 9/11 and the Manchester Arena Bombing.* Performances that considered social issues or explored thought-provoking material were generally more successful as candidates took on the approach that they could use theatre as a medium to say something about the world in which they live in. It was encouraging to see candidates

challenge themselves to produce a piece of original theatre that spoke to their audience and made them question their own ideas or preconceptions.

Work that explored issues such as infertility, marital affairs, still born babies was often less successful as it seemed so far removed from the candidates' own experiences. This was felt to be particularly true when performed naturalistically as candidates were unable to generate material that felt truthful or present emotional narratives and responses that were credible.

Moderators reported that a significant amount of work was influenced by the use of physical theatre. No doubt this is a direct result of exposure to such companies as Frantic Assembly and Complicite. Moderators commented that when movement material was connected to the ideas in the performance, the result was often powerful and visually engaging. However, when movement or dance was unconnected it was considered irrelevant and lacked meaning. Candidates exploring the methodology of Frantic Assembly are encouraged to look at the breadth of their working practice in order to offer range in their own work. There were several examples in this first year of narrative based work that simply included a 'chair duet' and considered this to be enough.

Several centres working with Punchdrunk and other immersive based companies chose to stage their performances in unconventional venues and spaces. Moderators reported examples of devised performances taking place in mini-buses, churches, caravans and school grounds. The work produced was often original and exciting for audiences but moderators did comment on the difficulty this caused when watching the recording. Several candidates chose to stage their performances in a promenade style and centres are strongly encouraged to remember the importance of the recording. The marks awarded need to be justified on the recording. Moderation of marks is evidence based and therefore the camera needs to have the 'best seat in the house'.

Quality of recordings, group sizes and timings:

The majority of centres provided recordings that were clear in terms of visual and audio quality. The most effective recordings began with a clear image of the group in a long shot and candidates were then introduced by name and candidate numbers. Centres that use identification placards or on-screen sign-systems provide the most helpful visual aid to moderators. Moderators also reported that it was effective when candidates introduced themselves by name, number, character and distinguishing feature. The use of digital file chapters is another useful identification tool.

Centres are reminded that further guidance on 'Best practice when recording performance' is available on page 80 of the AL specification (Appendix 4).

The recording is an essential piece of assessment evidence and teacher-assessors should do as much as possible to ensure the quality of the recording is as high as possible. The camera should be in a position to capture the dynamics and details of the performance.

The evidence for A02 is significantly compromised and candidates are disadvantaged when the evidence that has been captured by the centre does not support the marks awarded.

Performance evidence for this component arrived in a variety of digital formats and centres are reminded to check all USB/DVD recordings, prior to despatch.

Centres are reminded to ensure performance times and group sizes comply with the requirements of the specification. Details are outlined on page 10 of the specification and in the ASG.

Some moderators reported examples of centres using **non-assessed individuals** without permission from Pearson/Edexcel. This is an infringement of the specification and permission for non-assessed individuals must be sought through Drama Assessment. It was also noted that some centres used non-assessed individuals when it was unnecessary. Again, centres are reminded to check the conditions and rules relating to non-assessed individuals in the ASG. Failure to comply with terms as stated in the ASG is an infringement of the specification and centres will be reported to the Business Assurance team at Pearson.

Centres are also asked to make it clear when candidates are no longer part of the course. Due to the linear nature of the A Level it is now common to find students on recordings that are no longer entered as candidates. Moderators found it particularly useful when this was highlighted in the administration. When centres had made no attempt to signal which candidates were no longer part of the course, this often led to confusion and slowed down the early stages of moderation.

The majority of centres worked within the **recommended time limits** and encouragingly, every single candidate was able to present work that met the regulatory minimum time limit. However, moderators did report that some performances exceeded the maximum time limit allowed. It is important that teacher-assessors indicate when marking has stopped for performances. Moderators will only consider evidence that falls within the maximum time allowed.

The portfolio

Portfolios came in a range of acceptable formats and it was pleasing to note that all but one portfolio arrived on paper. Card is not an acceptable form of presentation. Nearly all candidates in this first year produced written portfolios. Several candidates chose to use photographs and diagrams to document key stages of their research, development and performance work and this often helped to provide insight into their theatre-making experience. However, portfolios that were dominated by bullet points, role-on-the-wall and flow chart diagrams were less successful as they rarely provided enough detail to give purposeful insight into the candidates devising experience. Whilst they are each credible forms of documentation and note-taking, moderators felt that candidates who chose this style of presentation were less able to achieve marks

in the upper level. Some candidates chose to record evidence through a series of 'Appendices' and this is to be discouraged as *'it is strongly advised that the upper word/time limits are adhered to by students to enable them to satisfy the requirement to produce a concise and coherently structured portfolio'*. For further clarification see page 18 of the AL specification.

Moderators also reported that some teacher-assessors commented on the process of the candidate for **AO1 (Create & Develop)** and whilst commendable, this is not valid. The portfolio is content driven and teacher-assessors are reminded that there are no marks for process in the portfolio.

The best portfolios were those that responded directly to the 6 statements, as outlined on page 17 of the specification. Candidates that used the statements often wrote with a greater sense of clarity and structure. Those that did not, tended to fall into generalised 'reporting' or description. There was a clear link between accurate marking and the use of the six statements.

Candidates that did not address the demands of the statement were rarely able to address each assessment objective. For example, some candidates did not refer to live theatre in their portfolios and had they used the statements to structure their ideas, this would have been clearly signposted. It was rare to see candidates discuss their extract in sufficient depth or discuss its context within the wider play. Candidates often focused on the stimulus in response to statement one and there was no further discussion. Candidates who embedded this discussion throughout the portfolio were able to communicate a more 'sophisticated' understanding of their creative journey and not lose sight of how the extract had acted as a creative springboard for ideas, aims and intentions.

Overall, marks awarded for **AO1 (Theory & Practice)** were more accurate and it was fairly obvious when candidates had or had not outlined and connected how the methodology of their chosen practitioner had impacted their creative process and production intentions. Candidates that did well were able to make succinct and relevant references to how their chosen practitioner had informed and influenced their ideas. They were also able to reference other theatre makers, individuals and companies but kept the central focus of their reflection on their chosen practitioner. Portfolios that were unable to connect practical exploration to practitioner theory were less successful.

Candidates scoring marks in the higher levels were able to 'sprinkle' and 'pepper' their theory, connected to their practice, throughout the final document. It was reported that some candidates struggled to make connections between theory and practice (AO1) or engage with the exploration and execution of their practitioner methodology, on paper. This is a requirement of the portfolio and candidates that were too biographical or literary in their response to practitioner methodology often failed to make connections with their own work. Low-scoring work also included simple description of practitioner theory without connecting to their own exploratory or performance experiences. Isolated theory and research that did not address the demands of the assessment objective often led to some mark adjustments. For example, "I used Lecoq's 7 levels of tension" with no further example or explanation rarely justified marks in the upper levels. Equally the history of Brecht and a simple list of Punchdrunk productions did not warrant marks in the middle of upper

levels. When candidates did offer sufficient practical examples, connected to relevant practitioner theory, they were able to communicate a genuine creative journey and link to a clear decision-making process.

Teacher-assessors were most confident in rewarding **AO4 (Analysis & Evaluation)**. Many candidates embedded evaluation and analysis throughout their work communicating a continually reflective process. Candidates evaluated the effectiveness of practical exploration and analysed the significance of their research. Some candidates only offered evaluation only in response to statement 6 and were rewarded with marks in level 5. This often led to mark adjustments.

Candidates that took a more holistic approach to their evaluation and offered detail, analysis and key examples throughout their final document were more successful.

Moderators also commented that candidates that were able to link contextual relevance and research to their creative and production process were able to access marks in the higher levels. Isolated context or research was often irrelevant and better suited to a text book than a personalised and reflective final document. Some candidates included verbatim from audience questionnaires which was helpful to an extent. When candidates used this to support their discussion or prompt further analysis it was a relevant addition. However, there were candidates who relied heavily on these questionnaires and consequently failed to offer their own personal response and their discussion lacked any depth.

The best portfolios were those that were personal and responded and engaged with the demands of each statement. High-scoring work detailed the experience of the candidate within an exploratory and production context, and outlined how research, context and practitioner methodology had contributed to the influence and success of their final devised performance.

Annotations and recommended word count

Many centres helpfully annotated their students' work so that moderators were able to follow their thinking. The moderator's task is considerably eased when annotations show how the assessment criteria have been applied. This cannot be stressed enough.

In some centres, there was evidence of genuine departmental standardisation and cross-moderation of work, something that is essential for the security of marks awarded to students in centres where there is more than one teacher-assessor. It is not a requirement to annotate work but it is immensely helpful to moderators when teacher-assessors indicate where and why final marks have been awarded. Where teacher-assessors note how students' writing/recording fulfils the needs of the portfolio, moderators report that they can more easily agree the marks awarded, than if they have to search for evidence. This is particularly important when work is submitted in continuous prose. Once again, centres are reminded that either the candidate or the teacher-assessor must clearly indicate where each of the 6 statements are addressed. Several

moderators had to send work back to centres to seek clarification on how marks had been awarded. Teacher/assessors are reminded that whilst it is not a formal requirement to annotate work, it is a JCQ requirement to ensure that there is clear evidence to indicate how marks have been awarded. Moderators found that detailed comments on the NEA authentication form often helped them 'to see' and understand where and why marks had been awarded. At A Level, it is not optional to complete comments for this form. It is a requirement.

A small number of centres did not take notice of the **recommended word count**. Over long work should be cut out at the first draft stage. Centres are also reminded that footnotes are part of the final word count and therefore excessive use of this form of documentation is to be discouraged. Moderators reported examples of good practice where teacher-assessors had drawn a line across the page of work to indicate to the moderator that the recommended word limit had been reached by the candidate and the centre had stopped marking.

Administration

The administration for this component is minimal and therefore the following guidance is designed to ensure that all administration for this component is correct.

Edexcel/Pearson is aware that some forms and administration requirements have changed since the launch of this specification and centres are thanked for their cooperation and advised to regularly visit the Edexcel homepage and ASG to ensure that the documentation being used is the most current version.

The following observations were made in this first year:

- Most centres ensured their work arrived on time and in good order. Consortium centres should indicate this in a covering letter to their moderator.
- Centres are reminded that a signed copy of the EDI print out should be included in the sample of work.
- Moderators commented on several arithmetical/addition errors. Teacher-assessors are strongly advised to check the addition of candidate marks carefully and contact Edexcel Online when mistakes have been made.
- Centres are reminded that it is not a requirement to encrypt or password protect USB drives. Centres should simply work within the parameters of their own child and data protection policies.
- Most teacher-assessors provided personal and pertinent comments for each area of assessment. Teacher-assessors that completed NEA authentication forms with detailed examples of where candidates had met key aspects of the mark criteria often guided the moderator through the process of awarding marks. A small number of centres simply copied the same generic comments for each candidate and this provided little insight into how final marks had been awarded.

- Most samples of work were correct. A small number of centres needed to be contacted regarding the work of their highest/lowest attaining students.
- In most cases, documentation had been correctly signed and this is pleasing to note. Chasing signatures is often highly problematic for both moderators and examination officers.
- Where centres requested special consideration for students, or felt there were circumstances that meant the work of students was not as strong as it should be, they were directed to Edexcel directly. Centres are reminded that a formal request for special consideration is always advisable, and these should be made through the examinations' officer to the specific department at Edexcel/Pearson and not through the moderator.
- The overall quality of recordings was satisfactory although this is clearly the most important area of administration to get right. Centres are advised to look at Appendix 4 in the specification for further guidance on ways to ensure this evidence is captured successfully.
- Centres are also advised to ensure that moderation materials are packaged carefully and securely. A small number of DVDs/USB sticks were damaged in transit and centres are reminded that without a working DVD/USB, marks for AO2 cannot be evidenced or awarded marks. Centres are strongly advised to keep 'back-up' copies in centres.
- It cannot be overstressed that where centres use large numbers of plastic envelopes for work and papers, or cardboard folders, they do so unnecessarily and waste time for their moderator. Centres are also reminded that work should be presented on ordinary paper, not card, stapled together for each candidate.
- In addition, centres are reminded to ensure that students' names are on all of the pages of the portfolio and statement of intention, in case they become separated.

High-scoring work was felt to show some of these features:

- Students had clearly been given the advantage of practice that engendered confidence and risk taking
- Creative group performances/design realisations that were and innovative and embraced the style and methodology of the chosen practitioner
- Performance work that encouraged a range of skill and control in terms of character, communication, voice and physicality
- Performance work that met all required and recommended time limits
- Performance/design realisation was dynamic using a range of creative choices to engage and create impact on an audience
- Portfolio content was driven by the 6 statements and used the language of the questions/statements in the response
- Portfolios that used a personal voice throughout. Students referred to their own work, not just that of their group. They made use of 'I' rather than 'we'
- Portfolios that offered a balance between analysis and evaluation
- Students' practical examples were embedded in their writing, across all of the statements/questions
- Portfolio research was connected to key stages in the development / exploration / production process
- Consideration of contextual awareness and the impact on the work
- Strong use of subject-specific vocabulary used to support ideas
- Theory and practice are connected. Understanding is embedded in portfolio and performance work/design realisation
- Students work independently to present their artistic aims and intentions before an audience. Ownership comes from a genuine sense of exploration and understanding
- Portfolios were concise, perceptive and made full use of the recommended word limit
- Teacher-assessor comments were detailed and specific, allowing the moderator to 'see' examples of how and why marks had been awarded.

Low-scoring work was felt to show some of these features:

- Group performances/design realisations that were poorly executed in performance and did not sufficiently embrace the methodology of the chosen practitioner
- Performance work used a limited range of skill in terms of character, communication, voice and physicality
- Performance work did not meet the regulatory or recommended time limits
- Portfolio content was unclear and often ignored the demands of the 6 statements. Some candidates failed to address the content of all of the statements and therefore some content was missing when mapped to Assessment Objectives.
- Portfolios struggled to find a personal voice
- Portfolios showed a lack of analysis or isolated analysis without sufficient evaluation
- Students' found it difficult to offer practical examples in response to the 6 statements/questions
- Portfolio research was either missing, superficial, minimal or unconnected to key stages in the development / exploration / production process
- Lack of consideration towards the contextual impact on the work
- Theory and practice often unconnected or irrelevant
- Limited subject-specific vocabulary used to support ideas
- Performance work was under prepared or lacked focus, energy
- Portfolios significantly exceeded or struggled to meet the available number of words
- Centres were poorly organised, had lost coursework, did not present appropriate recording evidence, had not carried out centre standardisation or did not have sufficient specialist drama staff to deliver the component.

In conclusion, the majority of centres had served their students well in this first year and proved to have a firm understanding of the demands of this component.

Based on the evidence presented for moderation, it is clear that students have engaged in the challenge of devising and several were able present innovative, creative and engaging pieces of original performance.

Moving forward centres should:

- Ensure the recording captures the best possible evidence to support the marks awarded for AO2
- Ensure candidates use the 6 statements to structure the content of their portfolio evidence
- Ensure that the key extract is specifically referred to in the final portfolio and connected to the wider context of the performance text
- Ensure the methodology of the chosen practitioner is dominant in both the performance/design realisation and portfolio
- Ensure all design documentation is made available to the moderator
- Adhere to all recommended word count/time limits
- Regularly look at the ASG and support material available on Edexcel Online.

